

**DIVERSITY AND EXCLUSION:  
AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM  
STUDENTS AFTER THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

by

Aneesha A. Baboolal

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

Spring 2019

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STUDENTS AFTER THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

After the events of September 11, 2001, Muslim people from diverse backgrounds experienced violence and discrimination which altered both gendered and racialized Muslim identity in the US. This has contributed to the societal reshaping of the Muslim experience, yet, more recently, the 2016 Presidential Election and its aftermath has impacted various marginalized groups. Muslims have once again encountered a hostile sociopolitical climate where they experience victimization through harassment, biased hate speech, and violence in broader society.

While there have been some studies surrounding the experiences of Muslim students at American colleges and universities in the years after 9/11, there remains a focus on specific types of students thus, largely erasing the diversity of Muslims and their intersecting social identities. Among studies regarding Muslim students, there remains a heavy focus on those from the Middle East, international students, and veiled women thus, marginalizing domestic Muslim Americans across race/ethnicity, women who do not veil, and non-Arab/South Asian Muslim populations.

This qualitative study examines the experiences of self-identified Muslim students attending a predominantly white institution (PWI) and a historically black college/university (HBCU) in a Mid-Atlantic state through in-depth interviews (n=50) to capture a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity of Muslim students'

experiences in the Trump Era. This study centers the perceptions of Muslim students at specific intersecting identities (gender, race/ethnicity, citizenship/legal status, region of national origin, as well as student status), to gain greater insight into how a diverse population of marginalized religious minorities perceive issues surrounding Islamophobia, xenophobia, and anti-Black racism given the changing sociopolitical climate of the US.

Findings indicate unique experiences within the Muslim student population linked to social identities including gender and race/ethnicity, but also, between undergraduates and graduates, as well as international, immigrant, and domestic students. This study additionally contributes to understanding perceptions surrounding inclusive diversity for marginalized Muslim students, especially given the compounded nature of Islamophobia, xenophobia, and anti-Black racism. In addition, the intersectional nature of Islamophobia, exacerbated by social intolerance, has resulted in racially motivated harassment of Muslim women via microaggressions on campus, as well as hostility, intimidation, and violence in public spaces. Finally, this study proposes a theoretical model of *Twice Racialized Intersectionality* to examine the unique experiences of multi-layered racism on doubly marginalized individuals, as well as under-studied Muslim adjacent communities.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

*It's a person coming at everything we are.*

- Student Leader, Muslim Students' Association, Mid-Atlantic State University

*I don't want to say [MASU] is a racist campus, but I definitely think that like, "Yeah, there's a lot of racist students over here." I saw a Snap[chat] of a chair and it was like, wow, I didn't think people had that mindset still. So, it was a picture of a chair that was clearly from some time ago, and it was really old décor, and something and they were like, "**Just like the good old times when blacks were like below us**". It's like, "Get them out of our campus", ... **And it was just kind of worrying to see that people still had those views.***

--Bilal, Domestic Undergraduate Student at Mid-Atlantic State University

Racial/ethnic and religious minority students, both domestic and international are an important part of diversity initiatives on college and university campuses, including at Mid-Atlantic State University<sup>1</sup>. While there have been a plethora of studies surrounding

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonym to be used per IRB expectations (IRB to be submitted after committee approval), to protect the confidentiality of participants.

the experiences of students on various campuses, including historically black college/universities (HBCU), Hispanic serving institutions (HSI) and predominantly white universities (PWI), there are few studies that address international student experiences in the US and even less that focus specifically on graduate and religious minority students. Among studies regarding Muslim students, there remains a heavy focus on Muslim women (especially related to veiling practices post 9/11) (Gregory, 2015; Mir, 2011; Ameen, 2012; Macias, 2016; Salman, 2015; Karandish, 2014; Maruoka, 2009) and international Middle Eastern students (Pinkerton, 2006; Schatz, 2009; Abualkhair, 2014; Johnson, 2016), with a focus on otherness and exclusion. However, the intersectional experiences of Muslim students across gender, racial/ethnic identity, national origin and student status are rarely explored simultaneously and are increasingly relevant in a post-9/11 society, especially after the 2016 US Presidential Election, a historical time of increasing social and political tension in the US. Therefore, this study focuses on the perceptions of Muslim students, across gender, race/ethnicity, citizenship/legal status<sup>2</sup>, to gain greater insight into how a diverse population of marginalized religious minorities perceive issues surrounding Islamophobia<sup>3</sup> (including

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<sup>2</sup> Citizenship status in this context also refers to student status as international or domestic, VISA recipients, permanent resident green card holders, naturalized US citizens and American-born.

<sup>3</sup> Islamophobia, as a historical concept relates to anti-Islamic sentiment towards practitioners of Islam that is rooted in orientalism (Said, 1979). The *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* Report (Runnymede Trust, 1997; Considine, 2017), popularized the term which includes unfounded fear and hatred of Islam, Muslims or Muslim culture with eight specific characteristics. Rooted in orientalism, these include, Islam is static, monolithic, unresponsive to change, separate and other thus lacks common values with other cultures, inferior to the West, barbaric, primitive and

bias crimes<sup>4</sup> and hate speech) in the changing social climate of the US. Specifically, I build on pilot data collected in November 2016, immediately after the Presidential Election, and subsequently 50 in-depth interviews conducted between 2017 and 2018 to investigate how students navigate marginality at a predominantly white campus setting and anti-Muslim bias in public spaces surrounding campus, thus taking into consideration sentiments regarding broader anti-Muslim rhetoric, policies, and bias incidents on campuses during this critical period.

After 9/11, there was an increase in discrimination against Muslims, including 1,700 acts of hate violence such as verbal or physical assaults (Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2005; Sekhon, 2003), including on college campuses (Karam, 2012). Similarly, continued intolerance post-election has resulted in ‘hateful harassment’ incidents across the nation with 1,094 acts occurring one month after the election (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016; Eversley, 2016; Dearden, 2016) including anti-immigrant, anti-Black, anti-LGBTQIA, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim crimes, and anti-woman: women who wear hijabs face particular vulnerability to threat and assault

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misogynistic, violence threat, aggressive, and supportive of terrorism, a political ideology used to acquire advantage, hostility towards Islam justifies discriminatory exclusionary practices against Muslims, and this is normal. Considine (2017) provides a comprehensive overview of debates in Islamophobia including the dismissal of the term as a type of racism.

<sup>4</sup> Per the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), a bias crime (also referred to as hate crime), is a criminal offense committed against a person, property, or society, that is motivated by the offender’s prejudice against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or person’s ethnic/national origin. Furthermore, the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 added crimes motivated by bias against gender and gender identity therefore, the 2014 FBI Hate Crime Statistics Report of 2014 was the first to include data on hate crimes related to gender (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2004; National Institute of Justice, 2017).

(Eisenstein, 2006; Allen, 2015; Franks, 2000; Finn, 2011; Mir, 2011; Perry 2014; Miller & Werner-Winslow, 2016). These acts have also occurred on university campuses (Dickerson & Saul, 2016) eliciting fears and concerns among minority students. Given the War on Terror, in the years after 9/11, students reported higher stress levels (Heyman, Brennan, & Colarossi, 2010; MacGeorge, Samter, Feng, Gillihan & Graves, 2004), similarly, increasing incidents of bias after the 2016 election (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016), prejudicial campaign rhetoric that fosters intolerance (Crandall, Miller, & White, 2018) and policies with anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant connotations, impact a new generation of Muslim Americans, Muslim internationals, and individuals passing as Muslim during the Trump Era in the US. During the early 2000s, Islamophobic and xenophobic bias also manifested itself in higher education outcomes including, national security policies that restricted migration as the 9/11 attackers entered the US via international student visas (Rodriquez, 2008). At the time, these policies resulted in a decline in international student enrollment in the US, even among Black international students (Chandler, 2004), similar to decreases in international enrollment observed in 2017 (Redden, 2017). Furthermore, according to the Teaching Tolerance Survey (n=10,000 K-12 educations) marginalized students felt a negative impact of the election almost immediately, including being targeting via harassment through slurs and threats of violence etc. (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). Furthermore, microaggressions, both verbal and non-verbal, perceived and real, occur on college campuses as a result of

increasing enrollment of multicultural students from various racial, ethnic, religious and national backgrounds (Nadal, 2008; Cainkar, 2009; Alababany, 2014; Cerbo, 2010). The aftermath of the 2016 US Presidential Election resulted in a rise of hate crimes/bias incidents against various minority groups including immigrants, African Americans, the LGBTQIA community, Jewish people, women, and Muslims (Miller & Werner-Winslow, 2016). The recent Teaching Tolerance Survey of K-12 educators (n=10,000) across the US highlighted the negative impact of the election on students, indicating that eighty percent of respondents reported feeling anxiety for marginalized students concerned about the election impact on themselves and their families, particularly immigrant, Muslim, African American and LGBTQIA students (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). Furthermore, at least thirty bias incidents nation-wide were documented at various colleges and universities one week after the 2016 Presidential Election (Dreid & Najmabadi, 2016; Jaschik, 2016) indicating that marginalized groups, both in society, and in schools faced an increased risk of victimization during this time. Recent data shows that bias incidents on campuses increased by 25 percent across all colleges compared to 2015<sup>5</sup> (U.S. Department of Education; Bauman, 2018). In 2017, 280 hate crimes were reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) by select campus police departments (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018). Sixty percent of campus hate crimes

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<sup>5</sup> 1,863 hate-related incidents occurred between November 2016 and March 2017; 330 were on college campuses (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017; Bauer-Wolf, 2017; Inside Higher Education, 2017)

reported in 2017 involved vandalism and property destruction (FBI, 2018), while 31 were reported assaults rooted in hateful bias (Bauman, 2018).

While it is clear the election had an effect on college campuses, it also impacted racial/ethnic and religious minority communities. The *Communities on Fire Report* (South Asian Americans Leading Together, 2018) documented 302 incidents of bias against South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Middle Eastern people between November 2016 and November 2017. The report found a 45 percent increase in hate incidents, a level not seen since 9/11. Furthermore, 1 in 5 perpetrators invoked President Trump's name, an administration policy (for example, the Muslim Ban), or campaign slogan ("Make America Great Again") during the attack (SAALT, 2018). While these acts occurred in public spaces, Muslim students nationally also began speaking out regarding their fears of the impact of the Trump Era.

*"In Fall 2015, a Mid-Atlantic State University<sup>6</sup> student became alarmed by what she perceived to be a noose hanging from a tree in front of [a building on campus]. Others saw the same possibility and contacted the campus police. Although an investigation determined that the objects hanging from the tree were the remnants of lanterns from a festival welcoming international student, the*

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<sup>6</sup> Pseudonym to be used per IRB expectations to protect the confidentiality of participants.

*possibility of a noose was troubling—it was a reminder of both a racist past and continuing racialized experiences on campus<sup>7</sup>.*”

Mid-Atlantic State University (hereafter, MASU), like many other campuses during the election period faced protests on campus regarding hate speech after College Republicans invited controversial ‘alt-right’ leader Milo Yiannopoulos<sup>8</sup> (and previously the invitation of conservative journalist Katie Pavlich by Students for the Second Amendment), as well as the reaction to an alleged racial display of nooses hung on trees on campus (that turned out to be lanterns) after a Black Lives Matter march<sup>9</sup> have prompted university community response and action. Most recently, racial slurs posted on a bulletin board in a residential dorm targeting Latino and Muslim students within a few days after the 2016 Presidential Election. And subsequent actions and reactions including the post-election silent protest<sup>10</sup>, an anti-Trump speakout<sup>11</sup> and the ‘We Stand with You’ solidarity rally in December 2016<sup>12</sup> have highlighted the campus community’s

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<sup>7</sup> Experiencing Diversity at Mid-Atlantic State University: Race/Ethnicity (Volume 1) Executive Summary (Jones & Hussain, 2017)

<sup>8</sup> Source omitted to protect anonymity of university.

<sup>9</sup> Source omitted to protect anonymity of university.

<sup>10</sup> Source omitted to protect anonymity of university.

<sup>11</sup> Source omitted to protect anonymity of university.

<sup>12</sup> Source omitted to protect anonymity of university.

response in support of tolerance, diversity and inclusion<sup>13</sup>. Yet, these events make it clear that racial tensions endure on campus<sup>14</sup>. MASU is not distinct as the protests, tensions, and concerns expressed seemed to reverberate throughout marginalized communities during this time.

A recent article in the statewide newspaper featured the perspectives of the MASU Muslim Student Organization where leaders highlighted the fear and hostility Muslims in the region faced that align with national concerns<sup>15</sup>. Of the 10,000 Muslim households in the state, currently, many voiced concerns related to policies that threaten

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<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, at Mid-Atlantic State University, the Graduate Student Government (GSG) (2016-2017) passed Resolution SR-1617-04 in support of international students and faculty members. The resolution was in response to Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the US, passed on January 27, 2017 and banned travel from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen for 90 days and refugees for up to four months. The Graduate Student Government Resolution specifically indicated that it caused harm to community members, affected the quality of research and educational integrity of the university, while simultaneously contradicting with the university student government constitution. The GSG further objected to the ‘xenophobic implications’ of the order and resolved to stand in solidarity with “refugee, the immigrant, the displaced, and anyone else who suffers or is discriminated against due to their race, nationality, citizenship, religion, sexuality, or gender identity, including—but not limited to—those members of our university community adversely affected by this executive order, regardless of any future legal challenges or decisions.”

<sup>14</sup> According to a recent Campus Climate survey conducted at the university, on average, under-represented minorities (defined as all non-Asian and non-white students) face more discrimination and bias compared to their Asian and white counterparts. However, according to the Diversity Center, Asian students, on average, report more harassment on campus. While these measures contribute to our understanding of minority student experiences on campuses, a more nuanced in-depth view of marginalized student experiences remains necessary to better support students of all backgrounds and create safer campuses. Campus climate surveys nationally address various issues pertaining to the acculturation of racial/ethnic, gender, and religious minority groups and international students including collecting data related to friendships on campus, participation in activities with diverse individuals, feelings of discrimination as a result of one’s racial/ethnic/religious status by administration and faculty, and overall, a sense of belonging. While this information is increasingly important as universities diversify, hate speech, including subtle microaggressions and even bias incidents remains largely omitted from the on-campus discourse.

<sup>15</sup> Citation omitted to preserve the anonymity of research setting.

to bring back a Muslim registry<sup>16</sup>, VISA restrictions, as well as spreading misinformation about Islam that results in harassment, discrimination and hate crimes. Students noted that blanket hostility toward Muslims were misplaced and that verbal attacks felt personal: "it's a person coming at everything we are"<sup>17</sup>.<sup>18</sup>

Given the previously documented impact of post 9/11 policies, as well as Islamophobic rhetoric and policies, combined with on campus protests, student experiences were likely to be impacted in a variety of ways both in the months leading up to and after the 2016 US Presidential Election.

### **Purpose of Research**

After the events of September 11, 2001, Muslims from diverse backgrounds, across various racial/ethnic groups (including Middle Eastern, Black Americans, South Asians, and Africans) have experienced violence and discrimination. This has reshaped Muslim identity in the US (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2005; Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2005; Sekhon, 2003; Naber, 2006; Bhatia, 2006; The Sikh Coalition, 2014). Muslims in the US have also been victimized by public surveillance through both

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<sup>16</sup> The National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) previously allowed the US government to target Middle Easterners, Arabs, and South Asian Muslims over the age of 16, from twenty five predominantly Muslim nations that resulted in the deportations of many without due process, racial profiling, the registration and interrogation of 80,000 men and has never resulted in a terrorism-related conviction (Rights Working Group, Center for Immigrants' Rights & Pennsylvania State University's Dickinson School of Law, 2012)

<sup>17</sup> Citation omitted to preserve the anonymity of the student members of MSA and the university.

<sup>18</sup> A follow up article in February 2019 indicated an increase in hate activity in the state.

gendered ethnic dress and by public scrutiny (Finn, 2011). While recent literature addresses the experiences of Muslim women and undergraduates in the US in the decade after 9/11, international and graduate students remain understudied in relation to the Muslim experience at American colleges and universities. The marginalization of Muslims within college culture remains unique because of national Islamophobic sentiment including specific threats of discrimination, suspicion and harassment after 9/11 (Mir, 2006; Ali, Liu, & Humedian, 2004; CAIR, 2005; 2008; Cankar, 2009; Sirin & Fine, 2008; Chaudhry, 2013). More recently, as a result of the Trump Effect (2015 - present) (Costello, 2016; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016), various sources have documented an increase in anti-Muslim sentiment that mimics the hostile post 9/11 climate for racial and religious minorities, including immigrants (Nienhuser & Oshio, 2018; South Asian Americans Leading Together, 2018; Ayoub & Beydoun, 2017). Given the exclusion of marginalized Muslim and Muslim-adjacent communities that were impacted by 9/11 that remain under-studied as a result of invisibility in the literature, the researcher's standpoint<sup>19</sup> and historical knowledge of exclusionary truths informed the initial hypothesis regarding increased violence against marginalized people.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Emerging from the work of Hegel and Marx, feminist standpoint theory surmises that knowledge is socially situated, thus the way that marginalized groups are situated can create awareness of knowledge that is unique from the non-marginalized, thus, research based on power relations should focus on the marginalized and have been attributed to Nancy Hartsock (1983), Sandra Harding, Dorothy Smith, Hilary Rose, Alison Jaggar, and Donna Haraway that emphasizes the relationship between experience, power relations, and knowledge production.

<sup>20</sup> As noted by Trouillot (1995), Some communities are places of silence and exclusion where inequality results by privileging some events, incidents, and experiences over others, and thus, the unrecorded defines the boundaries of that

Muslim people are a diverse group with various intersecting identities, therefore, the rationale of the study is that the experiences of Muslim students during the Trump Era may be unique in relation to other marginalized groups, yet, similar to the experiences of their Muslim counterparts after 9/11. The study will focus on the experiences of a new generation of Muslims, specifically, on campus, and in public spaces during a period of heightened racial tension in the US. Drawing conclusions across difference allows for an intersectional analysis that takes into account the variegated experiences of Muslims including gendered and racialized experiences.

This study examines the experiences of self-identified Muslim students on campus across gender, racial/ethnic groups, and citizenship status, specifically in light of Trump Era societal consequences including incidents of bias, racism, and violence. Furthermore, the study captures the perspectives of undergraduate (Muslim Americans) and graduate students (largely international with precarious legal statuses), and thus, provides a contribution to understanding the complex Muslim identity in the US amidst increasing Islamophobic and xenophobic sentiment.<sup>21</sup>

The literature review will examine anti-Muslim sentiment after 9/11 including the

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history. While some post 9/11 impacted communities remain largely invisible in the literature as a result of exclusion of their voices, the researcher hypothesized that the repercussions of the 2016 US Presidential Election may also impact such groups and thus, initially pursued the pilot study with this in mind.

<sup>21</sup> International students are enrolled in higher education institutions, usually on a temporary student visa, are sometimes non-native English speakers (Andrade, 2006) but can also receive visas for academic study in the US (F-1), vocational study (M-1) and cultural exchange (J-1).

impact of violence on the Muslim community, the racialization of religion, gendered aspects of Islamophobia, the intersectional nature of gendered and racialized religious - based discrimination, the status of minority groups during the Trump Era, as well as an examination of the Black Muslim experience. Finally, literature examining Muslim students' experiences will be explored. The sections that follow will introduce the theoretical framework that informs this study (intersectionality), the significance of the research, and an overview of the dissertation.

### **Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality**

Intersectionality demonstrates the complex effects of multiple axes of difference that intersect across time and contextual space as various social systems, such as gender, race/ethnicity, class, age, and citizenship status, interlock simultaneously to shape experiences and provides a framework to better understand the inequality among groups along multiple dimensions (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw et al 1995; Collins, 1990; Brah & Phoenix, 2004; McCall, 2005; Clarke & McCall, 2013). The intersectional feminist framework acknowledges various interlocking inequalities through the 'matrix of domination,' a power hierarchy that describes individuals as situated according to difference (Collins, 1990), and demonstrates that there is an inter-relation between social locations including gender, race/ethnicity, and class. Intersectionality acknowledges that

lived experiences vary within social structures but that individuals also respond with agency (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Within these interlocking social systems, both advantage and privilege simultaneously result as no categories are mutually exclusive. Across varying domains of difference, a plethora of experiences and understandings of the world emerges. Intersectionality is essentially the notion that systems of oppression are linked in an interwoven system where various social identities inform one another.

In this regard, the Muslim experience is not universal but varies by gender, race/ethnicity, citizenship status, origin country and so forth. Intersectionality can therefore inform both gender and race/ethnicity-based research by accounting for experiences among persons at subordinate intersecting points. Crenshaw (1989) initially utilizes this theory to examine the experiences of Black women; in this case, it can simultaneously be used to consider the experiences of Black Muslim women, including immigrants, and other marginalized racial/ethnic groups at various intersections. This framework will allow an examination of differences within and across various social identities among Muslims including various gender identities, diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds, across multiple citizenship statuses (including international students, immigrant permanent resident green card holders, naturalized citizens, born-US citizens etc.) and across various class and age groups. This study, although exploratory in relation to historical circumstances, allows a recentered focus on the complexity of the Muslim experience in the US in regard to the changing relation of inequality (most notably seen

post-9/11 and again, after the 2016 Presidential Election), and focuses on the range of diversity apparent within the categorization of ‘Muslim’, as well as provides a focus on neglected intersections such as the experiences of Muslims who were too young to experience the aftermath of 9/11 Islamophobia, but became more susceptible to increasing anti-Muslim sentiment in 2016-2017.

Muslim identity in the US has become a complex site where gender, race/ethnicity, and citizenship status, along with religion take center stage for Muslim women (Mir, 2011). Acknowledging the overlapping categories via an intersectional framework allows subtle differences within social categories across a particular group to be closely observed. Intersectionality also captures the multiple variegated identities of students already marginalized by gender, race/ethnicity, religion and even status as international or immigrant (or even first-generation for some domestic students). An in-depth analysis of how social identities within this population differ and interact can shed light on the diverse experiences of Muslim students.

While some intersectional studies in the US acknowledge structures of race, gender, religion and citizenship in relation to state policies and everyday acts of violence, few focus specifically on anti-Muslim racism. Some studies construct racial/ethnic categorization of Muslim as ‘Arab-Middle-Eastern-Muslim’ and therefore, disregards other groups, including, “Arabs who do not identify as Muslims; Middle Easterners who do not identify as Arabs; South Asians who do not identify as Arabs, Middle Easterners

or Muslims; Latino/as who have been mistaken for Arabs etc.” (Naber, 2006). However, scholars argue that the ‘War on Terror’ has had race making implications for Muslims and South Asians (Huq & Miller, 2008; Selod, 2015; Singh, 2013;), as well as for individuals who are ‘perceived to be Muslim’ (Sekhon, 2003). The specificity of attributing anti-Muslim violence to specifically ‘Arab or Middle Eastern’ people excludes other Muslims across race, ethnicity and national origin. Furthermore, this type of categorization minimizes the racial consequences behind the notion of the ‘Muslim threat’ by marginalizing its impact across gender, race/ethnicity and nationality. Additionally, it undermines the experiences of diverse Muslim people and communities by rendering victimization of non-Arab Muslims, and those perceived as such (Singh, 2015; Sekhon, 2003) invisible, even while subjected to discrimination. Because of this, it is critical to examine perspectives across axes of difference.

### **Significance of the Research**

This project contributes to an intersectional understanding of the experiences of a diverse under-studied racial/ethnic religious group on campus while fostering a better understanding of anti-Muslim sentiment on and off-campus in the US. Centering the views and perceptions of Muslim people at multiple intersections to gain greater insight into how they perceive and deal with incidents of discrimination, how the changing social and political climate impacts their everyday experience at American universities,

and how gendered violence reshapes Muslim women's experiences remains critical during times of societal unrest.

This study was informed by the specific time period in which data was collected, coinciding with a surge of Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric, as well as a spike in bias incidents against marginalized groups. In this study, I demonstrate how violence against Muslim women, specifically, gendered Islamophobia, is exacerbated by social intolerance and acceptability of prejudice that seems to have normalized discriminatory experiences including verbal assaults and actual physical violence. While the impact of specific policies (such as the Travel Ban/Muslim Ban) can be measured more broadly in society, the implications of gender-based violence and racism remain invisible as a result of marginalization of impacted groups, unreported incidents, and a social climate in many ways normalizes hatred of Othered populations. This dissertation contributes to knowledge surrounding the racialization of Muslims related to the risks associated with revealing one's identity given societal prejudices including Islamophobia, xenophobia, and anti-Black racism.

This project is also significant as it contributes to policy initiatives related to gender-based violence and inclusivity on campus. The expectation to reported perceived crimes and engage in formal help-seeking behaviors is deterred by a lack of mechanisms to report religious-based offenses that is only exacerbated by common perceptions of violence against Muslims as normal. This study contributes to theoretical

understandings of multi-layered forms of racism that must be explored under the lens of intersectionality and racialization in order to fully understand the lived experiences of marginalized groups. Beyond fostering dialogue and appreciating difference, incidents on campus have a social impact on all students and are reflective of larger societal issues. Examining student experiences provides a unique opportunity in terms of fostering diversity to benefit all students, expanding counseling and victim-oriented support services, while shedding light on issues that are not widely discussed but impacts safety, acceptance, and tolerance. Finally, recommendations for equitable diversity practices in this study are student-informed, thus contributing to a model of inclusivity that is based on centering the population being served. Overall, this study adds to the literature regarding Islamophobia, bias incidents on college campuses, and gender-based violence, as well as a framework to begin to explore the diverse experiences of Muslim-adjacent communities.

### **Overview of the Dissertation**

This unique research project examines the perspectives of a marginalized group during a tumultuous period for members of the group with differing social identities. Much of the discussion on Islamophobic bias incidents involves Muslim immigrants, Arab American or South Asian Muslim communities in light of 9/11 and the War on Terror. This study specifically seeks to understand the impact how Muslim students are

making sense of discrimination during the Trump Era given their varying social locations. To capture the diverse Muslim experience during this time, it is important to examine a new generation impacted by post 9/11 Islamophobia that has been exacerbated in recent years as a result of anti-immigrant biases. This research demonstrates ways in which Muslim minorities are impacted both on campus and more broadly, in public spaces, where compounded violence reshapes how they navigate, resist, and protect themselves. This research also has implications for understanding changing multidimensional effects of racial identity, impact of discrimination, and explores how minority students are making sense of their experiences and navigating intersectional identities after the 2016 Presidential Election (Trump Era), a time that may be exacerbating their fears and concerns about their Muslim identity in the US. Furthermore, this study examines how racialized notions of Muslim student identity reshapes their experiences related to Islamophobia, xenophobia, and anti-Black racism in on and off campus spaces, as well as techniques utilized to manage discrimination. This study builds on theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and racialization of Muslims. The dissertation's structure provides an exploratory analysis and in-depth examination of a population that remains largely invisible in discussions of diversity and inclusion in higher education. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature that informed the structure of this study. The Literature Review addresses Islamophobia after 9/11, the impact on Muslim communities, the racialization of Islam, the specific impact

on Muslim women, the intersections of gender, race, and religious identity, the significance of the Trump Era, and finally, the Black Muslim experience, with a specific focus on student identity. Chapter 3 includes the qualitative research methodology utilized for this study including the research context and settings, population specifics, data collection processes, management, and analysis. Chapter 4 provides an overview of gender-based violence in public spaces for Muslim women in recent years. Chapter 5 examines experiences of prejudice and racial discrimination on campus for Muslim students. This includes specific findings related to graduate and undergraduate concerns, intra and inter gender differences, institutional hypervisibility and invisibility, perceptions of racial intolerance including the impact of microaggressions on retention, as well as the impact of tokenism on students' emotional well-being. Chapter 6 proposes a major theoretical contribution of the study, *Twice Racialized Intersectionality*, that suggests an examination of Black Muslim women's experiences must be explored through traditionally accepted categorizations of race, including their own self-identification, as well as racialization linked to religious identity, and social perceptions of race linked to Muslim identity as immigrant, Other, and foreign. Themes explored in Chapters 4, and 5, as well as the significance of the theoretical contribution of Chapter 6, and the implications for future research are discussed in the conclusion, Chapter 7.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Post 9/11 Islamophobia**

In order to understand the contemporary Muslim experience today, it is important to understand a historically similar context: post 9/11 Islamophobia. Muslims and other racial/ethnic minority groups perceived as an 'othered threat' in the US experienced an increase in hate crimes after the events of September 11, 2001 (FBI, 2005). According to the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), Muslims reported discrimination up to eight months after 9/11 which included FBI raids of religious organizations (CAIR, 2005), damages to mosques, vandalism to Muslim owned businesses, racial profiling (both on the streets and at airports), verbal/physical assaults, and even murder of those 'appearing to be Muslim' (Sekhon, 2003). In the aftermath of 9/11, gendered and racialized perceptions of Muslims resulted in various civil rights issues within American society. Similarly, various non-Muslim racial/ethnic minority and diaspora communities were impacted by surveillance and discrimination with over 1,700 acts of hate violence committed towards those 'appearing to be of Arab/South Asian descent' after September

11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (Sekhon, 2003; Serhan, 2013). At the community level, Arab Detroit post-9/11 experienced a crisis of citizenship, similar to what has been documented in other predominantly Muslim enclaves across the US (Serhan, 2013; Byng, 2007). Yet, little research has been done within communities that have been altered by overt suspicion linked to clothing, changing government policies, restrictive immigration regulations (including mass deportations), increased scrutiny by law enforcement officials (such as surveillance of mosques and immigrant communities) (Nessen; 2014; Moynihan, 2016) and the reinforcement of citizen scrutiny with campaigns like ‘If you see something, say something’ (dhs.gov, 2016), that have resulted in anti-Muslim backlash linked to bias crimes and hate speech.

Aggressive tactics after 9/11, including random home visits by law enforcement, civil rights abuses (including unlawful detainment) and the overall increased surveillance of Muslim ethnic enclave communities have left an enduring legacy for Muslim Americans (Naber, 2006). The backlash against Muslims has included South Asians, African Americans, Middle Easterners and Africans and people perceived to be Muslims such as Sikhs, Latinos and other communities who are all lumped together and perceived as ‘outsiders’ because of phenotypical characteristics (Bhatia, 2006; The Sikh Coalition, 2014; Jorawar, 2011; Sekhon, 2003; Serhan, 2013; Mishra, 2013). This backlash highlights the impact of anti-Muslim rhetoric and collective discrimination that plays out in personal, political and social spaces (Mir, 2011). Furthermore, Muslims in the US

have also been victimized by surveillance triggered by both gendered/ethnic dress and by public scrutiny which has altered the lived experiences of the community (Finn, 2011). Citizen surveillance based on cultural and physical attributes, including perceived race/ethnicity and cultural/religious clothing such as wearing a hijab, engenders suspicion (Finn, 2011). To some, identification with Islam has also become a signifier of the rejection of American values (Ahmed, 2000). The discriminatory gaze has shifted to ordinary citizens and has constructed a new form of racial subjugation in the US that impacts already marginalized groups as they are marked by discriminatory and disciplinary levels of surveillance by the public in social spaces (Finn, 2011).

Similar to post 9/11, hate crimes against various groups increased in 2016, immediately after the 2016 US Presidential Election, including a spike in attacks against Muslims (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). The next section focuses on the impact of 9/11 on the Muslim community in the US.

### **Muslim Communities in the Aftermath of 9/11**

In addition to violence, discrimination and financial issues, Muslims also encountered personal, cultural and emotional stress after 9/11. According to findings from the Detroit Arab American Study<sup>22</sup>, negative emotions related to the emotional

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<sup>22</sup> The Detroit Arab American Study (DAAS), built on the 203 Detroit Area Study (n=500) and examined the impact of September 11<sup>th</sup> on Arab Americans (n=1,000) in the Detroit metropolitan area. DAAS included questions pertaining

stress and discrimination Arab-Americans endured after 9/11 contributed to mental health issues within the population (Padela & Heisler, 2010). The study, a first of its kind, suggested that depression, stress disorders and anxiety emerged from a sense of loss of control attributed to the stress of being discriminated against (Padela et al, 2010). Various studies recognize that violence and discrimination against groups appearing to be Muslim increased post 9/11, however, the impact on specific populations and their personal experiences remains largely unaccounted for. Muslim people's sense of belonging to their communities and to the US as a homeland, have yet to still be fully examined (Byng, 2007; Bryan, 2007). The social effects of September 11<sup>th</sup> are profound, and the scrutiny endured by Muslims across the US are not fully documented. For example, the FBI and local law enforcement officials questioning and arresting of hundreds of Arab men, raiding businesses and homes and surveying local mosques in Jersey City, New Jersey is partially conveyed in the literature (Bryan, 2007) however, many other immigrant communities, Muslim and perceived to be as such, remain marginally represented in the literature. Additionally, Muslims and their interaction with American life changed; while some became more traditional (covering for women, studying the Qur'an closely, and a sense of responsibility towards representing the true

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to intercultural relationships and community needs, while addressing issues regarding religious participation, political activism, quality of social/political institutions in the area and interactions with people outside of respondents' racial/ethnic or cultural group (ICPSR, 2017).

meaning of Islam), others ceased to wear Islamic dress and refrained from mosque participation, largely in part due to their citizenship status (Bryan, 2007).

Furthermore, the increase in anti-Muslim state policies produced a context of fear where racial/ethnic minorities and immigrant communities became representative of the ‘Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim’ (Naber, 2006). Post 9/11 policies (including the Patriot Act) along with increased border protection, reinforced notions of ‘otherness’ related to cultural backwardness and notions of the oppressed Muslim women who sought liberation (Naber, 2006), while men were viewed as inherently violent and potential terrorists. These discourses have legitimized racism against communities perceived to be Arab, Middle Eastern and Muslim. Additionally, while the FBI targeted non-citizens, naturalized immigrants and US-born citizens (Naber, 2006), Muslim women also endured surveillance, were detained and deported. However, the literature largely omits the impact of deportations and detainments on women who may have lost male family members as a result of changing policies. Along with the devastation of the Muslim family, local, intimidation and harassment by the FBI in the form of random house visits to ethnic neighborhoods (without warrants) intruded on citizens’ rights. In addition, Muslim residents of some ethnic communities were followed and detained, with some held indefinitely without charges resulting in cases of missing persons while many others were later deported while family and friends were denied information pertaining to their relatives’ whereabouts (Naber, 2006). Lawyers, scholars and activists note that the

backlash against Arabs, Middle Easterners, Muslims and South Asians are similar to historical racial struggles in the US, particularly Japanese internment and mass African American incarceration in terms of facing collective punishment in one's homeland.

The next section examines the racialization of Muslims in order to provide context for understanding the modern Muslim experience in the US.

### **Racialization of Muslims**

Race is complex and includes a variety of intersecting factors that contribute to the racialization of groups including, but not limited to, language, clothing, nation of origin and religion (Selod, 2015). Furthermore, the racialization of Muslims has shifted over time as a result of anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia (Selod, 2015). The 'racialization of religious identity' began after 9/11 as a process in which diverse groups of non-Christian, non-white people were grouped together, in most cases, Muslim, Sikh, Arab and South Asian people, resulting in a racial construction of 'apparently Muslim'<sup>23</sup> (Singh, 2013; Singh, 2015). Along with the immediate increase in Islamophobia after 9/11, negative opinions of Muslims in the US have persistently worsened over time.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> This categorization includes most 'brown bodies' including turban-wearing Sikhs, women who veil, men with facial hair and encompasses individuals across ethnicity and nationality regardless of whether a person is a practitioner of Islam. Therefore, the appearance of being Muslim results in various groups being part of the 'Muslim other' (Singh, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Brookings indicates that Americans view Islam unfavorably compared to "Muslim people" with 61 percent of American expressing unfavorable views of Islam consistently in 2011 and 2015 (Telhami, 2015). Gallup polls indicated

Some scholars (Selod, 2015; Singh, 2013) argue that post-9/11 society requires an examination of Muslim experiences as racialized<sup>25</sup> in order to adequately reflect political, cultural, economic and social contexts, as well as to acknowledge the fluidity of race. Processes of racialization emerge from Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation framework that is defined as "sociohistorical processes through which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" however, the racialization of Muslims from a theoretical perspective continues to be understudied (Garner & Selod, 2015). Additionally, gender remains excluded from understanding processes of racialization while the black and white binary sometimes excludes the racialized experiences of immigrants (Selod, 2015). Furthermore, the Muslim experience with racism has to be understood within the context of both 9/11 and the War on Terror because of increased discrimination and media portrayals of Muslims as 'other', 'violent' and 'terrorists'. In many ways, the Muslim religious identity has become synonymous with notions of a 'threat to national security', a racialization process that has resulted in increased

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that Muslims do not feel respected in the West with Islamophobic policies emerging in some nations (including France and Switzerland). According to the Center for American Progress, promotion of misinformation leads to further prejudice and discrimination of Muslims in the US (Ali, Clifton, Duss, Fang, Keyes & Shakir, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Since 9/11, various scholars have described the experiences of Arabs (usually racially classified as white) as racialized as Muslim (Bayoumi, 2006; Cainkar, 2008; Hassan, 2002; Jamal 2008, Naber, 2008) and arguing that this has resulted in Arabs no longer enjoying 'white privileges' (Alsutany; 2008; Cainkar 2009). The conflation of Arab and Muslim in analyses have made it difficult to specifically capture how racialization occurs while religion/ethnicity have also been used interchangeably (Selod, 2015). Specific factors like religious identity contribute to racialization and some argue that this is unique because Arab and South Asian Muslims are usually categorized as white/Asian in the US and are essentially losing privilege through racial classification (Selod, 2015).

surveillance of Muslim bodies in public spaces and a denial of citizenship privileges (Selod, 2015).

Because the concept of race shifts over time, different groups, across racial and ethnic identity, experience and understand racism in different ways. Furthermore, notions of Islamophobia emphasize that other groups, including non-Muslims, can be racialized as such because of physical features (including skin color, ethnic clothing, etc.). Therefore, societal perceptions of brown bodies as ‘foreign’ and ‘other’ result in the changing racialization of anti-Muslim sentiment in the US where ‘Islamophobia’, once solely directed at practitioners of Islam, has expanded to include other groups such as Hindus and Sikhs (Singh, 2015).

The social construction of Muslims as terrorist enemies, paired with perceived security threats, both internationally and in the domestic landscape, has contributed to the racialization of religion that has hindered assimilation as groups are viewed as ‘foreigners’ resulting in limited access to resources and ultimately, citizenship (Selod, 2015). The contextual nature of racialization also means that Muslims, and other non-Islamic brown-skinned people (Singh, 2015) are experiencing more discrimination because of their religious identity today, than in the past (Selod, 2015), and arguably more so, after the 2016 Presidential Election. Overall, ‘Muslim’ is not being defined as a new racial category, however, it is important to note that religious identity has taken on

racial meanings that result in associating Muslim bodies with ideas of violence that lead to more experiences of prejudice (Selod, 2015).

The next section examines differences across the Muslim experience with a specific focus on women's hypervisibility and experiences of perceived discrimination and violence after 9/11.

### **The Impact of 9/11 on Muslim Women**

The experiences of Muslim men and women have been historically different especially in relation to violence, visibility, deportations and detainment. In the aftermath of 9/11, approximately 7,000 men were deported and over 500 Muslim men (most of them Arab) were interviewed by law enforcement, with the FBI primarily targeting working class men that were non-citizens, naturalized immigrants and US-born citizens (Naber, 2006). While men were targeted by more formal legal mechanisms, women were more often victimized by societal perceptions of Muslims and experienced bias in public life, including vulnerability to violence yet, their experiences were initially under-studied.

Muslim religious identity has resulted in the homogenization of diverse groups into one category, leaving various racial/ethnic groups susceptible to negative treatment as a result of religious markers (Mir, 2014; Joshi 2006). In addition, gendered Muslim identity in the US has also resulted in hypervisibility and increased vulnerability for

women (Eisenstein, 2006; Allen, 2015; Franks, 2000; Finn, 2011; Mir, 2011; Perry 2014). The hijab, the Muslim headscarf worn by women, is the second highest ‘trigger’ of discrimination after ethnicity and religion (CAIR, 2005) yet, the focus on ethnic hatred sometimes renders the impact of gendered violence against Muslim women as invisible and thus, normalized (Eisenstein, 2006). Addressing the politicized and racialized surveillance of South Asian and Middle Eastern women, Finn (2011) notes that Muslim women in the United States now endure a form of racialized subjectivity. Racial subjugation and discrimination of women after 9/11 have altered the lived experiences of women racialized as Muslim<sup>26</sup>. While women in general are not particularly vulnerable to hate crime, within the Muslim community, women and girls are extremely at risk for violence because of their perceived visible religious status (Perry, 2014). Muslim women’s risks are associated with their choice to cover their hair and body (with veiling widely discussed in current literature) (Gregory, 2015; Mir, 2011; Ameen, 2012; Macias, 2016; Salman, 2015; Karandish, 2014; Maruoka, 2009), thus making women, easily identifiable as Muslim and increasing their visibility and vulnerability after 9/11. Islamic dress code (Haddad, 2007) symbolizes modesty and identifies Muslim women from non-Muslims thereby, creating an easily recognizable target for hate crimes, discrimination, harassment and violence against women (Perry, 2014). The intersectional subjectivity of

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<sup>26</sup> White Muslim women have also noted that Islam racializes their identities in unique ways that other religious communities do not experience (Chaudhry, 2013).

gender, religion, race/ethnicity, along with perceptions of ‘foreignness’, complicates patterns of violence (Perry, 2014).

Perry argues that there are six characteristics that are unique to the female Islamic experience in the West:

- gendered status in relation to discriminatory access to education, health and social resources
- cultural identity as shaped by structural and cultural constraints through socialization and patriarchy (see also Essers & Benschop, 2009)
- immigrant and minority status that leads to economic and social marginalization
- language barriers that further contribute to a loss of power (see also Predelli, 2004) religious identity resulting in separation from men and wider society
- Islamic dress code that symbolizes modesty and identifies women from non-Muslims thereby, creating an easily recognizable target for hate crimes, discrimination and violence of bodily integrity (See also Haddad, 2007)

The narratives surrounding Muslim women post-9/11 have primarily centered on gendered violence as an ‘over there’ issue or one within the Muslim family, including focus on honor-based violence (Wright, 2007), rather than the impact of external violence from communities and society to Muslim women. Some scholars have argued that it is time to move away from private violence and the discourse surrounding oppression and patriarchy to adequately acknowledge public violence against Muslim women by larger

society including racism and sexism (Perry, 2014). In this regard, gendered violence has taken on a unique form in relation to Muslim women who are susceptible to victimization as a result of their perceived gender, racial/ethnic and religious identities that construe them as ‘foreign’.

Additionally, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 essentially reshaped Muslim American women’s gendered performances at the personal, political, social and symbolic level in order to achieve survival (Mir, 2011). Within immigrant communities, Muslim women are the first to be identified as Islamic through their clothing thus creating fear and pity as they are hyper-feminized as helpless and immobile yet, are still associated with ideas surrounding terrorism (Mir, 2011). In Mir’s (2011) post 9/11 study of Muslim women on college campuses in the Washington, DC area, women who chose to not wear hijabs embraced invisibility as a form of safety through trying to pass as non-Muslim in order to be accepted by mainstream society and viewed the decision as one that would aid in their goals of achieving change and tolerance. Muslim college students noted that visibility and silence was no longer an option during times of high anti-Muslim sentiment yet acknowledged changing planned career paths as they felt they would not be welcome in politics, diplomacy or government jobs (Mir, 2011). Further studies indicate that Muslim women’s choice to veil in the aftermath of 9/11 has been utilized as a form of resistance that engaged with larger identity movements across the globe and has also served as a political tool to counter anti-Islamic sentiment in the West (Maruoka, 2007). Research

shows that Muslim women also utilized hybrid identities in the aftermath of 9/11 to subvert and transgress dominant narratives that defined what being a Muslim woman meant (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010). While there is an understanding of the impact of 9/11 on college aged Muslim women, it can be argued that the rise in Islamophobia may also have impacted a new generation of Muslims in the US, as well as individuals perceived to be Muslim.

Mir (2011) argues that American citizenship for Muslims requires assimilation (Selod, 2015) and is harmful to cultural identities of being Muslim, ethnic, transnational and immigrant (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Women also recognized the decline of the American dream post-9/11 as Muslims faded into hiding, disguised themselves and began to fear any association with Islam or other Muslims (Mir, 2011). Some women resided in Muslim ethnic enclaves, largely socializing with fellow Muslims while others attempted to maintain broader relationships with mainstream American society, while others believed that isolation was a political issue that embodied a sense of cultural backwardness (Mir, 2011). In this way, ethnic enclaves are binary spaces where minority cultural behavior is one of assimilation or isolation. For Muslims in America to successfully integrate in a post-9/11 society, the process requires disguising oneself as less religious, less cultural, and less ethnic. Resistance to these de-identifiers results in one having a 'loud identity' that makes it difficult to participate in mainstream society and belong to the nation-state (Mir, 2011).

Overall, Muslim women note that post-9/11 American society creates a sense of conflict between being Muslim and being American as contemporary discourse defines Muslim-American and de-Americanizes the Muslim identity. Muslim identity becomes a complex site where culture religion, class, gender, nationality, citizenship and sexuality intersect while being a woman and a Muslim American takes center stage (Mir, 2011). Furthermore, Muslim women endure racialized subjectivity in the US as a result of surveillance by broader society (Finn, 2011).

The next section of the literature review examines the impact of gendered and racialized identity on the Muslim experience for women after 9/11.

### **Gender, Race and Religious Identity**

Post-9/11 racism is a recurring process that constructed the ‘other’ (in this case, Muslims), through racial exclusion during crises. Racial stigmatization in the aftermath of social conflict results in multiple forms of power and control seen simultaneously through a multiplicity of lenses including gender, race/ethnicity, religion and citizenship status (Naber, 2006) (including perceived status as foreign). The post 9/11 ‘war on terror’ was not solely an international phenomenon as local communities also endured the impact. Individuals with Arab, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and generally Muslim identity markers (including ethnic dress<sup>27</sup>), were subjected to increased threats of

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<sup>27</sup> Brown, Awad, Preas, Allen, Kenney, Roberts, & Lusk, (2013) have found that cues of foreignness such

harassment, intimidation and violence with local police sometimes refusing to document the attacks due to a lack of evidence (Naber, 2006).<sup>28</sup>

Citizen surveillance has resulted in various changes in the public lives of brown bodies in the US. For women of South Asian descent, surveillance has altered experiences of race and gender in the US (Finn, 2011). Beyond associating ‘brown communities’ with ideas of terrorism, and formal surveillance through the state such as airport security, at immigration centers, or through neighborhood patrols, South Asians have also endured citizen surveillance by those outside of official authority structures (Finn, 2011). Finn’s (2011) sample of South Asian college women’s accounts of citizen surveillance depict a consistent awareness of a racial element of ‘othering’. Finn (2011) argues that South Asian women are constructed as potentially dangerous terrorists and ultimately, appear as an opposition to ‘whiteness’ and ‘Americanness’. The author notes that practices of social surveillance inscribe borders of racial subjectivity within the US and implicates bodily cultural attributes such as race/ethnicity, beards, and cultural artifacts (hijab, dress, etc.) that engender suspicion (Finn, 2011). As described above, research shows that, embracing ethnic markers in mainstream America sends the message

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as ethnic dress (specifically, compared to Western clothing) increases prejudiced perceptions of men compared to phenotype in the form of skin complexion and Middle Eastern names.

<sup>28</sup> A recent Presidential Plenary on Islamophobia in Action by Louise Cainkar at the 80th Annual Meeting of the Southern Sociological Society: Diversities: Inclusion, Equality and Resistance noted that after the 2016 Presidential Election in the US that the issue of documenting bias incidents including stalking and violence against Muslim women were rarely taken seriously by law enforcement.

that one has separated from the ‘American’ way of life thereby, invoking further suspicion that bears social consequences (Finn, 2011; Mir, 2011). Surveillance has thus prompted some women to embrace racial ambiguity, such as lighter skin as a marker for being non-South Asian to avoid cultural wear and to claim Indian ancestry instead of embracing Muslim heritage (Mir, 2011). Citizens who scrutinize othered bodies therefore have clues linked to South Asians’ commitment to the nation (Ahmed, 2000), while symbolic identification with Islam denotes someone who is rejecting America.

Finn’s discussions with South Asian women illustrate how counter-terrorism policies and the political context of post-9/11 society has impacted South Asian American identity in the US. Power and the surveillant gaze (Finn, 2011) has shifted to ordinary citizens who lack authoritative power while government encouraged surveillance has constructed a new form of racial subjugation on US soil that impacts already marginalized women. Displaying cultural artifacts has become a marker that could potentially incite ‘discriminatory, disciplinary and disproportionate levels of surveillance in public places’ (Finn, 2011). Finn (2011) argues that shared experiences of surveillance and exclusion within America could foster unification among disparate religious, national and ethnic/regional groups that are categorized as South Asian however, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Black/African, and other Muslim groups are rarely studied simultaneously and therefore, the Muslim experience across racial/ethnic and national identity remains somewhat unaccounted for.

The experiences of Muslim women remain critical to understandings surrounding gendered racism in 2016 and beyond not just because of the similarities, but also the surge in Islamophobia incidents in recent years mimics and exceeds the level of violence documented against Muslims in the months after 9/11 (SAALT, 2018). The next section sheds light on the precarious predicament of the intersections of gender, perceived racial/ethnic, religious, and immigrant identity, in relation to women's experiences of harassment in public spaces as a result of surveillance.

The next section draws parallels between the post 9/11 literature to more recent scholarly literature on the intersections of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim bias leading up to and after the 2016 US Presidential Election.

### **Racial/Ethnic, Religious, & Immigrant Minorities in the Trump Era**

Recent studies indicate that the 2016 US Presidential election was characterized by prejudice towards marginalized groups that were targeted by political rhetoric and campaign slogans that promoted a climate of acceptable prejudice that resulted in an increase in bias incidents (Crandall, Miller, & White, 2018). Some scholars note that the campaign of Donald J. Trump promoted xenophobia<sup>29</sup> such as the deportation of all

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<sup>29</sup> Beyond raising fears surrounding xenophobia, The Trump Effect has also had a gendered impact as seen with the women's march, which included over three million women nationally, protesting in opposition to perceptions of sexist statements, anti-immigrant policies, and Islamophobia (Lawless & Fox, 2018). This also resulted in a surge of donations, recruitment of more women to political campaigns and running for office thus, The Trump Effect reshaped the political landscape for a small group of Democratic women in 2018 via channeling negative reactions into political engagement, activism, and representation (Lawless & Fox, 2018).

undocumented immigrants, rescinding Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), denial of birthright citizenship to children born to undocumented immigrant parents, support for building a wall along the US-Mexico border, and tripling U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers (Nienhuser & Oshio, 2018). Reports during this time by the Southern Poverty Law Center described the impact of this rhetoric on people of color as “The Trump Effect” (Costello, 2016; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). This phenomenon addressed the impact of discriminatory rhetoric as having implications for marginalized groups. “The Trump Effect” or the period colloquially known as the Trump Era resulted in intensified verbal harassment of immigrants (including slurs and derogatory language), increased anxiety and fears related to separation and deportation, and emboldened expressions of politicized bullying and fear (Nienhuser & Oshio, 2018; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). These reports initially focused on schools however, the evidence of political rhetoric and policies impacting marginalized groups has been captured in recent studies that find an increase in fear related trauma, elevated levels of discrimination, increased vigilance among groups uncertain about their futures given the hostile political climate, and increased advocacy efforts (Nienhuser & Oshio, 2018).

Additionally, scholars indicate that the Trump Era magnified societal divisions

that reignited outrage linked to inequality (Shapiro & Fogel, 2019). On January 27, 2017, days into the new administration's presidency, Executive Order No. 13769, known as the "Travel Ban" or "Muslim Ban", was issued under the guise as a mechanism to preserve national security<sup>30</sup>. It subsequently banning foreign nationals from seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States for ninety days, including visa and green card holders, as well as indefinite suspension of Syrian refugees (Ayoub & Beydoun, 2017). The Muslim Ban upheld Islamophobic American policy and had an impact on Muslim immigrants and Muslim Americans, while also exacerbating fear within the population (Ayoub & Beydoun, 2017).

According to the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, in the days after, over 1,000 individuals primarily from Iran, Iraq, and Syria contacted the organization 24 hours a day with fears and concerns however, the most common inquiries were from students abroad who were unable to return to their programs of study; others included travelers, mainly green card holders (US Permanent Residents) returning to the US for special circumstances including weddings, funerals and medical treatment, and finally, Muslim American citizens who feared they would not be permitted to travel

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<sup>30</sup> The policy was framed as a counterterrorism measure to preserve national security however, opponents pointed out the discriminatory nature of it, and thus, it was challenged by civil society organizations in federal court via multiple lawsuits. On February 3, 2017, a federal court in the state of Washington issued a national temporary restraining order on the majority of the ban, asserting that it violated the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Robart, [2017](#)). Legal challenges ultimately forced a revision of the policy.

internationally anymore (Ayoub & Beydoun, 2017). Given the immediate human impact on the Muslim community, scholars argue that "Make America Great Again" was a vision for the country that further demonized Islam<sup>31</sup>, was further supported by campaign rhetoric that included statements from Trump such as "*I think Islam hates us*" and calling for a "*total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States*", which ultimately resulted in the Muslim Ban<sup>32</sup>.

While the Muslim Ban may have had a disproportionate impact on Muslim immigrants and internationals, the Muslim American community is largely composed of American citizens. Furthermore, Black Muslims including Somali and Sudanese immigrants were impacted by the Muslim Ban (Ayoub & Beydoun, 2017). Ayoub & Beydoun recount the experience of Nisrin El Amin, a Sudanese graduate student at Stanford University who was detained at New York City's John F. Kennedy Airport and additionally handcuffed. Her treatment was documented as representative of increasing Islamophobia in the US along with her immigrant outsider status, and her identity as a

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<sup>31</sup> The supreme Court reinstated the second version of the Muslim Ban on June 26, 2017, which impacted nations from six Muslim-majority states (Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen)

<sup>32</sup> Ayoub & Beydoun (2017) argue that anti-Muslim chanting, paraphernalia worn by Trump supporters, the ejection of Muslims rallies employed a campaign strategy of political Islamophobia to mobilize voters. This included conflating refugees with the Islamic State, calling for increased scrutiny including "extreme vetting" of Muslim immigrants, and Muslim Ban rhetoric, with the latter being supported by both Republicans and Democrats to some extent. In addition, Trump also promoted expanding counter radicalization surveillance programs that began under Obama in 2011, bringing back the "Muslim registry" (NSEERS) and altogether functioned as a mechanism to support state-sanctioned Islamophobia and xenophobia.

person of African descent that was further criminalized. The suspicion she faced was a result of both her racial and religious identity but also linked to her gender. Furthermore, the marginalization of Black Muslim experiences after the implementation of the Muslim Ban focused coverage on Arab and Iranian Muslims (Ayoub & Beydoun, 2017), thus, continuing to promote racialized ideas of who or what a Muslim is in American society (Love, 2017).

Overall, the 2016 US Presidential Election had a sweeping effect on marginalized groups in various ways including via xenophobia, Islamophobia, and anti-Black racism. As noted, this also had an impact on students and was further documented with the decline in international students from South East Asian Countries (India) and Saudi Arabia. Additionally, students reported concerns about the visa application process, denials, delays and the social and political environment. Furthermore, it is important to note that while some reports indicate an increase in international student enrollment, the declines are specific to countries with larger Muslim populations including Saudi Arabia and Turkey (Redden, 2017; Jaschik, 2018). Therefore, this was a crucial time to examine the perspectives of students as universities work towards achieving goals towards more diverse and inclusive environments for all, amidst social and political circumstances that impact various marginalized groups including women, immigrants, racial/ethnic and religious minorities. The next section focuses on the specific subgroup of Muslim

students on campus.

### **Muslim Students on Campus in the US**

Some recent literature addresses the experiences of Arab Muslim women in the US post-9/11 and of the undergraduate Muslim experience on campus (Cerbo, 2010; Mir 2006; Mir, 2011; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Ali, 2014). However, other work indicates that male Muslim citizens were primarily targeted (Naber, 2006) yet, they remain somewhat excluded from studies pertaining to the Muslim experience at universities and colleges in the US, especially among graduate students. Many individuals and groups are marginalized by college culture; however, the Muslim experience is differentiated by Islamophobic sentiment in the US and remains unique and relegated to one religious' group (Mir, 2006) that has subsequently spread to others perceived as Muslim (Singh, 2013). Furthermore, Muslims (across racial/ethnic identities) have been subjected to unique threats of discrimination, surveillance, suspicion and violence including racial profiling and harassment in the US (CAIR, 2005; 2008; Cainkar, 2009; Sirin & Fine, 2008; Chaudhry, 2013).

At the same time, racial, ethnic and religious minority students, both domestic (US-based) and international (recruited from foreign nations) are an important part of diversity initiatives on college and university campuses. While there have been a plethora of studies surrounding the experiences of students on various campuses

(including historically black college/universities (HBCU), Hispanic serving institutions (HSI) and predominantly white universities (PWI), there are few studies that address international student experiences in the US and even fewer that specifically focus on Muslim students<sup>33</sup>. Among these, there remains a heavy focus on Muslim women (especially related to veiling practices post 9/11) (Gregory, 2015; Mir, 2011; Ameen, 2012; Macias, 2016; Salman, 2015; Karandish, 2014; Maruoka, 2009), with one recent study focusing on multiple marginalities (McGuire, Casanova & Davis, 2016)<sup>34</sup>, and international Middle Eastern students (Pinkerton, 2006; Schatz, 2009; Abualkhair, 2014; Johnson, 2016), with a focus on otherness and exclusion. Only a handful of studies specifically examine international Muslim graduate students, with one study conducted shortly after 9/11 that specifically addressed the socialization of Middle Eastern students in the US (Johnson, 2004), while another assessed the mental health impact of Islamophobia after 9/11 on a small sample of graduate (n=5) students (Saedi, 2012). The two remaining studies regarding Muslim graduate students focus on gendered identity, with focus on Iranian women in the Canadian academy (Hojati, 2012) and another most recently addressing Saudi women graduate students' conceptualization of ethnic identity in the US (Barth, 2016). The intersecting experiences of Muslim students

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<sup>33</sup> This also includes a few studies that specifically examine the international graduate student experience.

<sup>34</sup> McGuire, Casanova and Davis examine intersectional marginalizations through an individual narrative of one Black, female, undergraduate Muslim college student born in Saudi Arabia.

across citizenship/national background, student status, racial/ethnic and gender identity are rarely explored simultaneously but has become more important to understand in a post-9/11 society, especially after the 2016 Presidential Election.

Similar to increased discrimination against Muslims on college campuses after 9/11 (Karam, 2012), intolerance against Muslims post-election have resulted in bias crimes across the nation with 1,094 acts occurring one month after the election (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016; Eversley, 2016; Dearden, 2016) and at least 30 on college/university campuses nationwide within ten days of the election (Dreid & Najmabadi, 2016; Jaschik, 2016). These acts have also occurred on university campuses (Dickerson & Saul, 2016), eliciting fears and concerns among minority students, therefore, making it a crucial time to examine the perspectives of students given the social and political context as universities work towards achieving diversity and inclusion for all.

Additionally, racial and ethnic microaggressions, defined as verbal and non-verbal insults, both with and without intent, that convey hostile and derogatory messages (Nadal, 2008) impact the experiences of Muslims in the US. Subtle microaggressions<sup>35</sup>,

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<sup>35</sup> Everyday microaggressions are words and actions that assault or aggress a person as a result of social identities (gender, race/ethnicity, religion etc.) (Pierce, 1970; Solorzano, 1998; Sue, 2010). Microaggressions can be conscious, deliberate, intentional, and unintentional, thus the microaggressor may be unaware of the impact. These acts reflect worldviews but also hidden messages normalized by society such as sexism and racism, therefore, conveying biases of the perpetrators. The context of such incidents matter as cumulative constant acts impact victims by taking a psychological and physiological toll further exacerbated by institutional issues (Pierce, 1970; Solorzano, 1998; Sue, 2010). Deeply rooted societal inequalities such as racism and sexism are almost invisible and aggressions evolve with

including perceived discrimination in the form of negative looks, gestures and comments, (Cainkar, 2009) occur in many environments including within school settings (Albabhany, 2014). College campuses are no exception as universities continue to pursue diversity initiatives and enroll multicultural students from a variety of foreign countries, as well as recruit students from a multitude of racial/ethnic, national and religious backgrounds (Cerbo, 2010).

In addition to racialized religious identity and gendered identity in the US, international students overall also endure challenges associated with attending school in a foreign country as immigrants (Lee, 2013). In this case, they may be unfamiliar with the post-9/11 climate of the US, where Muslim religious communities have become highly scrutinized (Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013; Byng, 2004, Bryan, 2007) resulting in stigmatized identities and increased risks (Mir, 2014). International students overall are a unique population as they navigate learning a new language and culture, while simultaneously entering a different cultural context for race relations, religious

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context (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal & Esquilin, 2007). Microaggressions include microassaults (verbal and non-verbal intentional attacks such as name calling, avoidant behavior, discriminatory actions), microinsults (rude behavior or insensitivity to put down a person's racial/ethnic identity) and microinvalidation (nullifying the feelings of minorities' lived realities by minimizing the impact of the act on the victim. Microaggressions can also result in dilemmas among groups, for example, Whites believing racial equality has been achieved or minorities viewing whites as racially insensitive. Beyond microaggressors sometimes being unable to recognize perpetrating such acts, this is further complicated by the perception that racial microaggressions are minimally harmful thus, victims are viewed as overreacting or struggle to cope with responses that may make minorities appear bad thus, reinforcing stereotypes (Sue et al, 2007).

differences and gender norms that can affect their overall experience both on campus and in broader society (Andrade, 2006). Furthermore, Islam is sometimes viewed as incompatible with Western values (Mir, 2011; Finn, 2011) further complicating the experiences of international Muslim students attending American universities (Blankenhorn et al. 2005; Hunter, 1998; Huntington, 1993; Klausen, 2005; Laurence and Vaisse, 2006; Ozyurt, 2013; Roy, 2007; Saikal 2003; Wessels, 2004).

The experiences of Muslim students on campus warrants further examination as the demographics of American universities are diversifying with the increasing enrollment of international Muslim and domestic Muslim American students (Shafer, 2012). While recent studies have examined the overall Muslim experience (especially among undergraduate women and Arabs in the US), Muslim graduate students and international Muslim students have largely remained excluded from the literature. Studies on Muslim students have focused on undergraduate identity (Cerbo, 2010; Ameen, 2012; Ali, 2014; Jilani, 2015; Mir, 2011; Zimmerman, 2013) academic achievement in the face of Islamophobia (Hart, 2016; Macias, 2016), international Arab/Muslim students before and after 9/11 (Johnson, 2016; Abualkhair, 2009; McDermott-Levy, 2010; Schatz, 2009; Bavifard, 2009; Pinkerton, 2006;), perceptions of veiling on campus (Maruoka, 2009; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Salman, 2015) and womanhood (Gregory, 2015), Muslims at Catholic universities (Shafer, 2015) resilience related to stigma after 9/11 (Ghaffari 2009), college social support for Muslim Americans (Karandish, 2014), with even fewer

studies acknowledging Muslim graduate students (Hojati, 2012; Johnson 2004; Barth, 2016) and Muslims of African descent (Basford, 2009; McGuire, Casanova & Davis, 2016) and none providing comparisons of similarities and differences within the diverse Muslim student experience at American colleges and universities across both undergraduate and graduate, as well as, international and domestic student status.

The next section examines the experiences of Black Muslims in the US.

### **The Black Muslim Experience**

In addition to understanding the racialization of religion and of groups perceived to be Muslim, there are specific aspects of the Black Muslim experience that require contextualization to better understand the complex intersections that Muslim students of African descent occupy. It is estimated that 80 percent of Muslims in America are non-Arab. Other estimates suggest that the Muslim American population is around 2.6 million (with two-thirds comprised of first-generation immigrants and a third as US-born) (Pew Research Center, 2011). Some studies indicate that the Muslim population is between 4 and 6 million, with almost half being converts (predominantly African Americans) and the remainder being South Asian, Arab, African, Iranian or Turkish immigrants (Cesari, 2004; Read, 2008; Mir, 2011). Black Muslims in the US have a unique experience as a result of Islamophobia, xenophobia, and anti-Black racism that impacts both African Americans and Black immigrants (Ochieng, 2017).

Furthermore, few studies exist regarding Black Muslim students on college campuses, with most emerging in the last decade and only minimally addressing immigrant, international and domestic students, and rarely, graduate students. These studies address spirituality (Smalls, 2011), comparisons between Black immigrant and Black native (domestic) students (Massey, Mooney, Torres & Charles, 2007), African Muslim student experiences (Basford, 2009), and more recently gendered Black Muslim identity in college (Black & Williams, 2013; Harris, Haywood, and Mac, 2016). However, the double bind of facing anti-Black bias and anti-Muslim sentiment, along with other intersecting identities, such as immigrant status or gender, remains unexplored<sup>36</sup>.

### **Student Identities: Being Black or Being Muslim?**

The unique experiences of Black Muslims in the US compared to Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian Muslim students constitutes a diversity within the population that needs to be accounted for. Some scholars indicate that Black Muslims have moved towards claiming Blackness as a cultural and political identity, while moving away from

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<sup>36</sup> McGuire, Casanova and Davis examine intersectional marginalizations through an individual narrative of one Black, female, undergraduate Muslim college student born in Saudi Arabia. This study excludes the international and graduate student experience as a result of having one immigrant undergraduate participant with no comparison group for generalizability and further conclusions connected to the overall Black Muslim immigrant experience cannot be drawn without a larger sample.

religious identity (Khan, 2015) yet, this group continues to face a ‘double jeopardy’ in terms of being racialized as Black *and* as Muslim (Etman, 2016). This identity is further complicated by gender and immigrant status. Furthermore, in terms of on-campus identities, Black Muslim students have reported exclusion from Muslim student organizations (Khan, 2009) and document the pressure to choose between ‘being Muslim or being Black.’

While being Muslim on college campuses means that students may experience intolerance because of their religious identity, discrimination towards Muslims and Islam are also present in the classroom and further isolates students (Ali & Bagheri, 2009). Additionally, emerging literature has begun to address the role of student affairs professionals in terms of specific issues Muslim college students face such as hostility towards religious groups (Ali & Bagheri, 2009), while other studies build on what instructors can do to center the perspectives of marginalized Muslim students in the classroom (Niyozoy & Pluim, 2015). However, these studies result in a generalization of the Muslim student identity that lumps together a diverse group of students across gender, race/ethnicity, and national background.

While examining the perspectives of racial/ethnic minority students de-centers traditionally privileged narratives, few studies examine multiple marginalizations. To date, only one case study examines the complexity of intersectional identity through gendered, religious, immigrant, racial/ethnic identity in an educational space by

examining the narrative experiences of one Black, Muslim, immigrant woman, originally from Saudi Arabia (McGuire, Casanova & Davis, 2016). This further highlights the unique situation of students with multiple marginalized social identities (Ali, 2014; Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006) who remain understudied (Stewart & Lozano, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

In the years after 9/11, a plethora of studies emerged that focused on Muslim immigrants and Muslim Americans in the United States. These studies addressed the impact of the War on Terror on Muslim communities, the experiences of Muslim men and women, and Islamophobia in general. In regard to the Muslim student experience, studies have focused on mostly veiled Muslim women (cites), international students (with a focus on Middle Easterners or Arabs), however, international students (including non-Middle Eastern Muslims across varying racial identities), and graduate students remain understudied. Furthermore, comparative differences between undergraduate and graduate Muslim student experiences, as well as international student experiences, in relation to domestic Muslim American student experiences are not yet acknowledged. In addition, examining the experiences of Middle Eastern and South Asian Muslims in relation to African American or Black immigrant/refugee Muslims remain understudied. Given this,

I add to the literature in multiple ways by examining these student experiences<sup>37</sup> via the lens of intersectionality and racialization both on campus, as well as off campus, in light of changing times that reflect increased biases in the Trump Era, similar to the years after 9/11.

The next chapter addresses the research context and methodology, including the research settings, population specifics, data collection processes, as well as data management and analysis.

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<sup>37</sup> Only one participant in the pilot study identified as Black/African immigrant however, about half of the Black/African American participants identified as having a Black immigrant parent. None of the students in the sample identified as having refugee status and thus, this area remains understudied.

## Chapter 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes an intersectional approach to understanding the experiences of Muslim students including graduate and undergraduate, domestic and international, across gender, race/ethnicity and immigrant status, to shed light on their on-campus experiences at a predominantly white institution (hereafter, PWI) and historically black college/university (HBCU) in a Mid-Atlantic state<sup>38</sup>. To answer the research questions outlined, I conducted an open-ended pilot survey (n=7), and in-depth interviews (n=50) with 43 Muslim students at a PWI, as well as (n=7) students at an HBCU.

This chapter addresses the methodological approach and related issues pertinent to the study within populations that have been overlooked in the extant research (Ali, 2014; Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006; Stewart & Lozano, 2009; Sallee, 2010). For instance, research focused on the Muslim student experience centers veiled Muslim women (usually, undergraduates) and international students that are typically from the Middle East while inadvertently marginalizing the experiences of non-veiled Muslim women,

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<sup>38</sup> Referred to as Mid-Atlantic State University (PWI) and Mid-Atlantic State University (HBCU).

graduate students, and Muslims from other parts of the world. Thus, students at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities remain understudied (Ali, 2014; Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006; Stewart & Lozano, 2009). Due to the lack of research in this area, the sensitive nature of the subject, participants' distrust of outsiders, and respondents' hesitation to discuss violence and discrimination during a difficult social and political climate, as well as cultural and language barriers, a qualitative method was utilized to elicit rich data. An open-ended pilot study was initially utilized to determine the feasibility of the overall project. During the second phase, an in-depth, semi-structured interview guide was utilized to conduct interviews with students at the PWI and amended, as needed per IRB guidelines and in response to participant feedback. The final stage of the study included interviewing participants at a HBCU utilizing the same interview guide.

In accordance with the intersectional theoretical framework for this study, the qualitative methodological approach is rooted in feminist theory (DeVault, 1996; Harding, 1987) and supports marginalized voices in a way that centers participants while simultaneously producing rich data and reducing harm to participants. This study is guided by the voice of the participants and thus, recognizes the multidimensionality of the Muslim experience (Capous-Desyllas & Forro, 2014). This also aids in recognizing that the dominant narratives surrounding Muslim communities, students and specifically, women, particularly ideas of being oppressed and submissive, can be challenged through

humanizing participants and centers their standpoint in the research process (Shdaimah & Leon, 2018). In addition, this approach shifts from a perspective of ‘repressed others’ to engage with participants’ choices and lived experiences as a vulnerable population (Shdaimah & Leon, 2018). Therefore, in many ways, this study was informed and shaped by feminist methods and methodology.

Reflections and observations in this chapter emerged from methodological issues related to obtaining entree into various student organizations on campus, utilizing insider/outsider identity. In addition, the complexity of the researcher’s use of intersectional self-identity to build trust and facilitate participant access will be discussed in relation to subject safety and vulnerability in cross-cultural interviewing contexts. This chapter also addresses ethical methodological concerns in qualitative interviewing. Researcher reflexivity, in terms of insider/outsider status, specifically, an outsider attempting to gain insider status through engaging in solidarity with a marginalized community will be examined. First, as researcher, I will assess the impact of my social identities on the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2009), as a woman, an ambiguous person of color, and an immigrant from a lesser-known country (Trinidad), and central to the study, my identity as a non-Muslim. In some ways, my intersecting identities facilitated the research process and in other ways hindered it. In this case, researcher identity was at the core of how and why students chose to participate in the study. Being a person of color and an immigrant aided in this process as participants expressed

mistrust of outsiders. Reluctance to participate was rooted in fears of being identified as Muslim and subsequently, retaliation from the university, as well as revealing their identity to outsiders. Graduate students in particular explicitly noted that their faith in the researcher encouraged their participation as they feared backlash for engaging in research related to their own identities. Given that many of these students had lived in the US post-9/11 and were weary of the current sociopolitical climate that remains rife with Islamophobia, anti-immigrant and anti-Black sentiment, they also expressed gratitude to be heard and made visible through the study. Participants' feelings of faith, trust and being given a voice resulted in students' assumptions about the researcher that resulted in an outsider obtaining entree into the Muslim student community and subsequently, insider insight into many issues. For one, students insisted that the researcher was 'Muslim too' and questioned my lack of *hijab* or indicated they had been greeted with a *salaam* (which did not occur). Participants thus racialized the researcher in similar ways to which they had been racialized as Muslim in mainstream society and generally assumed that the interviewer was of South Asian (usually Pakistani or Indian) or Middle Eastern (specifically, Saudi Arabian) descent. During tense sociopolitical times, such as the Trump Era, where marginalized people may view their identities as under attack, this impacts interviewer and interviewee dynamics, specifically in regard to participant perceptions of the researcher as insider or outsider to the community.

While strategies were utilized to specifically 'get to know' participants instead of

‘speaking for’ them (Tillman-Healy, 2006), this resulted in various outcomes during data collection. For one, student participants expected the researcher to possess cultural knowledge, felt a sense of solidarity, confided both covert microaggressions and overt victimization including street harassment, slurs and threats, as well as physical violence. Finally, during emotional post-interview debriefings, many participants indicated feeling a sense of therapeutic release after unburdening themselves of long withheld stories. In some ways, the researcher was therefore able to ‘pass as Muslim’ and participants expressed a sense of community because of perceived empathy and solidarity. Thus, the assumptions of a vulnerable group in a cross-cultural interview setting has implications for the researcher, the researched and the overall process.

Open, supportive, and culturally sensitive interview tactics utilized in the research process can also facilitate enriched data. While participants were made aware of the researcher’s non-Muslim status and racial/ethnic identity, they also conveyed a sense of comfort because the researcher was specifically, *not* white, thus indicating that race, and perhaps perceptions of white researchers, mattered more to vulnerable participants’ sense of trust, than gender, immigrant status or being Muslim. Furthermore, being non-Muslim facilitated connections with participants who saw themselves as ‘born Muslims’ because of their family ancestry and traditions but were not necessarily faithful practitioners but rather those who abided by some cultural norms of their upbringing. In this way, researcher identity impacted and shaped participant responses and honesty as the majority

of participants noted that they would have been more careful with how they phrased certain incidents and specifically, what they reported to a white researcher. Overall, while there are ethical concerns to consider in terms of the impact of participants' assumptions about a researcher, safety, and sensitivity regarding specific types of vulnerable populations in cross-cultural settings, the issues in this chapter will be considered from an intersectional angle to provide further insight into the unique dynamic of non-white outsider researchers and racialized subjects.

The next section provides details regarding the methodological approach used in this study including pertinent information about the research setting, data collection methods, sampling, recruitment technique, and respondent characteristics for each phase of the study. Next, data management and analysis are discussed for both the pilot study and the interviews at both research sites. Data analysis software, coding procedures, and analytical strategies are also outlined. Finally, researcher reflexivity is discussed.

### **Research Setting: Site I: Mid-Atlantic State University (PWI)**

In 2017, there were an estimated 10,000 Muslim households in Mid-Atlantic State, the local setting for this research study, where many voiced concerns related to federal policies that threatened to bring back a Muslim registry<sup>39</sup>, VISA restrictions, as

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<sup>39</sup> The National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) previously allowed the US government to target Middle Easterners, Arabs, and South Asian Muslims over the age of 16, from twenty five predominantly Muslim nations that resulted in the deportations of many without due process, racial profiling, the registration and interrogation of 80,000 men and has never resulted in a terrorism-related conviction (Rights Working Group, Center for Immigrants'

well as spreading misinformation about Islam that results in harassment, discrimination and hate crimes. A recent article in a regional newspaper featured commentary by the Muslim Student Organization at Mid Atlantic State University (PWI) members and highlighted the perceived fear and hostility Muslims in the region faced that aligned with national concerns.<sup>40</sup> Students noted that blanket hostility toward Muslims were misplaced and that verbal attacks felt personal: "it's a person coming at everything we are".<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, while local newspapers documented previous bias incidents on campus<sup>42</sup>, the Crime Statistics reports from Mid-Atlantic State University (PWI) between 2013-2015 indicated no hate crimes occurred on campus, in dormitory residences or on surrounding public property.<sup>43</sup> Overall, this demonstrates the existence of a diverse Muslim population in Mid-Atlantic state, including communities of immigrants and Muslim Americans and their concerns related to discrimination. The next section addresses the specific population at the first research setting, a majority white college campus.

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Rights & Pennsylvania State University's Dickinson School of Law, 2012)

<sup>40</sup> Citation omitted to preserve the anonymity of research setting.

<sup>41</sup> Citation omitted to preserve the anonymity of the student members of MSA and the university.

<sup>42</sup> After a Black Lives Matter march on campus in 2015, an alleged 'racial display' of nooses hung on trees was documented and later dismissed.

<sup>43</sup> Incidents occurring on property near campus or at off-campus student organization locations, handled by the local police department are not counted as on campus hate incidents. This data can also reflect the changing and broad definitions surrounding hate crimes, police-university incident reporting, as well as counting issues.

### **Population at Mid-Atlantic State University (PWI)**

There are diverse populations of Muslim and Muslim American students at various universities and colleges across the US as a result of initiatives to promote diversity and recruit international students. In this section, I specifically discuss the quantity and nature of Muslim students at the first research setting. The Muslim population at Mid-Atlantic State University (PWI)<sup>44</sup> appears small but is commensurate with various colleges and universities across the US.<sup>45</sup> This suggests that the study can offer generalizability beyond the cases of institutions in Mid-Atlantic State; however, this can also be limited by the diversity of the sample. At the PWI university, the Muslim Students Organization (MSO) has a membership of over fifty students, while the Black Graduate Student Group (BGSU) has a rolling membership of Muslim domestic and international students, including from various African and Caribbean nations. Furthermore, a report from the International Student Office (ISO) (2015) indicates that while students at the university hail from 97 countries, China accounts for 60 percent of the international student population, followed by Saudi Arabia (8.5 percent) and India (5.2 percent). There are also

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<sup>44</sup> Unofficial and official numbers of the number of Muslim students at Mid-Atlantic State University (HBCU) are unavailable.

<sup>45</sup> As of 2016, Islam is the second largest religious identity in the US yet, Muslim students continue to report Islamophobic incidents. Higher education services directed towards this population are usually through student affairs, diversity/multicultural and international student offices. However, a recent article in *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* (Schaidle, 2016) calls for counseling services, safe zones and increasing cultural awareness on campus in support of religious pluralism as societal discrimination has further began to permeate the campus atmosphere, in part because of the anti-Muslim rhetoric utilized during the 2016 Presidential Election.

a growing number of students from Kuwait. ISO reports that there are currently 708 undergraduate level students and 788 non-degree seeking English Language Institute students while 418 participate in Optional Practical Training. ISO does not collect data pertaining to students' religious affiliation. However, a recent article in the state newspaper indicated that the university has 66 students, employees and scholars from the six countries impacted by the executive order yet, this number does not include family members (Fishman, 2016).

An initial review of reports from the Office of Institutional Research and the International Student Office<sup>46</sup> at the PWI indicated that graduate enrollment including both full-time and part-time students accounted for 168 African American students at the university inclusive of 96 females and 72 males. Overall, full time international graduate students accounted for 43.3% of the graduate student population and of these 586 were women and 766 were men for the Fall 2015-2016 academic year. Undergraduate enrollment included 856 African American students (a total of 5 percent of the undergraduate population) including 482 females and 374 males. Furthermore, international undergraduate students accounted for almost 4% of the population with 301 females and 350 males (a total of 652 altogether). During academic year 2015-2016, domestic African American students accounted for almost 10% of the Professional and

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<sup>46</sup> Official office names have been changed to protect anonymity of research setting.

Continuing Education students, including 39 females, 33 males and a total of 34 international students (14 female, 20 male). Given these numbers, it is possible that the Muslim student population at the first research site (PWI) was larger than estimated.

On-campus incidents at Mid-Atlantic State (PWI) from 2015-2018, such as racial slurs posted on a bulletin board in a residential dorm within a few days after the 2016 Presidential Election that targeted immigrant, Mexican and Muslim students<sup>47</sup>, protests on campus regarding hate speech after an on-campus Republican student organization invited controversial ‘alt-right<sup>48</sup>’ leader Milo Yiannopoulos<sup>49</sup> (and previously the invitation of conservative journalist Katie Pavlich by Students for the Second Amendment), as well as the reaction to an alleged racial display of nooses hung on trees on campus that turned out to be lanterns after a Black Lives Matter march<sup>50</sup> have all prompted university community response. For example, the post-election silent protest<sup>51</sup>, an anti-Trump speak out<sup>52</sup> and the ‘We Stand with You’ solidarity rally in December

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<sup>47</sup> Source omitted to protect anonymity of university.

<sup>48</sup> The term alt-right entered mainstream American social and political language during the 2016 US Presidential Election and is short for ‘alternative right’. It refers to a white-nationalist movement in the United States that initially emerged online. The group’s core belief is rooted in white-identity politics and is considered by political scholars to be both anti-liberal yet rejecting of American conservative values (Hawley, 2017).

<sup>49</sup> Source omitted to protect anonymity of university.

<sup>50</sup> Source omitted to protect anonymity of university.

<sup>51</sup> Source omitted to protect anonymity of university.

<sup>52</sup> Source omitted to protect anonymity of university.

2016<sup>53</sup> have highlighted the campus community's response in support of tolerance, diversity and inclusion<sup>54</sup>. However, the impact of these events makes it clear that racial tensions exist on campus. Beyond fostering dialogue and appreciating difference, there is a social impact of diversity on minority student experiences that can further be explored in this study through narrative and in-depth interviews with students marginalized by these incidents that are reflective of issues in larger society. Given that there may be a significant population of Muslim American students, along with international students from various regions including the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, an open-ended pilot study was planned to examine the feasibility of conducting the study at a PWI where the Muslim student population appeared small and invisible, as well as to assess minority student perceptions of the climate.

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<sup>53</sup> Source omitted to protect anonymity of university.

<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, at Mid-Atlantic State University, the Graduate Student Government (GSG) (2016-2017) passed Resolution SR-1617-04 in support of international students and faculty members. The resolution was in response to Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the US, passed on January 27, 2017 and banned travel from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen for 90 days and refugees for up to four months. The Graduate Student Government Resolution specifically indicated that it caused harm to community members, affected the quality of research and educational integrity of the university, while simultaneously contradicting with the university student government constitution. The GSG further objected to the 'xenophobic implications' of the order and resolved to stand in solidarity with "refugee, the immigrant, the displaced, and anyone else who suffers or is discriminated against due to their race, nationality, citizenship, religion, sexuality, or gender identity, including—but not limited to—those members of our university community adversely affected by this executive order, regardless of any future legal challenges or decisions."

**TABLE 1 Enrollment of African American & International Students (PWI)**

<i>Student Status</i>	<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Women (n)</i>	<i>Men (n)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Graduate	African American	96	72	168
<i>International Graduate*</i>		586	766	1,352
Undergraduate**	African American	482	474	856
Undergraduate <i>International</i>		301	350	651
Professional and Continuing Studies***	African American	39	33	72
Professional and Continuing Studies <i>International</i>		14	20	34

\*represents 44.4% of total graduate student population at Mid-Atlantic State University.

\*\* represents 5% of undergraduate population at university.

\*\*\* represents 10% of the Professional and Continuing Education students.

According to a recent Campus Climate survey conducted by the Diversity Center at the university, on average, under-represented minorities (defined as all non-Asian and non-white students) faced more discrimination and bias compared to their Asian and

White counterparts. However, according to the Diversity Center, Asian students, on average, report more harassment on campus. While these measures contribute to our understanding of minority student experiences on campus at this particular PWI, a more nuanced in-depth view of marginalized student experiences remains necessary to better support students of all backgrounds and create safer campuses. Campus climate surveys nationally address various issues pertaining to the acculturation of racial/ethnic minority and women students, including collecting data related to friendships on campus, participation in activities with diverse individuals, feelings of discrimination because of one's racial/ethnic/religious status by administration and faculty, and overall, a sense of belonging. While this information is increasingly important as universities diversify, bias incidents including subtle microaggressions and even overt violence remain largely omitted from the on-campus discourse.

The next section provides information regarding the pilot study conducted in November 2016, immediately after the US Presidential Election at the first research site, the PWI.

### **Sample and Recruitment Strategy for Pilot Study at PWI**

The exploratory pilot study utilized an open-ended questionnaire disseminated via Qualtrics (an electronic survey tool) that was used to initially examine the hypothesis that there was a larger 'invisible' population of Muslim and Muslim American students, both

international and domestic, undergraduate and graduate, that were largely unaccounted for in terms of capturing diverse experiences at the PWI. Furthermore, the pilot study was built upon previous Campus Climate related surveys (Jones & Hussain, 2017) by asking a targeted sample of Muslim students about their experiences and concerns on campus. Because the pilot-study survey was mostly open ended, it also provided foundational knowledge which improved the quality of the final interview guide. Data collection for the exploratory pilot study at the PWI utilized purposive sampling including sending targeted emails specifically undergraduate and graduate student groups serving racial/ethnic minorities, as well as contacting faculty and staff members that generally worked with or had interactions with Muslim students on campus at Mid-Atlantic State PWI. Overall, the recruitment strategy was initially designed as both purposive and snowball sampling, as individuals were also encouraged to recommend fellow students who would be interested in taking the survey<sup>55</sup>. Between November and December 2016, the IRB-approved pilot survey was used to recruit a variety of Muslim students on campus through the Muslim Students Organization, the Black Graduate Student Group and via select employees (including faculty and staff) of the English Language-Learners Institute who interacted with international students. At the end of the pilot survey,

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<sup>55</sup> The researcher did not obtain personal information about other potential participants but asked current student participants in the study to share the flyer and recruitment email for the project with their Muslim friends and associates.

participants were asked if they would be interested in participating in an interview at a later time.

**Data Collection Method: Pilot Study: Open-Ended Questionnaire at Mid-Atlantic State University (PWI)**

The open-ended Qualtrics survey captured specific demographics of the population of Muslim students on campus to begin capturing the diversity of Muslim students on campus. Additionally, participants were asked about a range of experiences related to their ethnic/racial, immigrant/citizenship status and religious identity. The pilot explored potentially unique issues related to the Muslim experience on campus. Participants reflected on experiences related to migration, barriers to acculturation (in the US and on campus, if any exist), and shared their personal experiences post-election (from both the domestic and international perspective). Participants were asked about concerns (if any) of great importance to them in relation to their statuses as racial/ethnic/religious minority students on campus. The main criteria for participation was self-identification as a Muslim student at Mid-Atlantic State University (PWI), regardless of denomination or level of religiosity. The broad spectrum of Muslim identity used in this pilot study captured a variety of student concerns across various statuses, as well as similar themes across different populations.

### **PWI Pilot Study Respondent Demographic Characteristics**

Participants were asked sixty (60) questions. Table 2 below documents the characteristics of each participant. Of the total sample of seven participants, there was a roughly even split by gender (3 men and 4 women), international status (3 domestic and 4 international), and student status (3 undergraduate and 4 graduate). Participants ranged in age from 19 to 29 years old and were from various racial/ethnic backgrounds including four who identified as Middle Eastern or North African, two as Asian (with one specifying Pakistani ancestry), and one identified as Black/African American specifying Guinean. Six participants identified as Sunni Muslim while one identified as Modernist.

**TABLE 2** Pilot Study (PWI) Participant Demographics

<i>Pseudonym</i> <sup>56</sup>	<i>Ali</i>	<i>Farah</i>	<i>Yasmin</i>	<i>Hassan</i>	<i>Sara</i>	<i>Nazia</i>	<i>Omar</i>
<b>Gender</b>	Man	Woman	Woman	Man	Woman	Woman	Man
<b>Age</b>	27	24	24	22	21	19	29
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	Middle Eastern/Northern African	Middle Eastern/Northern African	Middle Eastern/Northern African: <i>Specified Saudi Arabian</i>	Middle Eastern/Northern African: <i>Specified Saudi Arabian</i>	Asian: <i>Specified Pakistani</i>	Asian	Black/African American: <i>Specified Guinean</i>
<b>Student Status</b>	Graduate	Graduate	Graduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Graduate
<b>Citizenship Status</b>	International Student Visa*	International Student Visa*	International Student Visa*	International Student Visa*	US-Born Citizen	US-Born Citizen	Naturalized US Citizen
<b>Resident of US</b>	3 years	2.5 years	3 months	4 years	Lifetime	Lifetime	13 years

**PWI Pilot Study Findings**

Because the pilot survey findings at Mid-Atlantic State University (PWI) largely influenced the subsequent research design, sampling and recruitment techniques for the subsequent semi-structured interviews at both research sites, some of the broader implications of the results are included in this section. The broad spectrum of Muslim identity captured in this pilot study resulted in an examination of a variety of student concerns across various social locations. Several themes emerged from respondent

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<sup>56</sup> Pseudonyms were assigned based on gender, religion/culture, and popularity of name in participant’s region of origin for all phases of data collection.

narratives related to a sense of intolerance on campus, lack of institutional support, gender hypervisibility, being ‘othered’ through outsider perceptions of ‘foreignness’ and multiple marginalization because of religion, gender, race/ethnicity and being perceived as immigrants.

Altogether, findings from the exploratory pilot study at Mid-Atlantic State University (PWI) indicated several themes related to on campus issues such as intolerance related to hate speech, a perceived lack of institutional support, gender hypervisibility in the form of microaggressions, othering through perceptions of ‘foreignness’ and multiple marginalizations as a result of intersecting identities of race/ethnicity, gender, religion and citizenship status. Furthermore, the findings indicate a need for more in-depth investigation and analysis that can be addressed with the research questions presented, specifically addressing Muslim students’ intersectional experiences at a PWI, how racialization and visibility interacts with these perceptions and help-seeking behaviors Muslim students may engage in on campus.

**Data Collection Method: Research Site I: Mid-Atlantic State University (PWI)**

Conducting the pilot study enabled me as researcher to hone in on specific questions for continued study that addressed how Muslim students make sense of their identities and experiences on campus and informed the creation of the interview guide. The research design utilized a demographic questionnaire and semi-structured interviews

guided by approximately sixty-five questions. The interview guide built on questions initially asked in the pilot survey but also expanded questions by leaving room for follow-up questions and probes that could not be achieved with quantitative methods. For example, in the pilot survey participants were asked how they felt about campus discussions regarding racial/ethnic minorities and marginalized religious groups, such as Muslims but had limited space to elaborate. The interview specifically asked students to describe discussions regarding Muslims on campus, whether positive, negative or neutral, allowing participants to elaborate, through detailed narrative on their experiences.

#### **Sample and Recruitment Strategy for Interviews at Research Site I (PWI)**

From the pilot study, it was clear that there was a diverse group of Muslim students on the PWI campus across various statuses, including undergraduates and graduates, international and domestic students, as well as across a plethora of racial, ethnic and national backgrounds. The pilot study recruitment also demonstrated successful techniques in obtaining access to a diverse cross-section of Muslim students. Thus, a similar sampling and recruitment strategy utilized for the pilot study was implemented for the interviews that included both purposive and snowball sampling to reach a diverse Muslim student population on campus at the PWI. A recruitment flyer was designed specifically for the PWI that included a description of the study, target sample population sought, how to contact the PI and the incentive that participants would

receive (a \$10 gift card to Amazon.com). Initial recruitment included following-up with pilot study participants who indicated an interest in participating in an interview. Initially, campus offices including the International Student Office, the English-Language Learners Institute, the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, Black Culture Center, and the Saudi Arabian Scholars Program (that hosts international students annually) were contacted to disseminate the flyer among their student populations. Many declined or did not respond to researcher queries. However, the African American Studies Department, Diversity Center and Graduate Office were critical in aiding with the dissemination of the flyer. This is important because it ultimately shaped the final sample including the lack of international Muslim students from African/Caribbean nations but could also be reflective of the university's demographic composition. Furthermore, contact information for some non-registered student organizations including the Muslim Graduate Student Association and the Muslim Sisters Circle at the English Language Learners Institute were unavailable and thus, I was unable to recruit through these venues. Next, registered student organizations on the PWI campus were contacted to share the recruitment flyer for the study via email with the Muslim Students Organization, Indian Graduate Student Group and in the Black Graduate Student Group newsletter. Faculty and administrative staff members that have had some contact with Muslim students both in the classroom and as mentees were requested to share the recruitment letter and flyer with their contacts. Students that expressed interest were also encouraged to share recruitment

materials with fellow Muslim friends on campus. Initially, I also planned to recruit via social media however, word of mouth among both international and domestic students contributed to reaching interview sample saturation (Latham, 2013; Croch & McKenzie, 2006; Guest, Bunche & Johnson, 2006).

Upon approval of the dissertation proposal, the proposed sample included 40 participants from the PWI, with the sample equally being comprised of women (n=20) and men (n=20), as well as across subsample variations that were expected to overlap. It was expected that one third of the sample would ideally be comprised of individuals of Asian descent (n=13), Middle Eastern (n=13) and Black/African (n=13) racial and ethnic groups. Among these, at least half of the sample would be international (n=20) and domestic (n=20) students and there would be an equal split across student status as undergraduate (n=20) and graduate (n=20). Table 3 below indicates the actual achieved sample from the PWI (n=43) which included more women (n=24) than men (n=19), an overrepresentation of Middle Eastern students (n=21) in comparison to Asian (n=12) and Black (n=10) Muslims that are also reflective of the student population. There was also an almost equal division in the sample among international students (n=20) and domestic students (n=23); as well as for undergraduate (n=22) and graduate students (n=21).

**TABLE 3: Respondent Sample (Mid-Atlantic State University - PWI)**

<i><u>Characteristic</u></i>	<i><u>Frequency (n)</u></i>	<i><u>Ideal Sample (n/%)</u></i>
<b>Gender (PWI)</b>	<b>Men 19</b>	50% (n=20)
	<b>Women 24</b>	50% (n=20)
<b>Race/Ethnicity (PWI)</b>	<b>Asian 12<sup>57</sup></b>	33% (n=13)
	<b>Middle Eastern 21<sup>58</sup></b>	33% (n=13)
	<b>Black/African 10*</b>	33% (n=13)
<b>International Status** (PWI)</b> <i>(F-1/J-1/M-1 Visa Holder)</i>	<b>20</b>	50% (n=20)
<b>Domestic Status (PWI)</b> <i>(Immigrant, Native-born, Naturalized Citizen/Green-card holder etc.)</i>	<b>23</b>	50% (n=20)
<b>Undergraduate Student (PWI)</b>	22	50% (n=20)
<b>Graduate Student (PWI)</b> <i>(Enrollment in MA/MBA, Ph.D. etc.)</i>	21	50% (n=20)
	<b>n=43<sup>59</sup></b>	<b>n=40*</b>

<sup>57</sup> Self-identified although some regions are considered ‘Middle Eastern’

<sup>58</sup> Some participants identified as both Middle Eastern and Black or White. Larger number of Middle Eastern participants also reflects representativeness of sample at PWI.

<sup>59</sup> See Appendices for additional tables with demographic information for PWI and HBCU participants.

\*While data saturation and the sample size were achieved within 12 weeks of initiating the interview phase of the study, potential participants continued to contact the PI and a few additional interviews were conducted in early December 2017 at which point the study was closed.

\*\*Participants identified their origins as being from the United States, Canada, India, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Ghana, Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt, Oman, Jordan, Bangladesh, Trinidad, and the Dominican Republic. HBCU participants additionally identified that they had ancestry or parental immigrant ties to Ivory Coast, Guinea, and Sierra Leone.

\*\*\*Demographic characteristics and social locations overlapped.

\*\*\*\*This does not include the sampling frame for the HBCU.

### **Research Setting: Site II: Mid-Atlantic State University (HBCU)**

Mid-Atlantic State University (HBCU) as the second research setting was very different than the PWI. For one, the HBCU is located in the Southern state capitol city and is situated in a rural county that leans more politically conservative compared to the Northern liberal leaning PWI. Historically, Mid-Atlantic State (HBCU) was the first state college for Black American students, while the PWI was historically reserved for white students. While the HBCU has more racial/ethnic diversity compared to the PWI, it also had a smaller enrollment of around 4,650 students (altogether as of 2015, while the PWI had an enrollment of 22,850 students including 18,350 undergraduates and 4,500 post-graduates).

### **Population at Mid-Atlantic State University (HBCU)**

As a HBCU (historically Black college/university), it was expected that there would be a significant population of Black students both domestic and international. Furthermore, while there were only a few visible special interest student organizations at the HBCU, these included the International Students Association, the Fellowship of

Muslim Students and the Association of Graduate Students. Additionally, because there was one undocumented immigrant participant in the PWI sample, as well as the HBCU's status as a college that accepts Opportunity Scholars<sup>60</sup>, it was expected that there may also be an undocumented Muslim student population at the second research site.

### **Sample and Recruitment Strategy at Mid-Atlantic State University (HBCU)**

Because participants from the PWI phase of the study had some social connections and networks at the HBCU, initially, a snowball sampling method was utilized. Similar strategies including contacting student organizations at the HBCU, along with offering e-giftcards and the option to participate via video (for example, GChat or Skype) or phone interviews were also offered to encourage participation. Unfortunately, the insular nature of HBCUs and lack of accessibility with publicly available information online also impacted the sample recruitment. Thus, various professors were contacted at the HBCU in order to share information about the study. The assistance of faculty at the HBCU resulted in recruiting at least one participant at the graduate level. Initial recruitment through the MSA group chat (which included an estimated 55 undergraduate members) resulted in most of the undergraduate interviews. Overall, it remained much more difficult to recruit both international and graduate students given the above

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<sup>60</sup> The Opportunity Scholarship serves DREAMers who reside in states where they lack access to college as a result of out of state tuition fees or state restrictions on admittance.

methods. Table 4 below highlights the ideal sampling frame proposed for the HBCU phase of the study. While the majority of participants were expected to be of African American (domestic) or Black/immigrant (international) descent, at least one third were also expected to be graduate students. These numbers reflect both the smaller enrollment of the HBCU, as well as the limited number of graduate programs and degrees offered at the institution in comparison to the PWI.

**TABLE 4**

Proposed Sampling Framework, Demographic Characteristics from HBCU (n=15)

Characteristic	Frequency (n)	Sample Percentage (%)
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	Black/African n=15	Black/African 100%
<b>International Status*</b> (F-1/J-1/M-1 Visa Holder)	n=5	33.3%
<b>Domestic Status</b> (Immigrant, Native-born, Naturalized Citizen/Green-card holder etc.)	n=5	33.3%
<b>Graduate Student*</b> (Enrollment in MA/MBA, Ph.D. etc.)	n=5	33.3%
	<b>n=15</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\*Given the insulated and protected nature of HBCU culture, it was difficult to reach and recruit international students and graduate students for this study. Exhaustive methods of recruitment were attempted including through faculty*

emails to classes, direct contact to staff members, posters on-campus, and reaching out to student organization leadership. Additionally, given the low numbers of Black graduate students, and even smaller number of Black international graduate students, I was unable to recruit any students that fit the specific intersecting sample parameters of Black, Muslim and international student.

**TABLE 5 Mid-Atlantic State HBCU Sample Characteristics**

<b>Gender (PWI)</b>	<b>Men</b> <b>3</b>
	<b>Women</b> <b>4</b>
<b>Race/Ethnicity (PWI)</b>	<b>Asian</b> <b>2</b>
	<b>Middle Eastern</b> <b>4</b>
	<b>Black/African</b> <b>1</b>
<b>International Status (PWI)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Domestic Status (PWI)</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Undergraduate Student (PWI)</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Graduate Student (PWI)</b> <i>(Enrollment in MA/MBA, Ph.D. etc.)</i>	<b>4</b>
<b><u>International countries of origin:</u></b> <b>Pakistan, Guinea, Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>n=7</b>
<b>Age 19-29</b>	

**TABLE 6 Interviewee Demographics for PWI and HBCU**

#	Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity OR Nationality	Grad	UG	International	Domestic	In US	Veil
1	Amir (M*)	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	Y		Y		1 year	
2	Saif (M)	Middle Eastern/White (Saudi Arabian)	Y		Y		1 year	
3	Zoya (W)**	Asian/Indian	Y		Y		1 year	
4	Sabrina (W)	North African (Black) /Middle Eastern (Arab Moroccan)	Y			Y	Born US Citizen	
5	Rabia (W)	Middle Eastern/Other (Turkish)	Y		Y		3 years	Y
6	Zahra (W)	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	Y		Y		2 years	Y
7	Imran (M)	Asian (Indian)	Y		Y		2 years	
8	Soraya (W)	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	Y		Y		3 years (Permanent Resident)	
9	Maryam (W)	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	Y		Y		6 years	Y
10	Ismail (M)	Middle Eastern (Turkish)	Y		Y		1 year	
11	Ramin (M)	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	Y		Y		(Permanent Resident)	

12	Saamiya (W)	Asian (Afghani)	Y			Y	Undocumented (Naturalized Citizen in 2016)	Y (but stopped wearing)
13	Malikah (W)	Black/African American		Y		Y	Naturalized Citizen (born in Ghana)	Y (only wore post-election)
14	Noura (W)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)		Y	Y (ELI)		9 months	Y (removed in December 2016 to enter US)
15	Salim (M)	Asian (Indian)	Y		Y		1.5 months	
16	Alia (W)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)	Y		Y		6 years	Y
17	Aisha (W)	Asian (Pakistani-American)		Y		Y	Born US citizen	
18	Abdullah (M)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)	Y		Y		4 months	
19	Faisal (M)	Black/African/ME (Lebanese)		Y		Y		
20	Laila (W)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)		Y	Y		5 years	
21	Fatima (W)	Black/Middle Eastern (Moroccan)		Y		Y	15 years	
22	Habiba (W)	Middle Eastern/Black (Egyptian)		Y		Y	Born US citizen	Y
23	Youssef (M)	Middle Eastern/White (Egyptian)		Y	Y		Born US citizen	

24	Said (M)	Middle Eastern/Asian (Omani)		Y	Y		1.5 years	
25	Bilal (M)	Black/African (Moroccan)		Y		Y	2 months	
26	Sana (W)	Asian (Indian)		Y		Y	3 years	
27	Rania (W)	Middle Eastern (Egyptian)		Y		Y	4 years	Y
28	Tahira (W)	Asian/ME (Afghan)		Y		Y	8 years	Y
29	Qasim (M)	Middle Eastern (Oman)		Y	Y		1.5 years	
30	Diana (W)	Middle Eastern/Asian (Jordanian)		Y	Y		Born US citizen	Y
31	Zahir (M)	Asian (Bangladeshi)		Y		Y	17 years	
32	Amal (W)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabia)		Y	Y		8 years	Y with niqab
33	Mira (W)	Middle Eastern (Turkey)	Y			Y	22 years	Y
34	Khalil (M)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabia)	Y		Y		3 years	
35	Kabir (M)	Asian (Bangladeshi)		Y		Y	Born US citizen	
36	Zishan (M)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabia)	Y		Y		4 years	
37	Ahmed (M)	Asian (Pakistani)		Y		Y		

38	Jamilla (W)	Black/Hispanic (Puerto Rican)	Y			Y	Born US citizen	Y (Hijab and abaya)
39	Malik (M)	Black/Latino (some Mexican)	Y			Y	Born Us citizen	
40	Sadia (W)	Asian (Bangladeshi)	Y			Y	Naturalized US Citizen	Y
41	Adnan (M)	Asian (Pakistani American)		Y			Born US citizen	
42	Khadijah (W)	Black/African American (Other: Dominican)		Y			Born US citizen	Y (turban)
43	Saba (W)	Black/Afro-Caribbean (Bajan)	Y			Y	Born US Citizen	Y
44	<b>Aminata</b> (W)	Black/African (Ivory Coast)		Y		Y	Born US Citizen	Sometimes
45	<b>Kalif</b> (M)	Black/African American		Y		Y	Born Us Citizen	
46	<b>Abdul</b> (M)	Black/African American (Sierra Leone)		Y		Y	Born US citizen	
47	<b>Nasreen</b> (W)	Asian (Pakistani-American)		Y		Y	Born US Citizen	Y)
48	<b>Amira</b> (W)	Black		Y		Y	Born US Citizen	Y
49	<b>Solomon</b> (M)	African (Sierra Leone)		Y		Y	Born US Citizen	
50	<b>Ahmad</b> (M)	White	Y			Y	Born US Citizen	

\* (M) denotes that participant identified as a man

\* (W) denotes that participant identified as a woman

## **Difficulties Related to Acquiring Participation/Data at PWI and HBCU**

### **Researcher Reflexivity: Researcher Impact on Research Processes**

Scholars of qualitative methodology support that it is imperative for researchers to engage in reflexivity to acknowledge their influence on the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This section examines the impact, I, as researcher, may have had on the research process. As a non-Muslim, immigrant, graduate student that has resided in communities impacted by hate speech and bias incidents against Muslims and those perceived to be as such (including Indo-Caribbeans and Sikhs) in the days, months and years after 9/11, I may have ideas and beliefs related to this topic. Furthermore, I have worked with Muslim students at other campuses, and at Mid Atlantic State University, specifically as a mentor to international undergraduates predominantly from China, and a few from Saudi Arabia. At the time that I conducted these interviews as PI (during the 2017-2018 academic year), I was a Ph.D. student at the PWI university and thus, could relate to some of the concerns of participants.

### **Insider Assumptions, Access and Obtaining Entree**

As stated, I am not Muslim nor am I an international student; however, my immigrant status and my personal experiences, as well as my peer networks that consist of international, Muslim, and racial/ethnic minority students have informed my ideas surrounding this population. Furthermore, my perceived identity as an ambiguous

racial/ethnic minority (for example, having an Arabic name and sometimes being mistaken as South Asian/Middle Eastern, African or Latino), as well as preconceived notions about my social locations including my gender, country of origin, my status as a domestic student, immigrant, accent (or lack thereof) and doctoral candidate status may have also impacted recruitment and the interview process. To address this, halfway through data collection, I began to not address my religious identity, racial/ethnic or national origin background until after the interview. While this was in the interest of not biasing participant responses, at times, it felt deceptive as participants racialized me because of my name, appearance, and the study, thus assuming that I was Muslim, an international student, Asian or Middle Eastern. On rare occasions, participants assumed I was African American ('Black'), Latino ('Mexican') or African ('Libyan'). However, I still had concerns regarding cultural hesitations. To address these concerns, I spoke with faculty and staff that studied or worked with minority students, as well as met with Muslim student organization members to obtain a better sense of cultural sensitivity<sup>61</sup>. In terms of gender sensitivity, I made sure to greet both men and women equally and did not shake their hands<sup>62</sup>. I also did not greet participants with any specific cultural greeting,

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<sup>61</sup> It should be noted that I am from Trinidad and Tobago, a country with a small Muslim population, I have Muslim family members and friends, and grew up in an ethnic immigrant enclave with mosques, halal stores, and a visible Muslim presence. Any additional efforts I made to access the population at the research sites was with the intention of cultural sensitivity.

<sup>62</sup> It was my understanding that in Muslim cultures it was inappropriate for men and women to shake hands. While I accidentally only shook the hand of one male participant, he thought it was amusing and stated that as a graduate student he had acculturated to shaking women's hands as a form of professionalization.

however, notably some perceived and insisted that I had ‘given the salaam’ upon initial meeting<sup>63</sup>. With all participants, I generally dressed modestly with long ankle-length skirts and black mid to long-sleeve length cardigans in the summer, wore my hair back and up, and usually had a scarf on during Fall months<sup>64</sup>. While I did not take any extensive measures to dress beyond my own comfort level, some participants (both men and women) indicated that they were surprised I did not wear a hijab as they usually assumed the study was being conducted by a Muslim woman. Additionally, while I usually only wore small stud earrings in silver or gold tones, one male participant noted that he had assumed I was Indian because I wore gold earrings that day. Thereafter, I paid more attention to my overall dress. Overall, gender sensitivity, cultural considerations, and decisions about physical presentation did have some impact on the participants and thus, I did my best to be sensitive to this while also being my authentic self<sup>65</sup>. As a form of good

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<sup>63</sup> Participants’ perception that I was Muslim influenced our interactions in person and via email. Some participants were certain that I had greeted them via email or in person with the traditional Muslim greeting “As-salamu alaykum” which roughly translates to ‘peace be upon you’ and is returned with ‘wa’alaykumu as-salām’ which means ‘and upon you, peace’ and is the traditional way that Muslims across the world greet each other. Neither in person nor via email did I greet participants with these salutations however, their perception that only a Muslim researcher would be conducting such a study influenced how they felt about our interactions.

<sup>64</sup> While I have observed that other studies have utilized overt deception in order to recruit and interview Muslim participants, I primarily used my intersecting identities as an immigrant woman of color and graduate student, to navigate my interactions with the sample population. In noting my dress, it should also be stated that I did not take any extensive measures and generally conducted myself in almost the same manner as I had before and after the interviews.

<sup>65</sup> As researcher, I also engaged in actively performing intersectionality. For example, if a participant seemed hesitant or reserved in their responses, I would reveal one of my shared identities to encourage and facilitate trust. With Black participants, I usually mentioned that I was from Trinidad, with participants from South Asian countries, I noted that I had some Indian ancestry, and with international students, I usually told them that while I was not an international student, I was an immigrant. I utilized a similar strategy when interviewing graduate students. Overall, my social locations played a part in my access to data and participants’ willingness to divulge information that they later said they would not have shared with an ‘American’ or ‘White’ researcher. Further details about this particular approach to in-

interview practice, studies that are designed to encourage good rapport, sensitivity to gender relations, acknowledgement of gender interview situations, and questioning procedures that reduce embarrassment encourage sensitivity and disclosure from participants that may have faced traumatic incidents (Currie & Maclean, 1997), thus, I believe these changes, along with other strategies, fostered an environment that facilitated participant trust.

Furthermore, from reviewing methods sections of similar studies related to collecting data with Muslim student participants, I did not expect conversations regarding sexuality to emerge due to cultural norms and taboos in the Middle East and South Asia. Additionally, there were no such questions in my protocol however, participants frequently brought up their stances on LGBTQIA populations, as well as their interactions with White American women on campus that they (usually men) found offensive, including perceiving their clothing choices as provocative and feeling targeted by young women.

### **Perceptions of Friendship**

With certainty, my involvement with the Black Graduate Student Group, Graduate Office, the Muslim Students Club and Diversity Center at the PWI aided in my

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depth interviewing will be featured in my upcoming chapter entitled “*Codeswitching Intersectionalities: Reflexivity and Emotion Work in Interviews with Muslim Students*” in *Ethics, Errors, and Ethnocentrism* (edited by Divya Sharma).

access to some populations. I usually asked participants where they had heard about the study and generally, they had either received an email directly from me, received the flyer from their friends (who had already participated) or received word of mouth via international student group chats. For example, one Iranian woman told me that her husband and many other Iranian students had a WhatsApp chat specifically for their volleyball team which she later sent a message to about my study. During the course of the study, I also interviewed board members of both the Muslim Graduate and Undergraduate Student Organizations, the Turkish Students Association and the Indian Graduate Student Group that were also helpful in encouraging their friends to participate thus resulting in a successful snowball sample. I believe that participants' sense of trust in me as a researcher and ally further facilitated my access to this population. One Iranian participant insisted after the interview that I was Muslim because I was doing 'the work of God', another, an Indian graduate student indicated that she was too fearful to do this type of research and appreciated that someone was.

On the other hand, some participants also relayed their feelings of gratitude related to the study and finally having their voice heard. On the other hand, a handful also expressed trepidation about participating in such a study during a time where they felt their personal information could be used against them. Some participants admitted that they had volunteered as a result of curiosity, while others inquired as to whether the university had compiled lists of Muslim students. Some expressed concern because

their parents had instructed them to not participate as a result of surveillance of Muslims and their own generation's experiences post 9/11. While other participants were active in student organizations and wanted to voice specific concerns. Many student participants admitted they were in it primarily for the Amazon gift card while some outright refused to accept 'payment' for the 'good work' I was doing. While I believe this was linked to Islamic cultural beliefs of *zakat* or the obligation (usually financial) to donate to charity to physically and spiritually purify, I usually insisted it was merely for their time and they could pass it forward by giving the gift card to a friend as a gift. While at times I did worry about participants' personal connections to me based on their assumptions that I was Muslim or a friend of the person who recommended the study to them, almost all of the participants I asked indicated that their responses to me as an individual and to my questions were more open because I was a non-White person and because they felt the interview experience was therapeutic as they discussed issues that had weighed heavily on them that they could not discuss with others.

### **Power, Authority and Representation**

To ensure protection of respondents in my study, including minimizing risks, I completed the University's Protection of Human Subjects and Responsible Conduct in Research trainings. After receiving university IRB approval for my pilot study to ensure

that my study followed the institution's regulations, I also defended my dissertation proposal which was revised by all members of my committee. As the study evolved into different phases, I also submitted IRB Amendments to address participant safety and expand options for participants to safely participate in phone/video interviews and receive gift cards via post or email. With younger participants, specifically undergraduates, especially with interviews conducted in either the adjunct or faculty office, I was concerned with whether or not I was seen as an authoritative figure and thus, there could have been a power dynamic at work during the interviews (Anderson, 2009). To address this, I usually changed my tone and demeanor, taking on a less professional tone, encouraged the participant to talk more about their parents or high school experiences, and always sat beside them during the interview rather than across the table as to not convey a professor-student dynamic. In discussing my dress, tone, interview location, seating arrangement, race/ethnicity, background and other dynamics, multiple participants indicated that they were enthusiastic and spoke honestly because they felt comfortable with me. Veiled women and older international student men, who were the most resistant at first, usually became more open and responsive after about ten to fifteen minutes into the interview, thus, I believe that my participants felt safe speaking about sensitive issues with me not just because of my gender but because of my relatability as a student, immigrant and person of color. This is not to imply that gender did not play a role as women were more likely to disclose experiences of victimization while men

seemed to either focus on women's issues, were unaware of or completely disregarded women's experiences during interviews. While I am uncertain of all of the ways in which I influenced the data, with certainty, I can say that participants noted that they were more forthcoming with me because of my perceived racial/ethnic/religious background. Thus, based on multiple participants affirming that had I been White, they would have been more careful about what they said, I believe that my access to the population and my connections with participants enabled me to obtain entree to the Muslim student community in a way that would probably not have been granted or as fruitful in data as a non-racial/ethnic minority individual.

As noted earlier, interviews were conducted in private secure locations to minimize participant risk. Some of these on-campus locations at the PWI included study rooms at the library, the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice graduate student office, an adjunct office and a faculty member's office (when it was not in use). While participants were at minimal risk (as per Institutional Review Board Human Subjects Research guidelines), in order to maintain privacy and anonymity, as PI, I also declined to conduct interviews in public spaces such as students' home departments where they would be easily recognizable by faculty, staff and fellow students and would potentially be more hesitant to speak openly about their experiences. While this resulted in some participant attrition at the PWI, it also protected the participants and quality of data. Furthermore, the interview guide offered participants a chance to provide feedback on the

efficacy of the interview in achieving its target, for example, I asked, “Is there anything else you think I should have asked?” This kind of reflexivity will allow an assessment of the interview approach and create changes as needed in an iterative process. As stated, at the end of each interview, participants were provided with a list of resources on campus but were also informed of my background and interest in studying racial/ethnic and religious minority experiences (beyond what was stated in introductions and the consent form). I also spent from as little as five minutes to up to an hour after interviews debriefing with participants especially in cases where students became visually emotional or upset as they recalled incidents. Finally, I spent time after each interview making notes about participants’ demeanor, style of dress, and their feelings towards me as a fellow student, ally and researcher. I added to these notes later in the day or the next day, as well as keeping track of this in my memos as a way to engage in reflexive journaling (Watt, 2007) to better understand the potential impact of my presence during the interviews. This was especially important in relation to participants’ misconceptions about my perceived religious and racial/ethnic identity.

Finally, I attempted to make participants comfortable in various ways including checking in with them via email before the interview, waiting either in the hallway or with the interview room door open as I felt having them ‘seek permission’ to enter the room conveyed a power dynamic, encouraging them to settle in comfortably (which for some meant physically spreading out, changing body posture and demeanor and in one

case, a female participant removed her niqab), chatting with them casually before and after the interview (including escorting them out of the building the interview was conducted in), asking them if they needed water or bathroom breaks and also having vitamin C and cough drops on hand during the Fall semester<sup>66</sup>. Even with all of this, I always told participants, repeatedly throughout the interview, that they did not have to answer questions they were not comfortable responding to, especially if they were hesitant. However, even when participants skipped questions, as the interview went on, they usually returned to the question and provided an answer which speaks to the level of trust that we were able to build. Finally, even though I provided resource guide lists for many on campus offices (including the Counseling Center), as well as information about a national Muslim Youth Hotline, I made sure to present these resources in a positive light.

It is important to note that throughout the research process I remained aware of the effect my personal beliefs could play in influencing the study (King & Horrocks, 2010). Approaching the research design, instrument and interviews as centering the participants' narratives meant that the results were based on the participants' views and not what interviewees thought the researcher wanted to hear. Frequently, I encouraged

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<sup>66</sup> While this was not planned, students seemed to appreciate small gestures of courtesy and from my perspective as interviewer, it seemed as though they opened up more and treated the interview as a casual conversation when I appeared to be more of a 'friend'.

participants to tell me how they felt, asked them about their thoughts and reactions, asked if their friends or parents felt similarly, and also inquired how people outside of their community or people in positions of power (including faculty and staff members at their university) felt about the issues and perspectives we discussed. I engaged in this tactic in the context of the questions as follow-up probes and usually after participants had relaxed and the environment felt more casual and less rigid. Taking this into consideration for the transcripts, I focused on feminist epistemology (Harding, 1987) including reflecting on certain comments to recall if they had any impact related to my personal feelings or beliefs. At times during interviews, I was immediately aware of these processes because it did not support conclusions I had drawn based on my initial review of the literature and thus, I documented these in my post-interview notes. While all research is ultimately impacted by the interactions of researchers and subjects, and is therefore, in some way influenced by the researcher, framing the study as one where the experiences of the participants are central remained critical to my coding methods.

### **Memo Writing**

While memos were utilized as a way to reflect on interview themes, the participants' feelings/emotions, demeanor, style of dress and their reactions towards me, as well as the researcher's reflections on the experience and sensitive topics that emerged

during the course of the discussion (Lofland et al., 2006) as well as impressions and summary. Memos as part of reflexivity and in a coded and journal-style format contributed to a better understanding of not just researcher impact on the interviewee, but also helped in drawing connections across interviews. I usually listened to the audio in the days or weeks after and revisited the memos to add or clarify on new understanding or further reflection of the data. As I will discuss later, memos were also critical for examining personal and emotional aspects of the interview data as it helped me make sense of participant emotions and reflections, as well as addressing my first impressions. Memos also helped form an early understanding of emerging themes in the data, as well as helped me develop more guided follow-up probes during the interview. For example, themes from the pilot study were used to aid in memoing the first five interviews however, nuances in gendered experiences and new rich data emerged related to specific follow-ups that influenced how questions were later asked. For instance, when both men and women were asked about if the other gender was treated differently in public places or on campus, men usually responded that they had not seen any such differences. However, after speaking to women who noted that they were generally harassed if they were veiling in public or with other hijabi women, I began to ask men a follow-up to the gender differences question by inquiring if they had a different experience in public spaces with their mothers, sisters, or wives, especially if they veiled, in comparison to when they were alone or with Muslim men. This elicited more thoughtful reactions from

participants who reflected that they had indeed noticed differences but had not recognized it until I specifically asked them to compare their experiences. Being able to recognize these nuanced differences early in data collection as a result of keeping reflective thematic post interview notes and engaging in insightful memos resulted in an improved interview guide, thus encouraging more thoughtful responses and producing enriched data.

### **Emotional Impact on the Researcher and Participants**

It is increasingly important to engage in reflexivity that examines the emotional aspects of the research process. According to King and Horrocks (2010):

“Reflexivity enables a critical stance to be taken towards the impact of both the researcher and the context in which the research takes place. This can include a wider political context and more subjective, personal perspectives”.

Some scholars argue that both reasoning and emotions are critical to deciphering meaning therefore, understanding researcher and participant emotions can aid in understanding this study.

While memos were utilized as a way to reflect on post-interview discussions, the participants’ feelings/emotions, as well as the researcher’s reflections on the experience and sensitive topics that emerged during the course of the discussion (Lofland et al.,

2006), memos were one form of examining the personal and emotional aspects of the qualitative research experience. While I expected the interviews to take some personal toll on my emotional health, I was still surprised by the impact especially emotional interviews had on me, as well as the long-term consequences of how I thought about legitimate concerns of participants. Memos aided in my post-interview emotional responses to the interviews as the experiences of participants were constantly present in my daily life through personal, social and political experiences. In many ways, memos helped me to make sense of the more difficult and traumatic experiences participants shared with me. Overall, this part of the research process allowed for me to separate my feelings from individual participants' experiences and ultimately, contributed to the overall content of the interviews, including my ability to relate to being profiled, identifying with the precarious immigration status of students and sympathizing with their sense of vulnerability as it also personally resonated with me as researcher. Researchers' emotional experiences and understandings are based on the data (Henry, 2012), thus, emotional engagement can enrich understanding which also shapes the analysis and interpretation of data as researchers produce knowledge (Lofland et al. 2006; McCorkel and Meyers 2003).

Furthermore, the interviews also sometimes elicited very emotional responses from participants. This mostly occurred with women who relayed traumatic stories of violence, but also emerged in the form of sympathy as they discussed the violent

experiences of friends and family members in the Muslim community. Older participants, specifically graduate students that were married or had children displayed more physical emotional reactions when discussing their children's experiences at school or gendered harassment of their spouses in public places. Furthermore, for many, because it was the first time speaking about these incidents, it elicited unexpected emotions. Some stated that while they had not thought about their experiences in some time or their reactions to it, they were surprised by how much it had shaped their subsequent behaviors and their perspectives. Many noted that discussing their experiences in the context of the interview felt therapeutic and was cathartic in nature because they had not discussed the incidents or the issues that weighed heavily on them before especially with non-Muslims who they felt would not be empathetic or understanding. On the other hand, some participants conveyed anger towards other Muslims, usually speaking of 'bad Muslims' or venting their frustration related to why some Muslims (specifically, women who veil) were not adapting and acculturating into Western (American) society. Some women jokingly talked about their perceived oppressed status or acted in more dominant ways during the interviews which seemed to be a way for them to process stereotypes and to gauge my response as a researcher.

Men also engaged in similar tactics to observe my reaction with some being very sympathetic and focusing their discussions on Muslim women's experiences while others engaged in demeaning Islamophobic humor about fellow Muslims or 'oppressed

women'. In some ways, I perceived this as a way to build trust and ascertain whether or not I was an insider. Men usually engaged in humor by laughing at or mocking experiences of their own trauma. While it initially surprised me, I was also aware that this was a coping mechanism that many used to compartmentalize the trauma of violence (McCrae, 1984), street harassment and Islamophobic bullying in schools. These experiences indicate that affective responses and observations impacted the research process including participant trust and ultimately, willingness to reveal personal experiences.

### **Emotional Labor and Post-Interview Debriefing**

Emotional difficulty during the interview process is not necessarily negative as many studies show that participants understand the risks and benefits of participation (King & Horrocks 2010; Wolgemuth, Erdil- Moody, Opsal, Cross, Kaanta, Dickmann, & Colomer 2015). However, I believe that the participants did not fully understand the emotional benefits of participation until the post-interview debriefing where I also discussed current research and positive impacts of the project in more depth. Essentially, I systematically revisited the consent form at the end of the interviews and also answered questions about themes that I had noticed. For many, this seemed to affirm their experiences and sense of comradery with the Muslim community at the university.

Furthermore, it also seemed to elicit more support and appreciation for the research, especially among those who were doubtful about participating. For others, they had no interest in this part of the debrief and based on their body language I wrapped it up quickly and reminded them they could always contact me in the future with any questions or concerns. Overall, while participants understood that there would be emotional risks self-reflection and affective responses, as well as transparent debriefing about the project seemed to serve as a form of support and affirmation (King and Horrocks 2010; Wolgemuth et al. 2015).

Qualitative interviewing is an interactional project (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003, p. 32) requiring *emotion work* by the researcher with participants (Hochschild 1979; Pierce 1995) before, during, and after the interviews. Qualitative researchers that study sensitive topics tend to engage in emotion work with participants in a variety of ways (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, and Liamputtong 2007; Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, and Liamputtong, 2009). Emotion work as a concept was initially developed by Arlie Hochschild (1979) as unpaid work that deals with the emotions of other in social interactions, similar to, yet differing from *emotional labor* (Hochschild 1983; 2012) which is done to manage the emotions of others in paid occupations.

For this study, I engaged in emotion work before, during and after the interviews. Once participants responded to my recruitment email, I was careful in my responses to not deter participation. Thus, I was not only grateful but courteous and supportive about

learning more about them while also revealing enough information about me as a researcher to begin to build trust. While I was initially unaware of these tactics, I became much more in tune as participants mentioned that they felt that I was respectful (especially if they had language barrier issues) and patient but also explained the study in non-academic ways. Some participants noted that they had done their research about me before reaching out about the study including doing an internet search of my name, viewing my public university profile and not just my research interests (thus legitimizing my status as a researcher) but also looking for pictures of me on the internet to gauge my racial/ethnic background. Sensitive communication via email and my public appearance seemed to be a critical component in building trust. Furthermore, I engaged in some minimal aspects of rapport building that could be considered emotion work in order to build trusting relationships with participants in the days before and the day of the interview. Beyond specifically conveying my enthusiasm to meet with them, I also followed up about personal details they may have included in their initial emails about their background and qualifications for the study. During these interactions, I generally removed my professional email signature and simply signed with my first name so that we were much less formal. For some, I gave suggestions about parking, checked in before the interview if they had mentioned they were recovering from illness or was dealing with a personal family matter. I also engaged in emotion work when I met participants for the first time by introducing myself and immediately referring to our last

emails. For example, one participant had cancelled our interview twice because his father-in-law passed away; therefore, when we finally met, I expressed my condolences again. With another participant, she had missed our previous scheduled interview because her child was sick, thus, when we met, I asked about how she was doing. While inquiring personally about participants was not required of me, I felt that it was important to treat my participants as human beings first and research subjects second.

During the interviews, I engaged in emotion work by being encouraging and patient when there were language barriers, being understanding when they were unsure if they were offending me and legitimizing their feelings by being non-judgmental. With some participants, I related to them as graduate students, with international students, I referred to my experience of working with international students as well as my immigrant status, and with undergraduates, I conveyed less of a professional demeanor and tried to be much more casual to make them comfortable. At the end of the interview, during the debriefing, many participants conveyed that they felt that I was their friend. One participant, Laila, a woman from Saudi Arabia, was very assertive about which questions she would answer and when she felt a question was answered, expressed surprise that she had openly discussed sensitive topics with a stranger as though I were her friend. She confided that she had told me things that she would never want her friends to know. I reminded her that the interviews were confidential and anonymous and that I was grateful for her candid reactions and honesty. Beyond debriefings, some participants, usually

women, wanted to chat more about my work as a researcher and as a graduate student. As noted earlier, I usually walked many participants out of the building and we chatted a bit further. This sometimes resulted in participants treating me as a new friend as multiple women asked for hugs after the interview. One woman in particular asked for a hug and also asked if she could refer her younger sister to me for advice on graduate school and careers in Sociology. Another participant asked for multiple hugs after and said that she felt like I had lifted a burden that she had been carrying around. While the topic was difficult for many participants to reflect on and discuss, allowing participants to navigate the questions in the order in which they were most comfortable (for example, giving them some time to think about a question while discussing another experience) fostered better communication and seemed to help the participants navigate their emotional responses. As the interviewer, it also allowed me to gauge when a topic was particularly interesting or was being avoided by the participant because it was something they had buried or was uncomfortable discussing. Sometimes I returned to these questions in the middle or at the end of the interview and asked participants if they were interested in adding anything that they had previously declined to answer, and they were usually more forthcoming.

### **Crisis of Representation**

The crisis of representation in qualitative research refers to the power difference

between the researcher and respondent (Anderson, 2009) and encourages the accurate representation of participants in field notes, transcripts and published data (Anderson 2009; Corbin & Strauss 2008; National Science Foundation 2003). I engaged in several techniques to address this including typing up a first draft of my notes related to the interviews in a memo format with emergent themes to begin to make comparisons and inferences from the interview data. This was especially useful during weeks where I had multiple interviews scheduled and was unable to have transcriptions done immediately. While it is impossible to accurately account for all the ways in which a researcher impacts their findings, the strategies I employed including probing and asking for clarification of responses to address potential misrepresentation, revisiting their responses in related questions, (for example, when you stated such and such, is this what you meant or were you referring to something else). Furthermore, feminist methodological approaches to research use techniques with marginalized groups including victimized individuals to negate power, control and trust that could exist between the researcher and interviewee (Renzetti 1997; Riger 1999).

### **Intersectional Approach to Research Methodology**

Social constructionist approaches examine understandings of the world that are based on shared assumptions about reality (King and Horrocks 2010). Furthermore, intersectionality as a feminist theoretical perspective related to both critical race theory

race (women's oppression is linked to intersectional axes of oppression that includes gender, race and class) can enhance the multiracial lens that acknowledges various forms of inequality embedded in racial power systems that also interacts with inequalities including immigrant/citizenship status and shapes gendered experiences. Multiracial feminism incorporates groups that are socially and legally subordinate (including through marginalized citizenship status) and allows an intersectional examination that centers race, ethnicity, gender, class and aspects of transnational identities such as legal statuses and nationality. This perspective is also recognized as US Third World Feminism or multicultural feminism. The multiracial feminist framework acknowledges various locations of inequality while emphasizing intersectionality (Crenshaw et al, 1995), the matrix of domination (power hierarchy with individuals situated according to difference) (Collins, 1990) and transnationalism (Mohanty & Alexander, 1997; Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Henne & Troshynski, 2013). Multiracial feminism is a conceptual framework that combines intersectionality and transnational (Third World) feminist theory that can be used to address how gender matters in racialized, classed and national formations of globalization that is relevant to the lives of immigrants including autonomy and resistance (Mohanty & Alexander, 1997; Mohanty, 2003) as transnational citizens. Intersectionality has been criticized for its domestic centered analysis that is hindered by country context and therefore, is unable to reflect the transnational aspects of women's lives (Purkayastha, 2012; Mahler, Chaudhuri & Patil, 2015) however, along with the

multiracial feminist framework, a gender-centered analysis of diverse populations like Muslims and Muslims Americans can be better understood. An analysis from a multiracial feminist perspective therefore widens our scope of understanding to consider the intersections between gender, race/ethnicity and immigrant status that simultaneously informs the contextual standpoint of international students (temporary immigrants) as well as first and second-generation immigrants including their status as privileged or disadvantaged in their country of origin along with the precarious status they occupy in the US within the national context.

Zinn and Dill's (2005) multiracial feminist framework is based on social relations where gender, race and class differences are utilized as organizing aspects of society that positions groups to encounter either opportunity or oppression within the structure. Thus, women are situated within multiple systems of domination and this encompasses perspectives developed by women of color, shaped by the standpoint of being outsiders within a larger system, and provides marginalized views of society as a result of social location (including acknowledging race as a power system that shapes gender through structural inequalities that reshapes the lives of women) (Zinn & Dill, 2005). Class is important in this analysis as international students are generally more privileged and thus, bring more financial and educational resources to their destination countries in comparison to their lower-income immigrant counterparts. While a

complete class analysis cannot be accounted for in this study, it is important to acknowledge the importance of social locations and backgrounds that shape the experiences of international and immigrant students.

In order to challenge knowledge created without women's narratives, placing women at the center contributes to enhancing the research (Smith, 1990). It is important to consider that with some marginalized populations, both men and women remain absent in the literature. Thus, domestic students as the majority on American campuses have been studied extensively while international students have not; much like undergraduates in comparison to graduate students. Additionally, Muslim women's experiences have been examined more so than men's especially in relation to higher education. Furthermore, international students have been studied more than immigrant students, especially those of racial/ethnic and religious minority backgrounds. Minority statuses on campus bring additional research challenges to studying these types of students (Sallee, 2011) including cultural differences, language barriers, transient status on campuses and heterogeneity. Yet, the significant population of international students has increased nationally over the years and has resulted in rich contributions to colleges and universities in terms of diversity and economic growth. Placing marginalized students at the center of this study addresses the marginalization of these groups while expanding knowledge. Understanding how unique social

locations (as Muslims, as international or graduate students) (Sprague, 2005), impacts their experiences on American college campuses. Gender remains a major component in this study as Muslim women (especially those who veil) are particularly susceptible to harassment and violence in public spaces while overall, women are disproportionately victims of violence. The role of culture and gender thus remain important in addressing this overlooked population.

### **Data Management, Analysis Procedure & Research Questions**

#### **Interviews**

After reviewing the consent form with participants and answering their questions about my role as researcher and interviewer, I immediately assigned anonymous participant identification numbers to protect the students' identities. Then, I proceeded with the demographic questionnaire as a way to get to know participants. In this way, I casually asked about their student statuses, degree programs and racial/ethnic, as well as cultural background. Specifically, these questions served as a way of getting to know the participant in a conversational manner including asking about their marital status (many volunteered whether they had children or if they had recently gotten married), if they identified with any particular denomination of Islam and if they attended the mosque. Many times, I used the term masjid (mosque) for cultural relevance. Once this was complete, I informed the participant about the topical structure of the interview guide and

again asked if they had any further questions before I turned on the recorder. When the recorder was on, I usually let the participant know it was on as many exhibited concerns that they would be recorded from the second they entered the room or signed the consent form. In fact, some hesitated to sign before asking if I had been recording them the whole time (which I had not done)<sup>67</sup>. To build trust and ease participants' concern about privacy being violated, I also verbally indicated when I was checking the recording device to remind them that they did not have to say anything they did not want to be taped. While this may seem like a way to deter participants from being honest, participants were very forthcoming during the interviews.

**TABLE 7** Interview Details

<b>Number of In-Person Interviews</b>	42
<b>Number of Phone Interviews</b>	8
<b>Interview Length (Range)</b>	31 - 96 minutes
<b>Interview Length (Mean)</b>	60 minutes

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<sup>67</sup> While I always let participants know that I had both a recorder and my phone, they were usually informed that I would be recording on my phone using an application that would allow me to easily upload it into a password protected account. The audio files were anonymously labeled by a random participant number and a recording number. Once uploaded to the password protected data drive, the audio files were labeled with participant number, recording number, and a pseudonym. The audio files were later deleted from my phone and only kept on the data drive. Beyond interviews that I transcribed myself on a password protected computer in a private location, some interviews were sent to a professional transcription service where files were uploaded using the anonymous participant identification numbers and pseudonyms.

In total, I conducted 50 interviews. The majority (n=42) were conducted in-person. Interviews ranged from about 30 minutes to up to 96 minutes. On average, an interview took approximately 60 minutes. The interview guide was structured in a way that allowed for broad questions to be asked first including asking about the meaning of the participants' Muslim identity. Next, students were asked about their awareness of services on campus for racial, ethnic and religious minorities, as well as important issues of concern to them based on their various social locations. Participants were also asked if they had any preconceived positive or negative ideas about life in the US, in the state (if they had moved here from elsewhere) and at the university and then asked about if it was as it seemed. At this point, they were asked about anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies in broader society, as well as if they had experienced discrimination based on their gender, race/ethnicity, religious or immigrant status and they were encouraged to provide narrative about which identity they think triggered the incident whether verbal or physical and the location. While participants were asked about interactions in the state, off and on-campus, including their involvement in student organizations for racial/ethnic and religious minorities and if they felt they had a cultural space and voice. They were also asked about their sense of safety and independence in the aftermath of incidents. Regarding their experiences on-campus, they were also asked if they felt other students, faculty or staff had misconceptions about them and if they had taken any steps to promote awareness of issues they exhibited concern about. Finally, student participants were

asked to provide recommendations and suggestions to improve diversity and inclusion in relation to the climate of their campus.

### **Data Saturation**

Ultimately, centralizing the knowledge constructed by participants via their shared understanding of their social position, the meanings they ascribe to their experiences and their social interactions contributes to a better understanding of the gendered and racialized Muslim experience from the everyday lived experiences. Thus, the interviews produced thick description (Denzin 1989/2001; Geertz 1973) of participants' accounts of their experiences and understanding given the social and political climate. Thick description emphasizes detailed information obtained from participants but also allows for interpretation of the data as it is collected (Schwandt, 2007). Thick data is a result of interpreting description, not just obtaining detailed descriptions (Schwandt, 2007) therefore, along with approaches that support participants' perspectives of their experiences (Denzin, 2001; Harnois, 2010; Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2001), it is a central tenet of understanding social phenomenon. The flexibility in the sequence and content of the questions (Rubin and Rubin, 1995) for this study allowed for thick description to emerge while this technique simultaneously allowed to data collection and analysis. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008),

validity and reliability of emerging themes are better assessed when data is collected and analyzed. Furthermore, engaging in this process, along with keeping detailed memos aided in identifying preliminary themes related to participant experiences, perceptions and protocol improvement that ultimately led to recognizing data saturation.

### **Coding & Analysis**

Given the exploratory nature of this study, multiple coding methods were utilized to code the transcripts. Furthermore, as the interviews were coded, I frequently revisited the research memos to review and update emerging themes and sub-themes. Prior to beginning formal coding, I also repeatedly read through the transcripts along with listening to the audio (this also helped with clarifying words and also pinpointing emotional topics for participants as their voices broke or they apologized for their reactions). Additionally, becoming better acquainted with the data in this way revealed themes and ideas that was more difficult to identify in earlier phases of analysis.

Additional steps were taken to immediately anonymize the memos, interview notes and demographic questionnaires. Once participants signed consent forms, they were given unique identification numbers that were later anonymized as pseudonyms based on popular names in their country of origin. The audio recorded interviews were transcribed

into Word files and a multi-step coding pattern including NVIVO and thematic analysis (via hand coding) was used. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed<sup>68</sup>. Post transcription, the data will be examined with pattern and content analysis (Patton, 1990), a process which includes seeking repeated phrases or trends in text<sup>69</sup> (Strauss, 1987; Ryan & Bernard, n.d.). The measure of content analysis is time consuming as it requires the ability to identify potentially relevant concepts within the interviews as well as developing appropriate coding thereafter (Shaw, 2006). In terms of pattern analysis, direct quotes and paraphrasing were examined. Thematic analysis which relies on identifiable themes and patterns derived from quotes and common ideas (Aronson, 1994) was used to define emerging codes in vocabulary, feelings and perceptions. Themes are identified by the collaboration of fragmented experiences which appear meaningless in the context of one interview; however, the emergence of cultural links between multiple interviews emphasizes a distinct collective experience (Aronson, 1994).

The data analyses focus on answer the following research questions:

- How do Muslim students make sense of their identities and experiences after the 2016 Presidential election?

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<sup>68</sup> Partial transcription funds provided by a research grant from the Center for the Study of Diversity.

<sup>69</sup> This process of word repetition has various names including key-indigenous terms, and key-words-in-contexts and can be done informally or formally with qualitative data analysis software (Ryan & Bernard, n.d.).

- How do intersecting identities, specifically, gender, race/ethnicity, and citizenship status, as well as, national background, interact with perceived discrimination and other experiences of Muslim students?
- How does the racialization of Muslims impact student experiences? How and to what extent do racialized notions of Muslims shape student experiences on American college campuses?
- What formal and informal help seeking behaviors do Muslim students utilize on campus in relation to varying forms of discrimination?

Survey data were initially assessed in Qualtrics (including descriptive statistics); however, given the small sample size, Dedoose (qualitative software) was primarily used for data analysis, and subsequently NVIVO for the interviews. Many of the survey questions were open-ended and thus, were analyzed using qualitative open coding techniques (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2010). Initially, memos and transcripts were revised to identify relevant categories and codes grounded in the data. Interviews were initially coded with deductive codes and preliminary themes from the pilot study that emerged from the research questions which included *gender hypervisibility* and

*invisibility* (specifically for women who did not veil), with sub codes related to *vulnerability, victimization, and isolation*.

The interviews were transcribed into text files by a commonly used professional transcription service (Rev). Transcripts were usually between 25 to 45 pages in length depending on the questions participants chose to elaborate more on or if they had specific stories they wanted to share. Audio recordings and subsequently, text files, were anonymous as identifying information was removed and files were labeled with pseudonyms (a process that was implemented immediately after the interview was completed). A multi-step coding pattern followed which included the researcher initially revisiting the memos and pilot study and conducting thematic analysis via hand coding. Post-transcription the data was examined with pattern and content analysis (Patton, 1990), which includes seeking repeated phrases or trends in text. The measure of content analysis is time consuming as it requires the ability to identify potentially relevant concepts within the interviews as well as developing appropriate coding thereafter (Shaw, 2006). In terms of pattern analysis, direct quotes and paraphrasing were examined. Thematic analysis relies on identifiable themes and recurring patterns derived from common ideas (Aronson, 1994) which was used to define emerging codes in vocabulary, feelings and perceptions. Themes are identified by the collaboration of fragmented experiences which appear meaningless in the context of one interview, however, the emergence of cultural links between multiple interviews emphasizes a distinct collective

experience (Aronson, 1994). Themes that were initially developed from the short pilot study were reassessed and expanded upon during this process. As new codes and subcodes developed, the transcripts were recoded to account for new and developing information (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

Interviews were initially coded with deductive codes that emerged from the initial pilot study findings which included *intolerance* and *hate speech*, *gender hypervisibility*, *microaggressions*, *institutional support or lack thereof*, *multiple marginalization based on racial/ethnic identity*, *perceived religious* and *immigrant status*. Broad codes elicited from the data included overlapping issues experienced both on and off campus such as *gender hypervisibility or invisibility*, *perceived risk of victimization including verbal and physical intolerance*, and *perspectives on diversity and inclusion*. Among graduate students, while *family and lifestyle* was a broad code, significantly related sub-codes emerged as analysis progressed, included *values*, *child-rearing in an increasingly Islamophobic climate in the US*, and *the risk of visiting family overseas*. Among undergraduates, an important code related to the US climate was the *post-9/11 normalization of anti-Muslim bullying and attitudes* among students between age 18 to 22. Initial broad gender codes such as *gender hypervisibility and invisibility* were expanded upon to include ‘undercover’ Muslim women’s experiences (those who did not veil), othering and surveillance of veiled women, and men’s internalization of ethnic names and perceived stereotypes about them as oppressors. Throughout the analysis,

frequent comparisons between memo notes, broad codes, and evolving subcodes were assessed to ensure that findings were logically characterized and supported.

Deductive codes from both the existing literature and pilot study guided in the analysis of the interview data. Throughout data analysis, new codes and subcodes emerged, it became necessary to review the transcripts and revise earlier codes to account for the new information (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Recoding also contributed to identifying data saturation (Corbin & Straus, 2008) among and across certain social locations in the sample. Similarities and differences between the participants emerged in the memos but were more profound in the coding of the data and was therefore examined in a comparative way to assess validity and consistency of claims across the sample. Beyond thematic coding, I also engaged in incident by incident coding (Charmaz, 2006) where specific events in the transcripts were coded and compared to previous incidents in the data. Using a comparative lens allowed me to recognize nuances and inconsistencies in the data (Corbin & Strauss 2008). Furthermore, this approach resulted in validity checks as I was open to findings that contradicted my theoretical approach and findings supported by previous reviews of the literature which resulted in the exploration of new concepts (Corbin & Strauss 2008). Finally, related codes were categorized in order to reflect significant themes that had emerged from the data.

This process allowed for the codes, themes, and findings to emerge from the data, which are reported in detail in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4**

### **INTERSECTIONAL GENDERED ISLAMOPHOBIA**

Drawing from 27 interviews this chapter examines gendered Islamophobia at the intersections of race, ethnicity, and immigrant identity. Findings indicate an increased sense of vulnerability related to women's hypervisibility as a result of gendered religious and ethnic dress, as well as multiple marginalizations, including societal prejudice related to perceptions of racial/ethnic identity and legal status. This informs our understanding of intragender and intergender harassment at other social locations, thus reshaping the Muslim American and immigrant experience in the US.

I'm not really seen as Muslim because *people assume Muslims look a certain way*, even though I am... I feel like if you don't wear it [the hijab] you're assumed to be Christian. *A lot of people when they first meet me ask my ethnicity. I think it's the exotic fetish like, "Oh, we don't know what this is." Previously when I've been asked and I've responded, "Arab" I've had people dramatically jump away, I've had people throw things at me, I've had people question my standing on ISIS.*

*I have privilege though, in the fact that I don't have to share that with everyone. Now that I've found that puts me in danger in some places, I choose when and where to share it.* I have to be around people where I know if someone throws something at me or someone does something, I can still be safe. *I know my hijabi sisters don't have that option. I don't know if all Muslims who aren't very obviously Muslims feel this way, but you feel like you're undercover all the time, because you're like, "Would you still talk to me if you knew I was Muslim? Would you? Actually, though?"*

**-Sabrina**

Sabrina, an American-born graduate student who identifies as Moroccan, is a fair-skinned Black woman with curly blonde hair and hazel eyes. On a daily basis, she does not wear any traditional Islamic covering, with the exception of holidays and special

events. Her name<sup>70</sup> is also not identifiable as Muslim and thus, in broader society, she is usually not perceived to be Muslim. In her reflection, she touches on various aspects of her identity: how she's exoticized sexually, rejected for being Muslim, has felt vulnerable for revealing her identity, and faced discrimination. But she also reflects that her experience is comparatively one of privilege when considering veiled women who do not have the option to conceal their Muslim-ness. Sabrina's experiences highlight the intersections of her gender, perceived race, and ethnicity, as well as her religious identity, and even her status as American. She later talks about switching between identities by centering the ones that make her less vulnerable, such as hiding her Arab ancestry and Muslim faith. Understanding why Muslim women might resist anti-Muslim bias in such ways requires us to situate their experiences in the last 20 years and the uniqueness of American Islamophobia. In this chapter, these themes are apparent throughout the experiences of Muslim women. Specifically, I examine the impact of gendered and racialized harassment (gendered racism) as inherently interconnected to notions of race/ethnicity and citizenship status for Muslim women.

In this chapter, I discuss how gendered and racialized hypervisibility can result in increased vulnerability and in some cases, subsequent victimization for Muslim women in different public spaces, particularly during the Trump Era, a time of heightened

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<sup>70</sup> While the name Sabrina is a pseudonym, it is similar to her real name in that it is similarly popular in her country of origin and can be perceived as Anglo.

awareness, concern, and fear for marginalized minorities, that bears similarities to hypervigilance after 9/11. I focus on off-campus incidents that are both gendered and racialized. While all incidents can be considered microaggressions, gender based and anti-Muslim harassment in public places include intragender encounters; the targeting of women by other women, as well as men targeting women, yet, these acts still consist of comments regarding women's bodies and hinder mobility in public spaces through fostering precautionary behavior and exacerbating fear of victimization.

### **Introduction**

The broader context of discrimination against Muslim people is crucial to understanding the experiences of Muslim women. In this chapter, I set the stage for analysis of the intersection of Islamophobia and gender by briefly revisiting the existing literature on Islamophobia after 9/11, the impact on Muslim women, the intersections of gender, race, and religious identity, and the specific vulnerability of public harassment related to Muslim women's experiences. Then, I examine how the ethno-religious and racialized discrimination (Zine, 2006) that emerges from orientalism (Said, 1979; Hoodfar, 1993) manifests itself in intersectional gendered Islamophobia. The themes examined in this chapter focus on the verbal and physical victimization Muslim women face in public spaces as a result of hypervisibility that increases their vulnerability. The focus on almost daily incidents in this section surround gendered anti-Muslim harassment

in public spaces that include microaggressions, prejudiced behavior and comments, as well as different gender dynamics, such as women targeting other women in contrast with the commonly accepted notion of harassment from men, and this suggests a complex power dynamic. Similar to post 9/11, hate-based incidents against marginalized Muslim and Muslim-passing people increased immediately after the 2016 US Presidential Election (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). The next section focuses on the impact of 9/11 on Muslim women to draw parallels between that time period and in the Trump Era.

### **Gendered Violence and Muslim Women**

The experiences of Muslim men and women have been historically different, especially in relation to violence, visibility, deportations and detainment. While men were targeted by more formal legal mechanisms<sup>71</sup>, women were more often victimized by societal perceptions of Muslims and experienced bias in public life, including vulnerability to violence, yet their experiences were initially under-studied. Muslim women endured surveillance, detention and deportation after 9/11, and the impact on women who may have lost male family members as a result of changing policies also remains understudied. Post 9/11 policies<sup>72</sup> along with increased border protection,

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<sup>71</sup> In the aftermath of 9/11, approximately 7,000 Muslim men were deported and over 500 Muslim men (most of them Arab) were interviewed by law enforcement, with the FBI primarily targeting working class men who were non-citizens, naturalized immigrants or US-born citizens (Naber, 2006).

<sup>72</sup> As discussed in the literature review, this includes The Patriot Act (2001), The Homeland Security Act (2002), Countering Violent-Extremism Programs (CVE), National Security Entry and Exit Registration System (NSEERS), the

reinforced notions of ‘otherness’ related to cultural backwardness and notions of the oppressed Muslim women who sought liberation (Naber, 2006), while men were viewed as inherently violent and potential terrorists. These discourses have legitimized racism against communities perceived to be Arab, Middle Eastern and Muslim<sup>73</sup>.

The increase in scholarship since 9/11 regarding Muslims and race (Islamophobia) (Garner & Selod, 2015), has more recently begun to encompass the term *racialization* to examine the experiences of Muslims in Europe and the US (Cainker, 2009; Kibria, 2011; Rana, 2011; Meer, 2013; Garner and Selod, 2015; Moosavi, 2015, Maira, 2016; Zopf, 2017). Selod has argued that visibility plays a critical role in racial categorization in the Muslim experience, including religious signifiers that have acquired racial meaning including wearing the hijab, having a Muslim name, speaking a foreign language or with an accent. While aspects of racialization will be considered in the next chapter, the significance of racial meaning and gendered consequences remains important. Gender intersects with race and racialization (Glenn, 2015) and has resulted in notions of Muslim women as oppressed and in need of saving (Ahmed 1992; Cainkar,

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creation of the Department of Homeland Security (2002), the NYPD Muslim Surveillance Program/Demographic Unit, expanding National Security Agency and US Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court information sharing on American citizens and foreigners etc.

<sup>73</sup> Additionally, while the FBI targeted non-citizens, naturalized immigrants and US-born citizens (Naber, 2006), lawyers, scholars and activists note that the backlash against Arabs, Middle Easterners, Muslims and South Asians is similar to historical racial struggles in the US, particularly Japanese internment and mass African American incarceration, in terms of facing collective punishment in one’s homeland.

2009; Razack, 2008; Abu-Lughod, 2002; Maira, 2016). Gendered and racialized experiences of Muslim and Muslim American bodies also means that negative stereotypes have resulted in hyper surveillance by both the nation and private citizens including towards South Asians and Arabs whose ethnicity became increasingly suspect in the post 9/11 socio-political context. *Gendered racialization* also indicates that bodies are raced in ways that are shaped by gender, including women wearing the hijab, being seen as threats to American values or Muslim men being viewed as potential terrorists (Selod, 2018). Muslim identity has also been historically associated with negative stereotypes including terrorism, misogyny, barbarism, and anti-feminism ( Abu-Lughod, 2002; Bayoumi, 2006; Cainkar, 2009; Rana, 2011; Razack, 2008; Said, 1978) that manifests into modern-day experiences of discrimination and social exclusion, including racial profiling and hate violence (Kibria, 1998; Tuan, 1999; Dhingra, 2008; Kim, 2009; Mir, 2014; Joshi 2006).

Gendered Muslim identity in the US has also resulted in hypervisibility and increased vulnerability for women (Eisenstein, 2006; Allen, 2015; Franks, 2000; Finn, 2011; Mir, 2011; Perry 2014). The *hijab*, the Muslim headscarf worn by women, is the second highest ‘trigger’ of discrimination after ethnicity and religion (CAIR, 2005) yet, the focus on ethnic hatred sometimes renders the impact of gendered violence against Muslim women as invisible and thus, normalized (Eisentein, 2006). Addressing the politicized and racialized surveillance of South Asian and Middle Eastern women, Finn

(2011) notes that Muslim women in the United States now endure *racialized subjectivity* which has altered the lived experiences of women racialized as Muslim after 9/11<sup>74</sup>.

Within the Muslim community, women and girls are extremely at risk for violence because of their perceived visible religious status (Perry, 2014). Muslim women's risks are associated with their choice to cover their hair and body (with veiling widely discussed in current literature) (Gregory, 2015; Mir, 2011; Ameen, 2012; Macias, 2016; Salman, 2015; Karandish, 2014; Maruoka, 2009), thus making women easily identifiable as Muslim and increasing their visibility and vulnerability after 9/11. The intersectional subjectivity of gender, religion, race/ethnicity, along with perceptions of 'foreignness', complicates patterns of violence (Perry, 2014). While some scholars argue that there are a variety of characteristics unique to the female Islamic experience in the west<sup>75</sup>, the most important in my analysis is the Muslim dress code that symbolizes modesty and identifies Muslim women from non-Muslim women (Perry, 2014). This creates an easily recognizable target for hate crimes, discrimination, and violence on women's bodies (Haddad, 2007; Perry, 2014).

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<sup>74</sup> White Muslim women have also noted that Islam racializes their identities in unique ways that other religious communities do not experience (Chaudhry, 2013).

<sup>75</sup> Perry argues that there are multiple characteristics that are unique to the female Islamic experience in the West including gendered status in relation to discriminatory access to education, health and social resources, cultural identity as shaped by structural and cultural constraints through socialization and patriarchy (see also Essers & Benschop, 2009), immigrant and minority status that leads to economic and social marginalization, language barriers that further contribute to a loss of power (see also Predelli, 2004) religious identity resulting in separation from men and wider society, Islamic dress code that symbolizes modesty and identifies women from non-Muslims thereby, creating an easily recognizable target for hate crimes, discrimination and violence of bodily integrity (See also Haddad, 2007).

Additionally, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 essentially reshaped Muslim American women's gendered performances at the personal, political, social and symbolic level in order to achieve survival (Mir, 2011). Muslim women are the first to be identified as Islamic through their clothing, thus creating fear and pity as they are hyper-feminized as helpless and immobile yet are still associated with ideas surrounding terrorism (Mir, 2011)<sup>76</sup>. While there is an understanding of the impact of 9/11 on college aged Muslim women, it can be argued that the rise in Islamophobia may also have impacted a new generation of Muslims in the US, as well as individuals perceived to be Muslim in more recent years. Overall, Muslim women note that post-9/11 American society created a sense of conflict between being Muslim and being American: contemporary discourse defines Muslim-American and de-Americanizes the Muslim identity. Muslim identity becomes a complex site where culture religion, class, gender, nationality, citizenship and sexuality intersect while being a woman and a Muslim American takes center stage (Mir, 2011). Furthermore, Muslim women endure racialized subjectivity in the US as a result of surveillance by broader society (Finn, 2011) that has endured during the Trump Era.

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<sup>76</sup> In Mir's (2011) post 9/11 study of Muslim women on college campuses in the Washington, DC area, women who chose to not wear hijabs embraced invisibility as a form of safety through trying to pass as non-Muslim in order to be accepted by mainstream society and viewed the decision as one that would aid in their goals of achieving change and tolerance. Muslim college students noted that visibility and silence was no longer an option during times of high anti-Muslim sentiment, and acknowledged changing planned career paths as they felt they would not be welcome in politics, diplomacy or government jobs (Mir, 2011). Other studies indicate that Muslim women's choice to veil in the aftermath of 9/11 has been utilized as a form of resistance that engaged with larger identity movements across the globe and has also served as a political tool to counter anti-Islamic sentiment in the West (Maruoka, 2007). Research shows that Muslim women also utilized hybrid identities in the aftermath of 9/11 to subvert and transgress dominant narratives that defined what being a Muslim woman meant (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010).

The discourse surrounding Muslim women portrays them as oppressed by Muslim men; thus, violence against Muslim women has sometimes been viewed as gender-based violence rooted in culture<sup>77</sup>. However, this does not take into account economic, social and political contexts that ‘other’ Muslim women (Bakali, 2016). Post 9/11, the War on Terror coopted feminist discourse by framing the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq as an attempt to liberate oppressed women (Bakali, 2016). Women politicians and feminist groups organized to ‘save’ Muslim women from ‘dangerous Muslim men’ and violent, backwards, oppressive cultures, however, some scholars argue that this discourse perpetuated a hegemonic relationship between the West and the East (Bakali, 2016; Thobani, 2010). Ultimately, framing the War on Terror as a women’s rights issue championed by the US and Canada silenced Muslim women, interpreted gendered oppression in the Muslim community as cultural, and centered honor-based violence, while excluding violence against Muslim women by others, including non-Muslim men and women (Morey & Yaqin, 2011)<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> The narratives surrounding Muslim women post-9/11 have primarily centered on gendered violence as an ‘over there’ issue or one within the Muslim family, including focus on honor-based violence (Wright, 2007), rather than the impact of external violence from communities and society to Muslim women. Some scholars have argued that it is time to move away from private violence and the discourse surrounding oppression and patriarchy to adequately acknowledge public violence against Muslim women by larger society including racism and sexism (Perry, 2014). In this regard, gendered violence has taken on a unique form in relation to Muslim women who are susceptible to victimization as a result of their perceived gender, racial/ethnic and religious identities that construe them as ‘foreign’.

<sup>78</sup> Honor killings and honor-based violence is usually defined as family enacted violence upon a member of a cultural group who is perceived to have brought family or communal dishonor. While this usually occurs in the context of marriage, it is usually not framed as violence against women but rather, problematically, as a type of violence that is rooted in the values of other cultures thus, constructing Western violence against women as inherently different

Furthermore, media and political discourse in the US surrounding terrorism has resulted in two frames for Muslim women that ultimately result in notions of good and bad Muslim women. While the first narrative constructs Muslim women as victims that escape Islam, the other frames Muslim women as needing to be saved from oppression, with the exception of Muslim women who turn against their faith via empowerment and are thus viewed by Western societies as native informants (Jiwani, 2010; Bakali, 2016). Narratives surrounding notions of bad Muslim men and women can be “verified” by insiders<sup>79</sup>, thus, if some Muslim women claim that Islamic culture is oppressive, then it must be.<sup>80</sup>

Gendered Islamophobia is ethno-religious and racialized discrimination against Muslim women (Zine, 2006). It emerges from historical orientalist notions of Muslim women as backward and oppressed, victimized by misogynist societies (Hoodfar, 1993; Said, 1979), and has been used to rationalize imperialism over Muslims; with the most frequent justification being that the West can provide emancipation for Muslim women

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however, similar crimes can be seen in the West as domestic violence or crimes of passion (Bakali, 2016). Morey and Yaqin note that this discourse frames honor killing as a Muslim issue and thus, upholds the divide between notions of the civilized West and unenlightened Other.

<sup>79</sup> However, some scholars argue that native informants lack the credentials to speak authoritatively about Islam or Muslim-majority nations#. Post 9/11 has created a niche for self identified critical feminist Muslim women to reproduce stereotypes regarding gender oppression in the Muslim community via informing the West about the oppressive nature of Islam including backwardness and misogyny of Muslims and Arabs that readily upheld orientalist views of the other in the media and politics of the West, including justification for the war and destruction in the Middle East (Bakali, 2016).

<sup>80</sup> In the context of this study, this can also be seen with notions of ‘good Muslims’ and ‘bad Muslims’ as Hijabi women can thus be seen as ‘bad Muslims’ because of their religious affiliation whereas, traditionally in the US, ‘bad Muslims’ was a label reserved for Brown men who could be labeled ‘terrorist’.

(Zine, 2006). Stereotypes have resulted in notions of Muslim women that have fostered binary spaces of the West as modern and progressive and the East as illiberal; the epistemic violence (Spivak) of these social constructs bears consequences for Muslim women/girls<sup>81</sup> (Zine, 2006). *Hijabophobia*<sup>82</sup>, a term utilized by the media in France, Turkey, and Canada (Quebec) that viewed the hijab as an assault on the dominant civic values of women's liberty and denial of national identity (Zine, 2006; Misbahuddin, 1996). Ultimately, the veil bears social messages of cultural and gendered norms as meanings are mapped onto bodies (Clarke, 2003; Hoodfar, 2003), and, for girls and women, this could mean additional consequences (Driscoll, 1997). Veiled Muslim women's bodies are marked by intersections of gender, body, and culture that express messages that can be interpreted as more than religious, but also social and political.

Muslim identity in the US has become a complex site where gender, race/ethnicity, and citizenship status take center stage for Muslim women (Mir, 2011).

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<sup>81</sup> For example, one impact of gendered Islamophobia is workplace discrimination towards women who wear the hijab (Parker-Jenkins, 1999).

<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Mir (2011) argues that American citizenship for Muslims requires assimilation (Selod, 2015) and is harmful to cultural identities of being Muslim, ethnic, transnational and immigrant (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Women also recognized the decline of the American dream post-9/11 as Muslims faded into hiding, disguised themselves and began to fear any association with Islam or other Muslims (Mir, 2011). Some women continued to keep social relations with fellow Muslims, while others attempted to maintain broader relationships with mainstream American society, believing that isolation was a political issue that embodied a sense of cultural backwardness (Mir, 2011). For Muslims in America to successfully integrate in a post-9/11 society, the process requires disguising oneself as less religious, less cultural, and less ethnic, and for many, this means removing the veil. Resistance to these de-identifiers results in one having a 'loud identity' that makes it difficult to participate in mainstream society and belong to the nation-state (Mir, 2011).

Acknowledging the overlapping intersectional categories of gender, race/ethnicity, and citizenship status, with a central focus on religious identity, highlights the diverse experiences of Muslims. The specificity of attributing anti-Muslim violence to only ‘Arab or Middle Eastern’ people excludes other Muslims across race, ethnicity and national origin. Furthermore, this type of categorization minimizes the racial consequences behind the notion of the ‘Muslim threat’ by marginalizing its impact across gender.

While Muslim men experience Islamophobic surveillance differently in society, for example, through constructions of notions of ‘bad Muslims’ such as terrorists, women are targeted for challenging the norms of acceptability in American culture. Power and the surveillant gaze (Finn, 2011) has shifted to ordinary citizens who lack authoritative power while government encouraged surveillance has constructed a new form of racial subjugation on US soil that impacts already marginalized women. Displaying cultural artifacts has become a marker that could potentially incite ‘discriminatory, disciplinary and disproportionate levels of surveillance in public places’ (Finn, 2011). Because Islam is viewed as backwards, misogynistic, and anti-feminist, Muslim women are seen as ‘culturally dangerous’ and threatening risks to public safety and security (Zempi & Chakraborti, 2014) and thus endure public scrutiny for Islamic practices such as wearing the hijab and are thus perceived as anti-modern (Selod 2015; 2018). In Selod’s (2018) study of South Asian and Arab Muslim men and women’s encounters with racialized surveillance, she finds that private citizens justify monitoring Muslim bodies because

they are perceived to be a threat to the norms and culture of the US. Furthermore, hijabis, Muslim women who wear the headscarf, are also conveyed messages regarding how being Muslim results in losing their beauty by covering, thus Western beauty standards also influence how Muslim women are seen. Muslim women also reported the ‘constant gaze’ of private citizens that sometimes resulted in verbal confrontations where Muslim women were accused of “polluting society”, told they were oppressed and abused. In other cases, professional women at work were also assumed to be foreigners who did not speak English as a result of wearing a hijab. In many ways, Muslim women’s choice to cover is seen as anti-American/anti-Western which can also be seen in security searches at airports where Muslim women are frequently selected for further security checks that are also a symbolic demonstration of national security to make some bodies feel safer (Selod, 2018).<sup>83</sup> Muslim women’s choice to cover or not cover their bodies and the increasing visibility of veiled women in public spaces has also fostered an international legal climate where niqabs (face veils) are increasingly criminalized in public spaces<sup>84</sup>.

The experiences of Muslim women remain critical to understandings surrounding

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<sup>83</sup> Selod’s work discusses the phenomenon of surveilled bodies as gendered racialization rather than gendered Islamophobia.

<sup>84</sup> For example, in 2009, under President Nicolas Sarkozy, France banned face covering, including introducing legislation to protect women from being forced to wear the niqab (Bish and Zempi, 2018). Furthermore, other European countries including Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Italy, and Bulgaria have also introduced bans that have prompted British parliamentarians to also consider it. According to Bish & Zempi (2018), such laws feed into the narrative that Muslim women need protection from oppressive misogynistic Islamic families while simultaneously promoting intolerance towards Muslim women, and further others women who are infantilized, viewed as weak, and perpetuates the idea that Muslim women do not belong in Western societies, thus encouraging them to stay out of public view (Bish & Zempi, 2018).

gendered racism in 2016 and beyond not just because of the similarities, but also the surge in Islamophobia incidents in recent years mimics, and in some cases, exceeds, the level of violence documented against Muslims in the months after 9/11. The next section sheds light on the precarious predicament of the intersections of gender, perceived racial/ethnic, religious, and immigrant identity, in relation to women's experiences of harassment in public spaces as a result of surveillance.

### **Vulnerability & Hypervisibility: Public Harassment of Muslim Women**

Within 10 days of the 2016 US Presidential Election, there were over 900 cases of violence against marginalized racial/ethnic minority groups (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). Recent studies argue that the 2016 Presidential Election in particular, was characterized by prejudice towards groups that were targeted throughout the campaign via discriminatory rhetoric which subsequently, normalized the societal acceptability of prejudice, and thus, resulted in increased bias related incidents (Crandall, Miller & White, 2018)<sup>85</sup>. The *Communities on Fire Report* (South Asian Americans Leading Together, 2018) found that between November 2016 and November 2017, there were 302 bias incidents against both Muslim people and those perceived to be as such, including South

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<sup>85</sup> Similarly, veiled women faced increased risks of violence in the United Kingdom post-Brexit, including an increased in hate crimes against Muslims in 2016 that was both misogynistic and Islamophobic (Zempi & Chakraborti, 2014; Bish & Zempi, 2018).

Asians, Sikhs, Hindus, and Middle Easterners. This was a 45 percent increase from 2015 and outpaces the level of violence against Brown communities since 9/11. Of the over 300 incidents, 1 in 5 perpetrators invoked the President's name, an administration policy, or the campaign slogan ("Make America Great Again") during the attack (SAALT, 2018). These attacks were physical and verbal, included fear mongering, the torching of community mosques, vandalism of homes and businesses, and harassment and bullying at school. Post-election violence against Brown communities was also gendered as women were targets of 213 of these incidents and of those, 63 percent wore the hijab (SAALT, 2018). In order to fully examine the specific intersectional nature of public violence against Muslim women, the next section will briefly introduce literature related to women's experience of public harassment.

The impact of gendered and racialized harassment (gendered racism), including racist speech that perpetuates inequality (Matsuda, 1993; Lawrence, 1990), the disempowering nature of street harassment (West 1987; Gardner, 1995), and the pervasive nature of such incidents towards women of color in public spaces that ultimately reinforces social hierarchies (Nielsen, 2000). Gendered and racialized harassment is inherently interconnected to notions of race/ethnicity and citizenship status for women, along with having both sexual and racial undertones making it difficult for victims to prioritize the nature of the experience as gendered or race, how to report such

incidents, and how citizenship status further minimizes these types of incidents for women (Welsh, Carr & Macquarrie, 2006).

Veiled Muslim women, experience street harassment in ways that are socially normalized for all women but also uniquely different in relation to other women (Bish & Zempi, 2018), I then demonstrate that ethno-religious and racialized discrimination (Zine, 2006) that emerges from orientalism (Said, 1979; Hoodfar, 1993) manifests itself into gendered Islamophobia conveying that Muslim women are backwards, oppressed and victimized by misogynist societies. The Muslim veil bears social messages of cultural and gendered norms (Clarke, 2003; Hoodfar, 2003), thus existing at the intersections of dress body and culture, and ultimately, embodies more than just religious meanings, but also social and political ones. For example, one impact of gendered Islamophobia is workplace discrimination towards women who wear the hijab (Parker-Jenkins, 1999). *Hijabophobia*, a term utilized by the media in France, Turkey, and Canada (Quebec) that viewed the hijab as an assault on the dominant civic values of women's liberty and denial of national identity (Zine, 2006; Misbahuddin, 1996). To name only the ethnic hatred is to make gender hatred invisible. It names the gender violence as something different from hatred. It normalizes the violence against women by not naming it. This invisibility of violence toward women sustains it (Zillah Eisenstein, 2006). The themes discussed in this chapter emerge from findings in the data that relate to women's on-campus experiences of simultaneous hypervisibility and invisibility in

certain spaces, sense of risk, safety, and vulnerability. The findings in this chapter focus on the victimization Muslim women face off campus through both verbal and physical encounters including gendered and racialized microaggressions as a result of hypervisibility that increases their vulnerability. The focus on off-campus incidents in this section surround gendered anti-Muslim harassment in public spaces that include microaggressions, prejudiced undertones, as well as different gender dynamics, such as women targeting other women in comparison to the commonly accepted notion of harassment only from men. Gender-based and anti-Muslim harassment in public spaces also still consists of comments on women's bodies and their dress.

This chapter highlights the gendered and racialized violence against women in the years after the 2016 US Presidential election (2016-2018) and provides context to draw comparisons between earlier historical periods (such as post 9/11), that also fueled Islamophobic sentiments in the US. Furthermore, I argue that unveiled or socially invisible Muslim women experience street harassment in more similar than different ways to other women, regardless of racial/ethnic, religious, or immigrant identity. However, the intersectional nature of such incidents can further our understanding of gender-based violence. Specifically, the findings in the next section address unveiled Muslim women's experiences of harassment as similar to other women's however, the underlying gendered and sexualized nature of harassment varies by context. Women who do not veil may encounter more sexualized harassment from men, while women who do

wear the veil, also face harassment from other women that is racialized, and thus, both anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim.

### **Findings**

All of the women in the sample experienced some form of harassment, either verbal or physical, and usually in public spaces. Women remained hypervisible in the public sphere as a result of stigmatized Islamic markers such as wearing some form of the veil<sup>86</sup>. Yet, Muslim women who did not wear the veil were also exoticized. Thus, these interactions, usually gendered, took on many forms including gender-based street harassment, hateful harassment intended to intimidate and community level bias incidents that usually occurred in home neighborhoods.

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<sup>86</sup> Similar to findings by Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012 & Allen, 2015

**TABLE 8** Subsample of Women & Demographics

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Women 27*</b>
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Asian 8**</b>
	<b>Middle Eastern 15**</b>
	<b>Black/African 8**</b>
<b>International Status</b> (F-1/J-1/M-1 Visa Holder)	<b>11</b>
<b>Domestic Status</b> (Immigrant, Native-born, Naturalized Citizen/Green-card holder etc.)	<b>16</b>
<b>Undergraduate Student</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Graduate Student</b> (Enrollment in MA/MBA, Ph.D. etc.)	<b>13</b>

<p><u>Countries of origin:</u> USA, Canada, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, India, Morocco, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic <u>Age Range 19-39</u></p>	<p>n=27</p>
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\*Includes both PWI and HBCU participants

\*\* Some women (n=3) identified as both Asian and Middle Eastern, others (n=3) identified as both Middle Eastern and Black/African.

### **Gender-Based & Racialized Street Harassment**

Unveiled Muslim women in my sample indicated that they experienced incidents of gender-based street harassment usually targeted in the same ways as other women commonly report. They were usually alone, encountered men, and received comments regarding their physical appearance. Interestingly, women who were usually more conservative in their dress upon arrival to the US, including wearing looser clothing and veils, noted that as time went on and they modified their attire, such as wearing form-fitting clothing, they encountered less harassment on the street related to their Muslim identity, but more as a result of their perceived desirability. The findings in this chapter indicate that while women are hypervisible when veiled, they are also not seen as desirable objects, and thus less sexualized until they choose to remove the veil and their Muslim identity becomes invisible. Women who wore the headscarf and more

traditionally Islamic clothing, encountered invisibility related to their gendered identity, but hypervisibility in relation to perceptions of the Muslim-ness and potential foreign identity. Furthermore, the perpetrator's gender also matters in these incidents as veiled women endure public violence from both men and women. These accounts related to Muslim women's experiences of biased harassment, as well as the intersectional nature of such incidents, contributes to our understanding of gender-based violence at the intersections of race/ethnicity, religion, and citizenship status. In the following sections I describe three types of harassment and their implications.

### **Islamophobic & Anti-Immigrant Harassment: Men as Perpetrators**

In my sample of Muslim women and men, harassment in public spaces is distinct as the victims are usually women. However, the violence is not always explicitly identifiable as related to gender but rather racial, ethnic, immigrant, or perceived religious status as outsider.

Maryam, an international graduate student from Iran, and similarly, Habiba, an Egyptian-American undergraduate, address tactics and approaches by men that are not sexual in nature. Maryam's experience highlights the frequency, and thus normalization,

of the casual nature of religious and racialized harassment of Muslim women.

One time, I was in the car and a car passed and [he] shouted, "***Get back to your country.***" It really didn't bother me that much. But I was standing once in the road. I was waiting for my son's bus to come from school. A car passed, and they showed their middle finger.

*-Maryam; International Graduate Student; Middle Eastern (Iran)*

Maryam's gendered experience of harassment also has xenophobic connotations because the assumption behind the insults allude to perceptions of her as a perpetual foreigner, immigrant, and outsider. More interestingly, her reaction to the incidents reflects a theme throughout the interviews where participants accepted such incidents as normal parts of everyday life, and thus, were tolerant of aggressive behaviors and harassment related to their perceived racial/ethnic, religious, and immigrant identity.

Similarly, Habiba, an American-born undergraduate student of Egyptian descent, recalls an incident that seemed threatening:

I have an older sister and she just told me while she was driving *this guy did inappropriate gestures towards her like shooting guns* and all that towards her once he saw that she ... wears a scarf as well.

*-Habiba; Domestic Undergraduate; Black/African/Middle Eastern  
(Egypt); US-born*

Habiba's story about her sister's experience highlights the pervasiveness and normalization of being targeted for veiling while Muslim, even while in seemingly safe spaces. Being in her own vehicle does not protect Habiba's sister from prejudiced behavior, in fact, it could make her more susceptible to road rage.

Furthermore, Aisha's experience as a Pakistani-American makes it clear that societal perceptions of Muslim women as docile, submissive, and quiet, may also result in verbal and physical interactions where women are left to expect victimization while bystanders fail to intercept:

Someone actually physically pulled [my friend] away because she was trying to get ice cream. She was wearing a Hijab; a guy was staring her down. *We're all aware of people staring because we know what to look for*, and she wasn't saying anything to him, and then, all of a sudden, as she was

about to go up, he claimed that she cut in front of him and she was like, "Sir, I've been here the entire time." *He was starting to raise his voice, and then he actually physically pulled her away and that's when she had to stop [and say], you do not touch me. I don't care, I know what the reason is, because I'm wearing a Hijab and I'm Muslim and I know you have an issue with that. Things like that, which was fine though because no one came to help her.* People were trying to mind their own business.

*-Aisha, Domestic Undergraduate Student; Asian (Pakistani); US-born*

Aisha described an incident that begins with a microaggression, surveillant staring, commonly experienced by Muslim women who veil, and are thus, hypervisible, racialized as an ethnic minority, or foreign immigrant in public spaces. She views the staring as something that she is aware of, indicative of the normalization of being treated differently in public spaces. The non-verbal gesture then escalates into physical harassment. Aisha justifies her friend's response as bystanders did not intervene to provide assistance. This incident again speaks to the normalized nature of gendered, racial/ethnic, and religious-based violence against Muslim women by white male perpetrators.

Fatima, a white-passing American-born woman who does not veil or publicly identify as Muslim conveys a similar story that contributes to our understanding of why Muslim people may view such behavior by White American men as 'normal'. In Fatima's story,

and in others, the verbal assault occurs in front of family, both elders and children, in a public space:

We were going to beach with my entire family, we do that almost every year. A guy on a motorcycle just shouted and just started cursing, and there was little kids with us. They have no shame. They say whatever they have to say no matter who's around.

*-Fatima, Undergraduate Domestic Student; Black/Middle Eastern (Moroccan); US-born*

Similarly, Rabia, an International Graduate Student from the Middle East recounts an incident that ends with her being told that “all you terrorists, get out of here!” yet, from her perspective, although she feels bad, it’s just another day of being Muslim in a public space in American society. In these women’s accounts, gendered Islamophobia appears normalized, not only because the incidents occur frequently and in various spaces, but also because of the lack of response from bystanders. Women viewed their experiences as linked to not just their gender, but also religious identity and for many, immigrant or perceived immigrant status as foreigner/outsider.

In further evidence of the complex and contradictory intersections of Muslim women’s social identities, Saba, who wears a turban and identifies as Black, discusses the

complex nature of her veiled status that has provided *respect* for her as a Black woman<sup>87</sup> while also exacerbating her vulnerability in public. Given historical narratives of Black women as hypersexual, her veiled status could be linked to ideas of sexual modesty and respectable gender norms<sup>88</sup>. However, this ‘protected’ status also has repercussions for her in public spaces that other Muslim women face as she has experienced harassment related to Islamic cultural attributes as slurs. She recalls an incident where the label of being a virgin, rooted in cultural notions of Islam, is used as a slur against her.

I’ve been yelled at from cars. ***Like one person yelled that I was a virgin, which was kind of strange.*** That may be the worst one. And I was just kind of like okay. Yes, I am. They think it’s funny. Like it’s hilarious to them.

***--Saba, Domestic Graduate Student; Black (Afro-Caribbean/Bajan); American-born***

Beyond the public shaming of Saba for perceived values that are counter to commonly accepted notions of sexuality in the US, there is also a xenophobic aspect of this harassment. In this scenario, the veil signifies that she has outsider values as she has not accepted cultural societal norms and thus, her personal choices are also subject to public

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<sup>87</sup> Similarly, all other veiled Black women in the sample, and some non-Black Muslim women in the sample who did wear a veil, discussed the protective status of respect from men of color in particular.

<sup>88</sup> In *Dark Continent of Our Bodies*, E. Frances White (2001), elaborates on the Black heterosexual experience in relation to notions of respectability. Specifically noting that Black women have had to contend with negative public images from both within and outside of the culture. Popular imagery of Black women are rooted in sexist Black male constructions of masculinity (Ebron, 1991). Images of Black women wearing the veil can also be rooted in enduring ideas of resistance in the community that transgresses dominant ideologies (White, 2001).

criticism. For Saba, there is still a sexualized component to her experience of street harassment, however, in this case, it is not a hypersexualization, but rather an animosity towards her choice not to adhere to the norms of sexuality of American society.

Similarly, to gender-based harassment, this form of violence against Muslim women has prejudicial undertones and occurs when friends and family members are usually not in close proximity. For participants in this study, the perpetrators tended to be white men, consistent with the literature on street-based and public harassment of women of color. These incidents are based in both gender bias and anti-Muslim sentiment and highlight harassment by White American men in public spaces. The perpetrators in these scenarios use overtly xenophobic language and gestures to convey their prejudices related to the 'perpetual foreigner' and exclusionary status that Muslim women occupy in American society.

### **Anti-Muslim Harassment of Women by Other Women**

For some women in this study, harassment in public spaces were also perpetrated by middle aged or older white women, starkly contrasting the experiences of Muslim women who were victimized by white men. Some women experienced violence from

both men and women yet, they indicated that in every instance the perpetrator was White and the way they were approached seemed to be related to gender. For example, while the majority of incidents occurred while women were alone, in many cases, if the perpetrator was a woman, the aggressor approached more cautiously, sometimes being friendly, or speaking to other women with open hostility about the victim.

Comparatively, male harassers tended to shout at women in public spaces, were usually alone, and their demeanor was usually one of anger. These incidents occurred in different public spaces and female aggressor's approach to their victims were less intimidating, thus, taking the victims by surprise. Women noted that the incidents usually started with commentary on their clothing, sometimes in friendly manner but usually sinister in nature, as it seemingly relies on women's trust of other women, sense of safety, and curiosity that results in victims being publicly humiliated, insulted, or experiencing direct rudeness that fosters mistrust, enforce their sense of vulnerability, and upholds exclusion. Ultimately, respondents were taken by surprise as they were usually not expecting to face hostility from other women.

Maryam relays her most recent encounter with "surveillant staring."

Well, the most recent one was in Costco, which the woman looked at us and told her husband "***What are these women wearing? What costume is this? Is it Halloween or something?***" ...She wasn't even talking to me. My mom was here, and we were just passing.

*-Maryam; International Graduate Student; Middle Eastern (Iran)*

While at Costco with her mother, Maryam experiences a gendered and racialized microaggression as a White woman stares at them, and subsequently makes an indirect derogatory comment to her spouse. For Maryam, this is another incident that normalizes microaggressions associated with gendered Islamophobia in her everyday life.

The majority of veiled women in the sample reported harassment from women in public spaces. Amal, a Saudi Arabian woman who wears the niqab recalls being taunted by another woman while entering a restaurant. The woman turns to her husband and exclaims, “I wonder how she eats”. Mira, a Turkish-American woman recalls being at a store in the mall where she is confronted by a woman who says:

“Are you crazy? Everybody’s wearing shorts/short sleeves and you’re totally covered. You look weird. Don’t you feel too hot?”

The harassment starts out as curious questioning, escalates into judgments related to her assimilation into American society, and ends with Mira being told to “go back to your country”.

Tahira, an American-born undergraduate student with Afghani ancestry recalls a similar incident at a store in Pennsylvania that begins with a friendly woman’s seemingly curious nature regarding her attire:

There was a lady. She was a senior [citizen]. She was White. ***She was like, "Are you wearing a tablecloth?" I'm like, "No. This is my scarf." She's like, "What are you doing in my country?"*** I'm like, "Excuse me? What did you just say?" She's like, "What are you doing in my country? If I go to your country, do you think I'm gonna dress up like this?" I just didn't know what to tell her. I was like, "What do you want me to say? I mean, that's your choice what you do, but I'm here, and I'm gonna do what I need to do." Then she started cursing me out...It was very bad. I don't remember the details of it, but she said much more than what I just told you. I just didn't know what to say. I was so shocked that, I don't know. I'm so nice. ***When she initially asked, I thought, "Oh, she's curious." I thought it was so nice. She's like, "No, this is a tablecloth."...*** I'm like, "Oh, I guess I'm sorry." She was kind of insulting me. She was waiting for my answer, like what am I going to say?

*-Tahira, Undergraduate Domestic Student; Asian/Middle Eastern (Afghani)*

Tahira's experience starts from surveillant staring, she is watched and identified, while prejudices related to perceptions of her identities (gender, race/ethnicity, and potential foreign status), results in a microaggression, specifically, verbal harassment rooted in xenophobic rhetoric. An older White woman approaches her to ask about her headscarf, however it quickly becomes clear that it is an attempt at public shaming and harassment for her appearance, religion, and perceived racial/ethnic and immigrant status. This incident representative of a trend that the majority of veiled (n=19) women in the sample report, where college-aged Muslim women are harassed by middle-aged or older white

women. Jamilla, a domestic student who identifies as Black and Puerto Rican mostly wears the hijab in public. Like other women in the sample she recalls harassment specifically from older White women who she describes as particularly “nasty” and “rude” however, she thinks that this treatment is also linked to attempts to convert her and assumptions about where she belongs:

“Like I can’t be here. I get a lot of ‘praise the lord’ and ‘hallelujah’, like they’re trying to convert me.”

In line with this, Rania, an Egyptian American undergraduate also acknowledged how mistreatment from other women also manifested itself in work spaces. As a waitress at a restaurant she is confronted by customers, usually women, who pretend they don’t understand her, treat her rudely, and then report her to managers. Of the veiled women in the sample, 64% (12 out of 19) reported incidents of workplace issues related to their Muslim identity.

Anti-Muslim harassment of women by other women thus reveals how Muslim identity is gendered and racialized in public spaces. Similar to hijabophobia, the social, political, and religious messages regarding progress and oppression, foreignness and Americanness, and whiteness and otherness, rise to the surface. Internalization of misogyny and public reprimands have also been found in other studies of marginalized women in public spaces that serves to other women (i.e.. Armstrong’s 2015 study on sex

workers). Other studies indicate that the appropriation of hypermasculinity can translate into misogynistic behaviors towards other women especially when the victims are perceived as passive or vulnerable, both dominant discourses of femininity (Henriksen, 2015) but also tied to stereotypical perceptions of veiled Muslim women. The intersectional nature of gender-based harassment against Muslim women beyond religious identity and perceived immigrant status is further examined in Chapter 6 with a specific focus on the intersections of racial/ethnic identity, perceived legal status, and racialization of gendered Muslim identity.

## **Conclusion**

These reflections related to Muslim women's experiences of biased harassment, as well as the intersectional nature of such incidents contributes to our understanding of gender-based violence. This chapter highlights the gendered and racialized violence against women in recent years (2016-2018) that is fueled by anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment that is also comparable to other historical periods of Islamophobia in the US, such as the immediate months after 9/11. As noted in a recent study (Crandall, Miller & White, 2018), campaign rhetoric leading up to, and the subsequent aftermath of

the 2016 Presidential Election was characterized by prejudicial language. Discriminatory rhetoric thus normalized social acceptance of certain biases that informed harassment and hate incidents that have been identified through incidents where perpetrators invoked the President's name, a Trump administration policy, or the campaign slogan "Make America Great Again", during an attack against an individual. Furthermore, grassroots organizations such as South Asian Americans Leading Together find that within one year of the 2016 election, there were 302 bias incidents against Muslim people, and those perceived as such, with crimes against marginalized groups outpacing the level of violence against Brown communities since 9/11.

Furthermore, I argue that unveiled or socially invisible Muslim women experience street harassment in more similar than different ways to other women, regardless of racial/ethnic, religious, or immigrant identity. However, the intersectional nature of such incidents can further our understanding of gender-based violence. In terms of policy, it is important to recognize that many of these incidents occurred mere blocks from the university, thus, these findings call for further examination of protective measures including resource availability for student victimization beyond student on student violence. More broadly, this also means taking into consideration how age and perceptions of gender progressiveness impacts women's perceptions of other women that can also serve as a barrier to solidarity, reporting incidents, and overall, safety for all

women.

**TABLE 9 Women Participants’ Pseudonyms, Race/Immigrant & Veiled Status**

#	Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity OR Nationality	In US	Veil
1	Zoya	Asian/Indian	1 year	
2	Sabrina	North African (Black) /Middle Eastern (Arab Moroccan)	Born US Citizen	
3	Rabia	Middle Eastern/Other (Turkish)	3 years	Y (hijab)
4	Zahra	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	2 years	Y (scarf)
5	Soraya	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	3 years (Permanent Resident)	
6	Maryam	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	6 years	Y (hijab)
7	Saamiya	Asian (Afghani)	Undocumented (Naturalized Citizen in 2016)	Y (but stopped wearing while in college)
8	Malikah	Black/African American	Naturalized Citizen (born in Ghana)	Y (only wore in the months after the election)
9	Noura	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)	9 months <sup>89</sup>	Y (removed in December 2016 to enter US)
10	Alia	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)	6 years	Y
11	Aisha	Asian (Pakistani-American)	Born US citizen	

<sup>89</sup> Were not at MASU during the election year but were impacted by policies/sentiment.

12	Laila	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)	5 years	
13	Fatima	Black/Middle Eastern (Moroccan)	15 years	
14	Habiba	Middle Eastern/Black (Egyptian)	Born US citizen	Y (2 years)
15	Sana	Asian (Indian)	3 years	
16	Rania	Middle Eastern (Egyptian)	4 years	Y
17	Tahira	Asian/ME (Afghan)	8 years	Y
18	Diana	Middle Eastern/Asian (Jordanian)	Born US citizen	Y
19	Amal	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabia)	8 years	Y (with niqab)
20	Mira	Middle Eastern (Turkey)	22 years	Y
21	Jamilla	Black/Hispanic (Puerto Rican)	Born US citizen	Hijab and abaya; covered face only off campus
22	Sadia	Asian (Bangladeshi)	Naturalized US Citizen	Hijab
23	Khadijah	Black/African American (Other: Dominican)	Born US citizen	Hijab (turban)
24	Saba	Black/Afro-Caribbean (Bajan)	Born US Citizen	Hijab
25	<b>Aminata*</b>	Black/African (Ivory Coast)	Born US Citizen	Sometimes
26	<b>Nasreen*</b>	Asian (Pakistani-American)	Born US Citizen	Y (hijab)
27	<b>Amira*</b>	Black	Born US Citizen	Y (hijab)

*\*Bold denotes participant attended a historically Black university and participated in a phone interview*

## Chapter 5

### ISLAMOPHOBIA, XENOPHOBIA, & ANTI-BLACK RACISM ON CAMPUS

I was walking to the library, I think, to meet my friend, and when I walked past them [*young white women on campus*], they all got tense and scared, you know? That made me angry a little bit. I am a large guy, and I guess I could be perceived as intimidating, but I think that's more due to the media and the prejudices that they helped instill in people to think big, black guy, he must be up to no good or something like that.

*-Malik, Domestic Graduate Student; Black/Latino; American-born*

Muslim identity in the US has become a complex site where gender, race/ethnicity, and citizenship status take center stage (Mir, 2011). Acknowledging the overlapping intersectional categories with a central focus on race/ethnicity and religious identity highlights the diverse experiences of Muslim students. Some studies construct racial/ethnic categorization of Muslim as ‘Arab-Middle-Eastern-Muslim’ and therefore, disregard other minoritized groups, including “Arabs who do not identify as Muslims; Middle Easterners who do not identify as Arabs; South Asians who do not identify as

Arabs, Middle Easterners or Muslims; Latino/as who have been mistaken for Arabs etc.” (Naber, 2006). However, scholars argue that the ‘War on Terror’ has had race-making implications for Muslims and South Asians (Huq & Muller, 2008; Selod, 2015; Singh, 2013;), as well as for individuals who are ‘perceived to be Muslim’ (Sekhon, 2003). The specificity of attributing anti-Muslim violence to ‘Arab or Middle Eastern’ people excludes other non-Arab Muslims across race, ethnicity, and national origin, while also upholding the false assumption that all Arab people are Muslim. Furthermore, this type of categorization minimizes racial consequences by marginalizing its impact related to anti-Black racism, as well as anti-immigrant sentiment.

This chapter briefly addresses the literature surrounding the racialization of Islam, the unique Black Muslim experience, and the impact of the Trump Era sociopolitical context on campus climate, specifically at MASU. Findings include a broad overview of issues across major group identity, including comparisons between graduate and undergraduate concerns, inter and intra-gender variability among Muslim students, as well as institutional invisibility. Next, specific thematic trends in the data related to anti-Black racial intolerance, and subsequently, Islamophobia and xenophobia on campus, will be examined. These include microaggressions, such as linguistic violence, isolation and belonging, as well as tokenism in the classroom, all of which impact the identity, student retention and success of Muslim and Muslim American students.

### **Racialization of Muslims**

Some scholars (Selod, 2015; Singh, 2013) argue that post-9/11 society requires an examination of Muslim experiences as racialized<sup>90</sup> in order to adequately reflect political, cultural, economic and social contexts, as well as to acknowledge the fluidity of race. Additionally, gender remains excluded from understanding processes of racialization while the black and white binary sometimes excludes the racialized experiences of immigrants (Selod, 2015). Furthermore, the Muslim experience with racism is understood within the context of both 9/11 and the War on Terror because of increased discrimination and media portrayals of Muslims as ‘other’, ‘violent’ and ‘terrorists’, yet we have yet to examine this experience in the Trump Era. In many ways, Muslim religious identity has become synonymous with notions of a ‘threat to national security’, a racialization process that has resulted in increased surveillance of Muslim bodies in public spaces and a denial of citizenship privileges (Selod, 2015) that endures after the 2016 US Presidential Election.

Furthermore, notions of Islamophobia emphasize that other groups, including

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<sup>90</sup> Since 9/11, various scholars have described the experiences of Arabs (usually racially classified as white) as racialized as Muslim (Bayoumi, 2006; Cankar, 2008; Hassan, 2002; Jamal 2008, Naber, 2008) and arguing that this has resulted in Arabs no longer enjoying ‘white privileges’ (Alsutany; 28; Cankar 2009). The conflation of Arab and Muslim in analyses have made it difficult to specifically capture how racialization occurs while religion/ethnicity have also been used interchangeably (Selod, 2015). Specific factors like religious identity contribute to racialization and some argue that this is unique because Arab and South Asian Muslims are usually categorized as white/Asian in the US and are essentially losing privilege through racial classification (Selod, 2015).

non-Muslims, can be racialized as such because of physical features (including skin color, ethnic clothing, etc.). Therefore, societal perceptions of brown bodies as ‘foreign’ and ‘other’ result in the changing racialization of anti-Muslim sentiment in the US (Singh, 2015). The contextual nature of racialization also means that Muslims, and other non-Islamic brown-skinned people (Singh, 2015) are experiencing more discrimination because of their religious identity today, than in the past (Selod, 2015), and arguably again, after the 2016 Presidential Election. Overall, ‘Muslim’ religious identity has taken on racial meanings that result in associating Muslim bodies with ideas of violence that lead to more experiences of prejudice (Selod, 2015).

The next section examines differences across the Muslim experience with a specific focus on anti-Blackness.

### **The Black Muslim Experience**

In addition to understanding the racialization of religion and of groups perceived to be Muslim, Black Muslims in the US have a unique experience as a result of Islamophobia, xenophobia, and anti-Black racism that impacts both African Americans and Black immigrants (Ochieng, 2017).

Few studies exist regarding Black Muslim students on college campuses, and the double bind of facing anti-Black racism and Islamophobia, along with other intersecting

identities, such as immigrant status or gender, remains unexplored<sup>91</sup>.

The unique experiences of Black Muslims in the US compared to Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian Muslim students constitutes intra-Muslim diversity that is erased via lumping together of all Muslims. Black Muslims have moved towards claiming Blackness as a cultural and political identity, while moving away from religious identity (Khan, 2015) yet, this group continues to face a ‘double jeopardy’ in terms of being racialized as Black *and* as Muslim (Ochieng, 2016). This identity is further complicated by other social locations including immigrant status.

While being Muslim on college campuses means that students may experience intolerance because of their religious identity, discrimination towards Muslims and Islam are also present in the classroom and further isolates students (Ali & Bagheri, 2009). Furthermore, in terms of on-campus identities, Black Muslim students have reported exclusion from Muslim student organizations (Khan, 2009) and document the pressure to choose between ‘being Muslim or being Black.’ To date, only one case study examines the complexity of intersectional identity through gendered, religious, immigrant, racial/ethnic identity in an educational space by examining the narrative experiences of

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<sup>91</sup> McGuire, Casanova and Davis examine intersectional marginalizations through an individual narrative of one Black, female, undergraduate Muslim college student born in Saudi Arabia. This study excludes the international and graduate student experience as a result of having one immigrant undergraduate participant with no comparison group for generalizability and further conclusions connected to the overall Black Muslim immigrant experience cannot be drawn without a larger sample.

one Black, Muslim, immigrant woman, originally from Saudi Arabia (McGuire, Casanova & Davis, 2016).

As noted in the Literature Review, scholarship has focused on veiled Muslim women after 9/11, as well as studies that center international students, specifically from the Middle East. International graduate students remain understudied, as well as intra-group variability including across undergraduate and graduate student status, domestic and international status, as well as across racial/ethnic categorization (specifically, Middle Eastern, Asian, African American, Black immigrant and other). The findings in this chapter address how Black Muslim students' central identity as race/ethnicity-based is related to negative social experiences and encounters that center their race as a result of phenotype or skin color. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on discrimination from predominantly white students, faculty, and staff; however, Black Muslims also endure isolation from their Muslim peers, specifically, international students and recent immigrant communities that culturally isolate and view Black Muslims as outsiders, converts, or otherwise employ racist tropes.

To contextualize the unique post-election sociopolitical atmosphere and in order to focus on its impact on campus climate, the next section introduces literature related to the specific historical, social and political context, as well as campus climate at MASU (PWI).

## **The Impact of the Social and Political Environment on Campus Climate**

Mid-Atlantic State University (MASU PWI), like many other colleges and universities nationwide, has taken specific measures to reinforce a commitment to diversity and to support initiatives that result in a more inclusive campus. However, there are ongoing issues related to minority student acculturation, retention, and persistence of historically underrepresented and marginalized populations, including Muslim students. Recent racially based incidents on the campus<sup>92</sup>, as well as national social and political incidents have prompted community response and action. Furthermore, post-election protests (Curry, 2016), speak outs (Gibson, 2016) and the solidarity rallies (Walton, 2016) have highlighted the community's response in support of tolerance, diversity and inclusion. However, the impact of these events makes it clear that racial tensions persist on campus, a perspective that students frequently discussed in the interviews.

These incidents and resistance can be linked to national sociopolitical tensions surrounding the impact of the 2016 Presidential Election. While various sources have indicated an increase in bias incidents and hate crimes in the weeks and months after the election (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016), recent studies find that acceptability of

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<sup>92</sup> These include racial slurs posted on a bulletin board in West Tower days after the 2016 Presidential Election that targeted Latino and Muslim students (Taylor, 2016), protests on campus regarding hate speech after College Republicans invited controversial alt-right leader Milo Yiannopoulos (Orledge, 2016) (and previously the invitation of conservative journalist Katie Pavlich by Students for the Second Amendment), as well as the reaction to an alleged racial display of nooses hung on trees on campus (that turned out to be lanterns) after a Black Lives Matter march (2015)

prejudice towards groups targeted by both campaigns and associated rhetoric resulted in an increase in bias related incidents (Crandall, Miller & White, 2018). This included incidents at the K-12 level that found that marginalized students were most impacted, and that derogatory language and threats of violence increased for both students and teachers (Teaching Tolerance Survey, 2016; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). Up to thirty incidents of bias were reported nationwide at colleges and universities within the first post-election week (Dreid & Najmabadi, 2016; Jaschik, 2016).

More recent studies show that between November and March there were 1,863 hate-related incidents documented with 330 on college campuses (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017; Bauer-Wolf, 2017; Inside Higher Education, 2017). According to the US Department of Education, this indicates a 25 percent increase of campus hate crimes in 2016 across all colleges compared to 2015 (Bauman, 2018). The Chronicle of Higher Education (2018) reports that there were 280 hate crimes reported in 2017 to FBI via select campus police departments. Furthermore, 60 percent of on-campus hate crimes reported in 2017 involved vandalism and destruction of property and 31 reported assaults rooted in hateful bias (Bauman, 2018).

During this time period, one incident occurred at MASU (PWI) that involved derogatory language/graffiti; however other incidents leading up to and after the 2016 Election impacted students' experiences and perceptions of racial tolerance on campus, as

did the racialized microaggressions that are explored below. As noted in the previous chapter, microaggressions are based on a person's social identities. Earlier, I addressed off campus gendered microaggressions, specifically, this chapter examines racialized and religious-based microaggressions that are contextualized on campus given social, political, and historical contexts of the university and American society during 2017. These acts sometimes escalate, result in (un)intended consequences such as students questioning their own identity, their professors, peers, and even place at their respective universities however, it also demonstrates the emotional toll on victims.

### **Muslim Student Experiences on Campus: Broad Observations**

The Muslim student experience at Mid-Atlantic State University (PWI) was not monolithic. Variations across gender, race/ethnicity, citizenship/legal status, as well as student status as domestic or international students existed. In this section, I briefly discuss some of these differences to demonstrate the diversity of experience and in-group variability that was reflected in the issues students were primarily concerned about, followed by deeper analysis of the participants' narratives in the next section.

### **Graduate and Undergraduate Concerns**

Graduate (n=25) and undergraduate students (n=25) varied in age (19-39)<sup>93</sup>,

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<sup>93</sup> Undergraduates were typically 18 to 22 years of age, while graduate students were between 22 and 39.

lifestyle and status, and thus, their concerns, priorities, and experiences were very different. Graduate international students' (n=15) concerns were more related to immigration, travel overseas, and the implications of the political climate in the US. As young professionals who had arrived from overseas where they had often either left behind families or brought them to the US, international graduate students were concerned about family and lifestyle issues. For parents (and in many instances, specifically, women), this included childcare and healthcare concerns, as well as the additional burden of not being able to have elders or relatives visit from home countries to help aid with caretaking<sup>94</sup>. They also expressed concerns related to raising children in the US, which they perceived as increasingly Islamophobic: a climate that also threatened their values and their children's' perceptions of Islam via the Western education system. International graduates (n=15) were also concerned about traveling home, especially after the Travel Ban, in relation to visiting family, attending funerals, and most importantly, the risk of not being able to return to complete degrees after investing many years into programs.

On the other hand, undergraduates(n=25)<sup>95</sup>, like domestic graduate students

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<sup>94</sup> For many, this seemed cultural and traditional, but also was a way in which students who were both parents could alleviate childcare responsibilities and costs in the household in order to focus successfully on their studies. This seemed like mostly a gendered phenomenon in the study as mostly women discussed the additional burden placed on them as a result of not having support for childcare.

<sup>95</sup> With the exception of 4 commuter students who were less involved on on-campus activities, and 2 English Language Institute students who had recently arrived to the US and was acclimating to the environment.

(n=6), generally had concerns about on-campus issues such as diversity support beyond verbal proclamations<sup>96</sup> and emails, specifically, in the form of more cultural awareness from faculty, staff, and other students, as well as obtaining a more visible presence on campus spaces such as in organizations and cultural events. These students identify as domestic American students were usually intersected by their racial/minority status (22%) that also informed their perspectives on diversity issues. Undergraduate women were more engaged in these efforts, while Black Muslim men (n=3)<sup>97</sup> were more likely to discuss how their activism on campus was informed by their identities.

### **Inter & Intra Gender Concerns**

While gendered experiences, specifically for women, are examined in the previous chapter related to off-campus experiences, it is important to note that on-campus women also had unique experiences. Veiled women (n=19 and 70% of all women in the sample) discussed the hypervisibility associated with this status that manifested in

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<sup>96</sup> At the HBCU, student participants spoke about diversity in two different ways. While some acknowledged the empowering nature of an HBCU as a safe, supportive space, others pointed out the lack of multiculturalism was not reflective of the 'real world' and thus, viewed the environment as a protective space that wasn't realistic. Definitions of diversity as more multicultural essentially meant that some students embraced the empowerment associated with attending an HBCU, while others saw it as a setback for not reflecting the majority white state. Muslim HBCU students, like those at the PWI, also reflected on the Christian dominated atmosphere of the university that resulted in both exclusion but also respect. While they felt excluded via religious marginalization, women in particular discussed encountering more respect and tolerance from non-white non-Muslims on campus. Off campus experiences of both PWI and HBCU students were similar in terms of encounters with Islamophobia and anti-Black racism.

<sup>97</sup> Black Muslim men at MASU (HBCU) (n=3) also conveyed similar priorities related to their identity and on-campus experiences.

microaggressions such as othering through staring, yet participants reported differences between Muslim women who veiled and those who did not and viewed themselves as “invisible Muslims” that were “getting away with it” (n=7). As noted in the previous chapter, unveiled Muslim women who were not racialized as such (26%), could selectively choose when to reveal their Muslim identity to avoid violence. Similarly, on campus, they strategically chose when to embrace their Muslim identity as resistance in the classroom or among peers. On the other hand, Muslim men in the sample internalized stereotypes regarding their appearance and societal perceptions of Muslims (including wearing beards or having ethnic Islamic names) but remained aware of their invisible status. College aged non-Black men in the sample were concerned about stereotypes surrounding Muslim men as terrorists (n=17), while overall Black Muslims in the sample (73%) were concerned about campus climate diversity issues. Middle Eastern and South Asian men were less likely to voice concerns about social injustice issues and seemed to prefer to maintain an invisible presence (n=16). This could have been linked to various ways in which they talked about the normalization or invisibility of anti-Muslim violence. Specifically, their violent experiences of bullying, exclusion, and stigmatization throughout their lives, especially during their formative years, as well as their parents’ warnings and experiences post 9/11 skewed their perceptions of tolerable forms of discrimination and thus, resulted in minimization of violence. Furthermore, graduate-level aged men, like undergraduate men, reported increased respect for Muslim women

who veiled because they were seemingly linked to the hypervisible risk of violence, and thus notions of ‘courage’<sup>98</sup>. Graduate and undergraduate men in the sample differed as married men seemed to have a deeper understanding of the threats posed to their family’s safety and livelihood, especially when linked to violence that was committed in off-campus apartments, communities, or in public spaces like shopping centers, as a result of women’s veiled status.

It is important to note that in many ways men were also ‘invisible’ Muslims and in some ways this was attributed to Whiteness or White-passing status. Muslim men’s concerns were also unique in relation to their female counterparts. For example, internationals, in comparison to Muslim American men, had very reserved opinions in relation to the 9/11 generation who were usually between the ages of 18-22 and had grown up in a post 9/11 America and thus, were not very surprised by the sociopolitical climate or the increased violence of the Trump Era. The compounded impact of policies, social interactions, including bullying in schools, post 9/11 parental trauma (such as warnings and fear of detainment/deportation etc.), as well as community surveillance, compounded the overall experiences of anti-Muslim bias that men endured, and thus,

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<sup>98</sup> The exception were 2 male international students who indicated that they believed that women were manipulated into thinking they had a choice. One specifically displayed animosity towards fellow Muslims and did not want to be identified as such but participated in the study because he felt like he was culturally Muslim as a result of his parents, ethnic background, and how he was perceived in society.

resulted in internationalization of stereotypes. For some men, this meant denying their Islamic identity, a disdain for Muslims (manifesting itself in ideas of “good” and “bad” Muslims), as well as the extremes of denial or discrimination or increased paranoia surrounding surveillance. Given that the majority of the men in the sample were also STEM majors (with only two in the Social Sciences/Humanities), yet, women were more likely to report on-campus discrimination related to Muslim identity in their departments, it is important to further consider how Muslim men navigated these spaces. In line with this, Muslim men also did not report work-related discrimination or aggressions that could be linked to code switching or social assimilation where less social harm was perpetrated as a result of protections gained by denying religious identity, embracing class privilege or passing as White. Finally, Muslim men (with the exception of those who identified as Black) were unlikely to discuss anti-Black racism, and thus, observed their experiences as related to the devaluation of Muslim lives that they perceived as more socially tolerable. Along with this, Muslim men were also more likely to experience physical violence, including verbal assaults that escalated into physical altercations, yet, were unlikely to report such incidents, in many cases they did not ascribe it to anti-Muslim or anti-immigrant sentiment, even when the perpetrator used clearly biased language (including racial slurs in almost all incidents). Overall, Muslim men’s experiences appear to be rooted in internalization of violence and overall, a normalization of Islamophobia in American society that must be further assessed.

### **Hypervisibility and Invisibility on Campus**

Beyond the hypervisibility of the veil, Muslim students also talked about their invisible status on campus as well. In terms of being hypervisible, Black and Brown students discussed the impact of not just the veil, but also perceptions of being perceived as immigrant and foreign and encountering anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim racism. The vulnerability of being seen (wearing a scarf) and immediately treated with hostility, while also being perceived as foreign (for domestic students) also exacerbated intersectional issues of racialization, specifically, anti-Black racism and Islamophobia. This hypervisible status on campus had different impacts on students based on their identities. For example, international students felt isolated when attempting to socialize with American peers as a result of having an accent or being a visible person of color, thus exclusion from classroom groups and socialization hindered acculturation. In terms of invisibility, international students acknowledged a lack of leadership (both within the university and in student organizations) to represent their unique experiences and barriers, while undergraduate students conveyed concerns about a lack of inclusion related to intersecting identities (specifically, intra-Muslim differences related to immigrant status, region of origin, racial/ethnic identity etc.). Black Muslims in the sample (n=11), specifically, those who were physically identifiable as Black and not White-passing (n=8), identified the perpetual foreignness of Muslim Americans, which disregards the Black Muslim experience as an issue. For many, this exclusion meant that

they were never “Muslim-enough” for Muslim immigrants who viewed them as converts, cultural exclusion from Middle Eastern/South Asian Muslim student organizations, while enduring an added layer of exclusion from predominantly Christian spaces.

Among undergraduates, non-veiled and first-generation women were more likely to join organizations, protests, and speak out in the classroom, but they also encountered silencing in this space as a result of the risks associated with revealing, embracing, or appearing to defend Muslim identity. For many, they struggled with experiencing tokenism, and thus being called on in the classroom to speak for all Muslims, all Blacks, etc. Simultaneously, they were also silenced classes by both peers and professors<sup>99</sup> through microaggressions and subsequently facing repercussions for their multiply marginalized identities, including those that were linked to Black identity or foreign/immigrant status.

### **MASU (HBCU) On-Campus Perceptions of Intolerance**

Unlike MASU (PWI), the experiences of students at MASU (HBCU) centered around religious minority status and not specifically, race/ethnicity. As a result of the diversity of the institution in terms of racial/ethnic composition, while a few students

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<sup>99</sup> Among the participants, there was only one instance where a student perceived the professor to be supportive, offered an alternative perspective to a fellow student’s prejudiced rhetoric, and reemphasized respect in the classroom. It is important to note that the professor, although white passing, identified as Puerto Rican, thus influencing minority students’ perceptions of having an ally in the classroom.

(n=2) mentioned the lack of diversity, they were specifically addressing the predominantly Black campus that a majority of the sample (n=5) found empowering. Furthermore, the MASU (HBCU) women, especially those that veiled (3 out of 4) reported an increased sense of respect from both men and other women on campus. Half of the HBCU sample reported issues from faculty, staff, and peers, related to social events or incidents where Christianity took center stage, and thus, they endured exclusion as a result of their Islamic identity. More interestingly, off-campus, all HBCU participants (n=7) reported experiences that were more similar than different to their PWI counterparts across race/ethnicity and gender that was linked to their societal racialization as ‘just another Muslim’ in a public space. For example, all female participants (Nasreen, Aminata, and Amira) discussed surveillant staring in public spaces as a result of wearing the hijab. Amira specifically discussed the impact of workplace discrimination in regard to facing criticism that her hijab was not compatible with her military uniform. Off-campus Islamophobia was not just relegated to veiled women as Kalif also reported public microaggressions related to cultural dress. Finally, Ahmad, who identified as White, but upon marriage converted to Islam, reported beginning to recognize anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment in public spaces with his veiled wife. Specifically, in one example, he discusses an encounter with law enforcement, where he is stopped with his hijab wearing wife and is subsequently told by the officer that he should return to where he came from, to which Ahmad responds, “Virginia?” Ahmad’s experience

highlights a variety of issues including public Islamophobia, its manifestation in institutions, as well as what it means to move down in the racial hierarchy from White to Muslim/other as a result of processes of racialization.

### **Perceptions of Racial Intolerance & Anti-Black Racism**

Findings specific to the PWI indicated a level of intolerance, both verbal and physical, towards racial/ethnic minority students from peers and at times, from faculty<sup>100</sup>. However, subtle microaggressions, actual aggressions, and larger issues related to the university and larger national climate, also informed students' perceptions regarding support or lack thereof from the university.

Bilal, along with the majority of Black Muslim women in the sample (PWI n=6; HBCU n=2) referred to either the chair incident or the noose incident<sup>101</sup> to convey their perceptions of campus climate for Black students. Malikah, Khadijah, Faisal, and Saba,

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<sup>100</sup> In seemingly rare instances students also reported intolerance from staff including bus drivers, financial aid and graduate office staff that were usually race-based or on their status as foreign, and thus, students interpreted this as a sense of not belonging. In other cases, like many veiled undergraduate women at off-campus jobs, students simply reported this as 'people having a bad day'. When further examined via follow-up questions about their perceptions of others' attitudes, they eventually admitted that many people seemed to have bad days when encountering them especially if they were socially identifiable as Black/Brown (based on skin color, phenotype and other physical features), wearing the veil, or having a noticeably foreign accent.

<sup>101</sup> In Fall of 2015, objects found hanging from a tree on the university's campus was initially suspected to be nooses and later identified as paper lanterns from an event earlier in the Summer. Some interview participants referenced the event (specifically, Black students or students who has attended the university at the time and was aware of the incident), specifically, they discussed the incident in terms of trusting the university's claim but also addressing that the condition of the campus climate was such that students could easily believe that it was a biased act of anti-Black hatred.

all PWI students who identified as Black indicated that the allegation of a potential noose on campus was not actually about it being real or not. For Black students, facing issues of racism on campus, the handling of the noose incident by administrators, as well as the larger conversations on campus surrounding anti-Black racism informed their perceptions of campus climate. Malikah, who identified as both Black and African as she was born in Ghana, noted:

“After the noose thing, that’s when I like[d] the campus even less. The bar’s set so low... I’m just ready to leave.”

While Malikah’s internalized feelings and perceptions are related to retention, specifically, attrition of students of color, Khadijah reflected on the university as a place of racial denial:

“The nooses. Just lanterns? They’re trying to wash it down so that way it doesn’t seem as severe as it was.”

Faisal, who identifies as both Black and Middle Eastern noted that he felt that a small minority of people on campus had prejudiced views, while Saba reflected on her realization that perhaps racial issues were not taken as seriously on campus. Specifically,

after the administration addressed the issue, Saba noted hearing comments with the campus community about Black students “overreacting” to the incident, thus, her sense of discomfort was centered on her realization that other students, faculty, and staff, may be on what she called “the other side of the issue”, referring to anti-Black racism as not fully being recognized or taken seriously.

Other Black Muslim men in the sample also acknowledged their core identity or master status as linked more to their race than religion as the discrimination they faced on campus and in larger society was more noticeably connected to their identity as Black men. Unsurprisingly, they were also more concerned about issues that disproportionately impact the Black community such as police brutality. This is also important as Black participants in the study usually identified the issue surrounding Muslim identity as related to anti-Blackness, anti-immigrant sentiment, and Islamophobia, while many Middle Eastern and South Asian participants perceived a disconnect. Below, Bilal reflects on his perceptions regarding campus climate at MASU PWI after seeing another student’s comment on a university lobby photo posted to Snapchat:

*I don't want to say [MASU] is a racist campus, but I definitely think that like, "Yeah, there's a lot of racist students over here." I saw a Snap[chat] of a chair and it was like, wow, I didn't think people had that mindset still. So, it was a picture of a chair and they were like, "**Just like the good old times when black[s] were below us**". It's like, "Get them out of our campus", ... And it was just kind of worrying to see that people still had those views.*

*--Bilal, Domestic Undergraduate; Black; American-born*

*[The Snapchat image included the following text: “This decor reminds me of a simpler time like when black people couldnt [sic] legally attend this school.”]*

Bilal’s hesitation to label the campus as a racist environment is complicated by his personal encounters of anti-Black racism on campus, as well as larger incidents that send messages to students of color that they are not welcome at predominantly white universities. The image in question was provided by two other undergraduate participants in the sample and read “*This decor reminds me of a simpler time like when black people couldnt [sic] legally attend this school.*” Like other undergraduate students of color in the sample that were aware of the image, which was quickly removed by the university, both men and women perceived that the image sent larger messages about racial intolerance on campus.

Broader campus climate incidents, like off-campus or near on-campus incidents, have larger implications for students’ sense of belonging and acceptance at American colleges and universities. Students at MASU (PWI) also related incidents of near on-campus and sometimes on-campus (specifically, fraternity/sorority related) parties where Black face or cultural appropriation (i.e., dressing stereotypically as Arabs in one

instance) demonstrated broader issues of discrimination on campus. While Black students at the HBCU seemed to have issues that were not necessarily related to racial/ethnic intolerance on campus, they could also relate to near on-campus or off-campus social gatherings where prejudice was on display.

Solomon, who attends an HBCU, noted similar experiences related to on-campus parties where tensions between Black and White students were made clear, and thus, informed his daily interactions:

*"They would be like, "They're messing up our university," and stuff like that. We definitely heard that a lot. A lot of them come to our parties and saying, "This is whack." I don't mean to curse, but just saying, "F- you black kids." We definitely heard that a lot.*

*-Solomon, Domestic Undergrad, African*

Bilal and Solomon's perceptions of campus climate also counter racially optimistic perspectives regarding positive social change and racial advancement.

To counter anti-Blackness on and off-campus, Bilal conveyed his dedication towards supporting and mentoring students of color, while Solomon embraced his African identity and love for himself. Like other students in the sample, like Malik, began to find ways to use stereotypes surrounding anti-Black racism to challenge white students' perceptions of his existence on campus.

I was walking to the library, I think, to meet my friend, and when ***I walked past them*** [young white women on campus], ***they all got tense and scared, you know? That made me angry a little bit.*** I am a large guy, and I guess I could be perceived as intimidating, but I think that's more due to the media and the prejudices that they helped instill in people to think big, black guy, he must be up to no good or something like that. Sometimes, I play with it. I play with the prejudices people have, like I entertain myself. If people, if I would see them tense up around me and act like they're scared, then I would make an angry face at them, like, "Yeah, I'm about to do something," you know? Maybe I shouldn't do that. It's probably not the best thing to do.

***-Malik, Domestic Graduate Student; Black/Latino;  
American-born***

Malik negotiates his racial identity on campus by embracing stereotypical misrepresentations of Black men. Using his skin color, physical features, including his body size, he claimed to make angry or mean faces towards students who treated him with visible hostility while walking on campus, however, as he neared them, he would smile and say hello to throw them off guard. Malik's response may seem out of the ordinary, but it is a strategic way to dispel stereotype threat. Furthermore, Malik's awareness of the consequences of living in a masculine Black body, superseded his fears about Islamophobia, thus impacting his service commitments. For one, he was more active in mentoring Black students, both Muslim and non-Muslim, and was also active in diversity work and Black organizations in particular. This was also reflective of Bilal's experiences, as well as other Black men in the sample, as well as undergraduate domestic women like Sana, who channeled their experiences of subtle and overt on-campus

microaggressions into becoming more politically active both at protests and in student organizations.

In addition to broader campus climate issues, as well as on-campus incidents that occur in shared non-classroom spaces, Muslim students also experienced campus life differently based on their other social statuses and identities. Next, I will broadly discuss and examine the primary concerns of Muslim students across centralized Muslim and immigrant identities, specifically in relation to how the social, political, and demands of higher education intersect for marginalized racialized minorities navigating predominantly white spaces and institutions.

### **University Level Islamophobia & Xenophobia**

Another incident on campus that informed campus climate, and specifically, anti-Muslim bias was linked to a visit in Spring 2017 from the Westboro Baptist church. In regard to this incident, students were more concerned about the repercussions for people of color on campus. Faisal notes that just hearing what the protestors said angered him to the point that he took away a sign from a protester that resulted in police approaching him. Sana, recounts that there were police officers everywhere but felt that the presence of law enforcement was not for the protection of students:

“There were all these police officers... it wasn’t for the protestors though, it was for the students. Just because we’re minorities doesn’t mean we’re going to break out into a riot.

Tahira recounts seeing a protest sign that said, “Muslims are liars”, she became upset, and went to report it to an officer who pushed her and told her that freedom of speech and public safety were more important than her concerns. Her feelings about the incident were further exacerbated by the university not sending out an email to address the incident. Similarly, Aisha, recalled being upset that people could come onto campus and convey prejudiced statements to students, thus, eluding to a violation of a space she once perceived as insular and protected from such violence.

### **Impact of Microaggression on Personal Identity**

Beyond campus climate incidents that impact all students and have a more specific impact on targeted groups of marginalized identities, campus life is also experienced differently in terms of classrooms and shared spaces. In this section, I examine how microaggressions have specific impacts on the personal identity of students.

College-aged Muslim women, like their post-9/11 counterparts, make intentional decisions about veiling as a form of resistance, as well as through participation in on-campus organizations and solidarity protests. Non-traditional aged students, including

parents, engage in discourse about resistance with their children in the form of centering faith and resilience as a protective measure. Therefore, utilizing tolerance through educating non-Muslims about misconceptions, spreading awareness of injustice, including using social media as a tool of activism, and engaging with stereotypical views of the ‘good Muslim’ in American society has reshaped the Muslim community’s resistance beyond traditional forms of activism. For *hijabi* women, in the classroom this meant specifically being called on to speak for all Muslim people as a direct result of women’s hypervisible status as well as exclusion from classmates in the form of socialization but also from group projects. On the other hand, Muslim women’s experiences in the broader campus environment was one of both invisibility and hypervisibility with fellow students averting eye contact or given them ‘dirty looks’. For some, it also meant being ‘unseen’ unless they were not wearing the veil, had chosen to stop covering, or wore tightly fitted clothing to signify to peers that they were modern women.

One participant, Diana, an undergraduate international student from Jordan, reflects on her experiences of fear and isolation as she perceived the social and political climate had become more tolerant about anti-Muslim racism:

Like, *someone* [another student on campus] *said something, like coughed under their breath "terrorist" when I was walking [on] campus*. And then the election year happened, and it was like every single time I walked out ....

I noticed people were thinking it was okay more, and this was right before the election, so he [Trump] wasn't elected yet. **After, I actually remember being afraid to leave my room and- ... go to class because I was wearing my scarf and I was contemplating whether or not I should wear it or not wear it.**

**-Diana, Undergraduate International Student;**  
Asian/Middle Eastern (Jordanian)

Diana's admission of modifying her dress came up frequently in interviews with both women who veil and do not veil. Unsurprisingly, as noted earlier, similar discussions and actions occurred after 9/11 as Muslim identity and the consequences of gendered representations of Muslim women in public spaces became more surveilled. Like Diana, other women in the sample discussed removing the hijab after many acts of discrimination, wearing lighter colored or patterned headscarves, as well as overall wearing less black and moving from longer looser clothing to tighter form fitting clothing that seemed to denote assimilation. As discussed earlier, in terms of gendered violence, this appeared to be a safety precaution, however, on campus, it was also used as a form of acculturation to 'fit in' better with other students and the cultural climate of the US<sup>102</sup>. Diana's experience is not unique in that this is a common occurrence among Muslim students, and more specifically, among veiled women, however, the impact on her personal identity in relation to her peers is one that has enduring consequences as she

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<sup>102</sup> Three women also discussed putting the hijab back on as resistance during previous tumultuous political times however post-election, only one did so and only very briefly.

begins to modify who she is in order to acculturate and feel a sense of belonging on campus.

In the next example, Alia reflects on a common theme shared among Muslim students, navigating prejudicial attitudes from faculty advisors, mentors, and professors, an issue that has larger repercussions for historically underrepresented students in higher education.

### **Impact of Microaggressions on Student Retention & Success**

Alia, an international Saudi Arabian graduate student, noted how exclusion from faculty advisors and mentors could negatively impact student success by specifically discussing the experience of her friend, a doctoral STEM student who was pushed out of the program via constant rejection from an insensitive advisor:

My friend, she was a PhD student in chemistry. She did not continue because she is covering her face, and her professor was driving her crazy because *he said that he can't understand, and he's making her life difficult*. She decided to drop the whole PhD. She spent two years, and then she quit back to my country. It was so sad. I told her ... just continue and ignore him. She said she can't because it was her advisor. He was using his authority. I ask also, my other friends. She is covering differently, so she never had an issue except with that professor. *He mentioned that he cannot communicate with her. He can't understand*. He was so strict with her, and difficult to deal with.

**-Alia, International Graduate Student; Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)**

Alia's story about her friend's experience in a STEM PhD program reflects undertones of gendered anti-Muslim bias and xenophobia. Because she wears a niqab, which covers her face, her friend is racialized as not just a foreigner who will not assimilate, but with other stereotypical depictions of Muslim women. To add to this, her advisor engages in xenophobic rhetoric via statements that imply he cannot "understand her" and implying that he needs to see her face to communicate with her. These sentiments are rooted in anti-immigrant rhetoric related to accents and English-language ability, however, these issues are compounded because the advisor's lack of understanding can also be linked to his unwillingness to comprehend the cultural significance of her choice to wear the veil in the US.

Alia's friend is encountering a multi-layered power dynamic that is gendered, as the advisor is using his authority to specifically treat one student differently than others of the same racial/ethnic and religious background. The advisor is specifically treating the student differently in comparison to other Muslim women in the program that also veil but do not cover their faces, thus, indicating discomfort with the practice and encouraging forced assimilation. This experience also lends to notions of acculturation as Alia's friend can be perceived as not adapting to the American higher education environment adequately by not making accommodations to her identity. For almost all international

graduate students in the sample, both men and women, this experience of exclusion also manifested itself in social events, specifically related to socialized drinking as many did not consume alcohol for religious reasons.

Alia's reflection of her friend leaving the program, and ultimately the university, begins to shed light on the risk of concealing one's identity and assimilability particularly for veiled Muslim women. Her friend's experiences are also similar to Saamiya's, who eventually left her humanities PhD program as a result of issues of compounded racism including discrimination from students in her own classroom and inadequate support at the university level.<sup>103</sup>

Some students in the sample reported maintaining silence in classrooms to protect their identity and themselves from microaggressions and judgment from professors and peers, however, others embraced their experiences of racial tokenism as it related to their personal identity, but which ultimately may have exacerbated the burden on their emotional well-being in their programs.

### **Impact of Microaggression & Tokenism on Classroom Experience, Mental/Emotional Health & Personal Identity**

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<sup>103</sup> Saamiya noted that she was supported by her department and allies that she had made throughout her time at the university however, she simultaneously pointed out deficiencies with the support she received including exclusion of her minoritized identity both from the department and the larger university.

Although embracing tokenized identities in the classroom served some students as a way to tolerate, resist, and navigate microaggressions from professors and peers, however, it was clear that in many cases that there was also an unseen emotional burden on students that had negative repercussions for their well-being in their programs. Specifically, for students with other marginalized identities, the impact of xenophobia and Islamophobia, and the toll of defending one's humanity must be taken into account when we consider the complex paths that marginalized students are navigating as they pursue higher education. In one example, Sabrina discusses the burden she bears as a Black Muslim woman in the classroom that usually requires her to defend her identity, existence, and humanity:

*I think in classrooms, if I mention my religion, professors will pay extra attention to me. It seems like they're suspicious of me or watching me, and that's uncomfortable.* My professor, last semester, he talked about how the Muslim Ban was good for our country. When I was younger, I used to not tell people I was Muslim, but now I do it intentionally because I'm like, "People think we're terrorists. I'm American." When I revealed my religion, he was very attack-y, and made extra attention to try to change who I am, because *I felt like he perceived me as anti-American just by that identity.* That was really uncomfortable because I felt targeted that entire semester. **I was the only person of color, the only non-Christian,** and it was just really uncomfortable because I felt like the class was ganging up on me. **I was exhausted from constantly trying to defend this identity, but I did feel like I had to be there or else no one would.**

*-Sabrina, Domestic Graduate Student; Black (North African: Moroccan); American-born*

Sabrina, who does not veil, upon revealing her Muslim identity, experienced xenophobic and anti-Muslim bias similar to what many other young women in the sample faced<sup>104</sup>. The stereotypical perceptions of who Muslim women are, what they look like, and how they behave, clash with her presentation of identity in the classroom space, exacerbating multiple oppressions in the classroom but also challenging the normalization of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim rhetoric. The experiences of Black Muslim women, as noted in the previous chapter with Saba's experience, is worsened by both actual and perceived racial/ethnic identity, as well as perceptions of legal status and foreignness. Sabrina chooses to reveal or conceal her identity as a form of resistance as an invisible Muslim however, she also recognizes a strong sense of solidarity with other people of color as a result of her experiences in the classroom. As a result of being singled out and having to speak for minorities, she has become more active in student organizations, and like many other students in the sample (including Bilal and Saamiya.), also finds herself more politically active in protests.

Like other students in the sample, Sabrina also discussed isolation and exclusion from peers in her graduate program. For many undergraduate students in the sample, this exclusion came not just from white peers but also from student organizations. For

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<sup>104</sup> Men were less likely to participate in classroom discussions with peers or professors that could reveal their status as Muslim.

example, Black Muslim students not being fully accepted into Muslim student organizations that were primarily South Asian. The majority of undergraduate men in the sample protected themselves from Islamophobia and xenophobia by not revealing their Muslim status in classrooms and students who did noted the immediate impact and repercussions, including complete disregard for the diversity of experience.

### **Peer Impact in the Classroom**

This disregard is evident in Faisal's account of the layered impact of the classroom experience. Similarly, to Sabrina, he understands the cost of speaking up for marginalized communities and causes in the classroom. Faisal describes conservative students as having a "Trump supporting mentality" based on stereotypes of people of color, specifically related to conflating protests against police brutality with lack of patriotism indicated by not standing for the flag. While he expresses frustration regarding defending his identity and existence in the classroom, he also struggles with what it means when peers, whether fellow classmates or friends, promote Islamophobic rhetoric. Regarding a peer on Twitter, he says:

He just tweets a lot of these things, like the Muslim ban he was very pro Muslim, but he was like, "*We need to ban all Muslim, like it's not a peaceful religion.*" "I don't even think it clicks for him that I'm a Muslim

when he's tweeting this. Like, I could tweet right before, he'd read it and be like, "Alright now I'm gonna tweet about Muslims."

*--Faisal, Domestic Undergraduate; Black/Middle Eastern (Lebanese); American-born*

For Faisal, his peers' dismissal of his identity seems rooted in a complete lack of recognition of his identity, culture, and background. While many undergraduate students in the sample focused on the exclusion from peers, including in classroom project groups or as friends, Faisal acknowledges the broader impact on emotional and mental well-being of marginalized students who are not just invisible, but are made invisible, and denied their humanity through microaggressions that politicize their existence and rights<sup>105</sup>. Similarly, Sabrina and Alia's stories in this chapter are also contribute to this theme: biases from fellow students that reduce their identities to a social and political stance, a norm that they had experienced in other aspects of their lives.

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<sup>105</sup> Faisal's experiences and interpretations of his peers treatment of him are not unique to his circumstance as almost all undergraduate students in the sample made sense of perceptions of their Muslim identity via earlier experiences. Faisal, for example, situates his experience in the broader context of political Islamophobia but also earlier experiences of bias in high school including experiencing overt racial derogatory slurs at his soccer games, being told my peers' parents that "you and your family are going to hell for practicing this violent religion", experiencing harassment online by fellow classmates, being physically assaulted on school grounds etc. but did not see these acts as racist in nature even when racial slurs were used. Although Faisal identifies as Black, White-passing men in the sample similarly struggled to name Islamophobia as racism. Zahir and Amir in particular expressed frustration with anti-Muslim violence but would not call it discrimination. This is linked to the racial paradox of Middle Eastern identity linked to Whiteness (Love, 2017; Maghbouleh, 2017; Naber, 2000, Tehranian, 2008; Read, 2008) where there are some protections associated with not identifying ethnic identity, yet, hiding heritage to assimilate results in inability to describe discrimination as racism (Love, 2017). This is further exacerbated by colorblind ideology where even discussing race could be perceived as perpetuating racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

## **Conclusion**

Racializing religious minority students impacts their navigation of higher education and their experiences on campus in various ways that can be addressed in the classroom, at the peer level and at the university level which will be examined in the next chapter. One impact can be related to their social identities and statuses on campus related to age and experience such as undergraduate or graduate status, gender differences, as well as being rendered hypervisible or invisible at the institutional level via inclusion or exclusion by staff<sup>106</sup> or student organizations. Overall campus climate also impacts students' sense of belonging and acculturation and is not just connected to microinteractions but also broader issues of discriminatory acts, behaviors, and incidents on campus that may already have racial tension informed by broader historical, social, and political circumstances. Anti-Black racism is compounded for students with diverse identities that are centrally defined by racial/ethnic exclusion. Furthermore, at the university level, there is a multidimensional impact of Islamophobia and xenophobia both in the form of microaggressions and tokenism for students of color. For students in the sample there were impacts on their personal identity, a mental/emotional toll and exhaustion associated with representation in the form of speaking for other minorities, stigma related to stereotypes, and exclusion that went beyond socialization but also lends to compounding

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<sup>106</sup> Although not included in this chapter, students also discussed their experiences with administrative professionals who made assumptions about their legal status, identity, ability to communicate etc. and other forms of microaggressions that further impacted their views of the university climate.

the dehumanization of Muslims. The experiences of Sabrina, Faisal, and many other silenced Muslim students in the sample lends insight into the additional impact marginalized students face when their lived experiences are dismissed as political beliefs and positions in the classroom and in peer settings on campus. Like Bilal and Malik's understanding of campus climate incidents as sending broader messages of intolerance, similarly, microinteractions and encounters with anti-Black, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant bias on campus uphold social and political messages that students are also receiving off-campus that causes further detriment to their perceptions of discrimination and their overall mental/emotional health and well-being. Recommendations for equitable inclusive diversity on campus will be provided in Chapter 7.

## Chapter 6

### THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

Understandings of gender and Muslim identity inform contemporary notions of gendered Islamophobia, however, the intersections of race/ethnicity and as well as immigrant/legal or citizenship status are also important to consider. Furthermore, women at multiple marginalized intersections, whether those identities are accurate or socially imposed by others, encounter uniquely different experiences. This chapter first addresses how Muslim women navigate and resist gendered Islamophobia in everyday interactions, and subsequently, anti-Black racism and xenophobia. Examining the intersectional nature of gendered Islamophobia for women across racial/ethnic identities informs the emergent theoretical framework I propose of *Twice Racialized Intersectionality*. To begin, I will focus on two illustrative narratives surrounding Habiba and Laila's experiences with navigating and resisting gendered racism.

### **Navigating, Resisting, & Code Switching to Counter Gendered Racism**

Muslim women exist at multiple margins and thus, must navigate vulnerable predicaments related to both real and socially perceived notions of their identity,

including their race/ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship/legal status. Women in this study navigate these situations through embracing protective identities, including choosing invisibility as a mechanism to reduce risk (as introduced in Chapter 4). It is important to consider that Muslim women exist beyond just the axes of gender and religious identity. Perceptions related to stereotypes and social constructions of racialization and racial categorization, and ideas of Muslims as perpetual foreigners--and thus, of questionable legal status--also inform women's experiences.

Resistance to gendered narratives for Muslim women also comes in the form of choices related to veiling in the context of the sociopolitical climate, similar to women's experiences after 9/11. For example, Habiba, a domestic undergraduate student who was born in the US, immediately noticed the sexual undertone of comments and behaviors towards her once she decided to wear the veil:

*Before I started wearing a scarf, I noticed guys hitting on me or something like that. So, I would get weird looks or winks and guys just trying to ... I felt like it was harassment or something.*

*-Habiba; Domestic Undergraduate; Black/African/Middle Eastern (Egypt); US-born*

Habiba pinpoints a specific moment when she is less sexualized: specifically, when she begins to veil. While the hijab makes her hypervisible socially, it also made her invisible as an object of desire.

Laila had a related, yet opposite, experience once she chose to stop wearing the burqa after years of perceived social stigmatization on campus. Laila, an international student who was born in Canada but identifies as Saudi Arabian, poses an interesting intersectional case as she once wore the burqa, but after 5 years in the US (at the time of the interview), she no longer did. Due to her majority Black friend group, she had also adapted to African American culture. Laila's dark skin, form-fitting clothing, and use of African American vernacular English (AAVE) when speaking, all contributed to her passing as Black. While she openly admitted that she was frequently perceived as Black, she did not mind as she decided it was an improvement from her experience being perceived as a brown-skinned Muslim woman who wore a veil. Her reflections on gendered microaggressions when veiling, her internalization of the meanings of the veil, and her subsequent resistance to notions of oppression and xenophobia, all inform her lived experience. Laila's experience is unique as she has experienced anti-Muslim racism, and thus, finds solidarity with other marginalized people.

I used to wear the hijab, so I'm pretty sure people knew that I was a Muslim. Me wearing a hijab in the first two years, most of my friends were Saudi Arabians, Middle-Easterns. *Then, when I started not wearing the hijab, I felt like more white people kind of accepted me. [People would] come up to me, especially guys.* When you put it in a social context, *it's kind of easier for you to blend in and not be an outsider...* To be honest, when I wore the

hijab, I felt like most of my interaction was with minorities. White people kind of avoided. They stared.

*-Laila, International Undergraduate; Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian); Canadian-born*

Furthermore, Laila discusses the hijab as an overt hypervisible symbol of Muslim womanhood which initially limited her friend group in the US: first to only other Middle Eastern women, and subsequently, to other racial minorities, who she perceived as more accepting of her cultural and ethnic background. Laila's experiences of being accepted by other racial minorities is juxtaposed against her newfound visibility in public spaces once she removes her hijab. She points out that once she stopped covering her hair and changed her style of dress to become more Western, she began to receive more attention from White men in particular.

Laila's experience is complicated by her intersecting identities and how she is perceived in society: her experience shifted from sexual invisibility from a veiled Muslim woman to her almost instant sexualization once she removes the veil. This speaks to larger notions of Muslim women being both excluded and hypervisible as a result of their veiled status and thus, more prone to racialized anti-Muslim violence. However, the removal of the veil also increases the risk for sexualized harassment and other forms of gendered violence that all women face, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Laila also reflected on the transnational meanings of the veil for her as a woman

who has navigated both Saudi and American society. She compares experiences by noting that in Saudi Arabia wearing the veil garners respect<sup>107</sup>, whereas in the US it is met with suspicion and outright disdain.

I stopped wearing the hijab because I felt ...back home, if you wear the hijab, you're mostly respected compared to one that doesn't. Out here, no. ***I felt like if I wear the hijab, I'm less powerful. I look like I'm oppressed,*** and I don't like that. I'm big on power, and I like to show people that. I like to dominate. The fact that this can bring me down, I hate that.

***-Laila, International Undergraduate; Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian); Canadian-born***

As a result of her assimilation into American society, Laila not only experiences sexualization in situations where she was previously invisible but after 5 years in the US, she had also begun to internalize and interpret broader notions of how Muslim women are viewed. In her experience, she is seen as oppressed, however she actively resists this gendered narrative by taking her power back through the way she dresses, carries herself, speaks, and interacts with others.

Furthermore, the experiences her *hijabi* friends have encountered in the post-election climate, specifically, reflecting xenophobic and Islamophobic sentiment, also ultimately influence Laila's choices to reveal or conceal her Muslim identity:

I heard a lot of stories about people, especially when Donald Trump got

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<sup>107</sup> Similarly, another participant noted similar privileges associated with the veil in Saudi society.

elected. One of my friends who wore it was in a line at Kmart. She was like, "I was in line, and this old guy kind of crossed me, and cut in front of me. I was like, 'You don't see me?' He was like, '**Go back to your country.** Donald Trump is now elected.'" *I'm like, "Do you want to put yourself in a situation like this?"* If people ask me. I don't mention it [being Muslim]. I'm mostly uncomfortable when it's a white person, to be honest. Any other race, I'm Muslim. Nobody gives a F. But white people are harsh, just because they think women in Saudi Arabia live under a rock or in a dungeon.

*-Laila, International Undergraduate; Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian); Canadian-born*

Navigating gendered Muslim identity at the intersections of race/ethnicity and immigrant status, whether real or perceived, has resulted in women embracing protective identities that require racial passing and code switching (Anderson, 1999) to center some social locations, while temporarily muting others.

For some women in the study, navigating risk was more related to violence against socially 'invisible' Muslims such as women who did not wear a veil, did not have an accent, or were not visibly categorized as 'brown/foreign or other'. Thus, the exoticization of Muslim women who were not seen as typically Muslim placed women in a unique position where they could choose to identify as Muslim or not, in relation to their sense of safety and risk. The vulnerability of revealing one's identity also came with social repercussions including verbal and physical harassment in both the public and private sphere.

Sabrina, an American-born Moroccan graduate student, recognized the combined effects of being both a socially invisible Muslim along with the risks of being sexualized

as exotic.

I'm not really seen as Muslim because people assume Muslims look a certain way, even though I am. As a female with a hijab, I feel like if you don't wear it, you're assumed to be Christian. ***A lot of people when they first meet me ask my ethnicity. I think it's the exotic fetish it's like, "Oh, we don't know what this is." Previously when I've been asked and I've responded, "Arab" I've had people dramatically jump away, I've had people throw things at me, I've had people question my standing on ISIS " I have privilege though, in the fact that I don't have to share that with everyone.***

***-Sabrina, Domestic Graduate Student; Black (North African/Middle Eastern: Moroccan); American-born***

Sabrina uses her invisibility as a form of protection as she navigates anti-Muslim sentiment in society. She observes from the relatively privileged position of someone who chooses to not veil that there is a consequence for being visibly identified as a Muslim woman. Sabrina's experience sheds light on how being an unveiled Black Muslim woman is a critical part of her understanding her position in society, as well as a tool that she can use to navigate vulnerability, safety, and risk.

Like Habiba and Laila, Sabrina has also faced sexualization and exoticization. However, once she reveals her Muslim identity, she becomes less desirable and a person to be shunned. In her reflections on her intersecting identities, she narrates an incident where she faced verbal and physical consequences for revealing her Muslim identity to a young White man who had expressed interest in her:

*I was at a bar and I told someone I was Arabic. He threw an ashtray at me.* He started the conversation, hitting on me. Then he's like, "Oh, where are you from?" like this is his pickup line. I was like, "Oh, I'm Arab." He was like, "I served in the armed forces" something like that. I'm like, "Okay, my grandpa fought in the war." but he was just not having it, ***I felt like I was the enemy.*** I think it confused him, too, because he started off trying to talk to me. ***Now that I've found that puts me in danger in some places, I choose when and where to share it.*** Sometimes I'll share it on purpose, he like, "Get over it." ***I have to be around people where I know if someone throws something at me or someone does something, I can still be safe. I know my hijabi sisters don't have that option. I think in classrooms, if I mention my religion, professors will pay extra attention to me. It seems like they're suspicious of me or watching me, and that's uncomfortable.*** I don't know if all Muslims who aren't very obviously Muslims feel this way, but ***you feel like you're undercover all the time, because you're like, "Would you still talk to me if you knew I was Muslim? Would you? Actually, though?"***

*-Sabrina, Domestic Graduate Student; Black (North African/Middle Eastern: Moroccan); American-born*

As a light-skinned, racially ambiguous Black woman with curly blonde hair and light eyes who does not wear a veil, she is not immediately identified as Muslim. As a result, her Arab-ness is exoticized and seen as sexually appealing, however she is rejected for being Muslim, a status that increases her risk of violence and discrimination. Assumptions about what being Arab or Muslim means in American society shape her experiences; but also, as an African American woman, she resists and navigates these circumstances on her own terms. Given her self-identified privileges, including not wearing a hijab, she acknowledges that veiled women cannot conceal their Muslimness in social interactions. In many ways, her navigation of difficult interactions is rooted in her

ability to code switch<sup>108</sup> through her various identities. She can embrace being racially/ethnically ambiguous, as racialized by others, and not expose her faith or culture as a self-protective measure yet the consequence of this is being sexualized, and even hypersexualized as a Black woman. Ultimately, navigating from one identity to another changes the type of vulnerability or risk she faces.

Being able to resist, codeswitch, and navigate the unique intersections of Muslim identity emerges from social experiences in which Muslim women are simultaneously experiencing multiple forms of discrimination via gendered racism. For women like Sabrina, these experiences stem from normalized racial categorizations in the US (i.e. African American), and racialization of Muslim identity (i.e., being construed as immigrant, foreign, or Other), that reshapes women's social experiences. The next section examines the nature of intersectional discrimination at the axes of socially constructed and accepted categories of race in the US, along with racialized markers of Muslim identity that compound experiences of gendered Islamophobia.

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<sup>108</sup> In *Code of the Street* (1999), Anderson posited that behavior is shaped by relationships between behavior and structure that results in cultural adaptations. Nikki Jones (2010) has also expanded on this work through her work on the experiences of inner city African American girls who change their behavior in relation to their environments thus, challenging and manipulating cultural and social expectations.

## **Intersectional Discrimination at the Axes of Racial/Ethnic Categorization & Racialized Muslim Identity**

Sabrina's experiences with real and perceived ethnic categorizations and racialized identities are not unique in this sample. Specifically, Black Muslim women in the sample experienced gendered racism from two angles. For some, first as Muslim, as a result of their racialized identities as Muslims as well as through expressions of, and secondly, perceptions of *hijabis* (headscarf wearing women) as immigrant Others which exacerbated encounters with xenophobic rhetoric. For others, this is compounded through experiencing anti-Black racism and xenophobia via racialization of Muslim identity, thus Black Muslim women are experiencing multiple forms of racial prejudice in broader society.

Saba, one of eight women in the study who identifies as Black, is an American-born graduate student who wears a turban. Saba reflects on experiences after the 2016 Presidential Election related to her fears, increased vulnerability, microaggressions, and the intersectional nature of gender-based harassment for her that interconnect aspects of gender, race/ethnicity, religious identity, and immigrant status.

*People definitely stare at me and give me dirty looks for being Black and Muslim. I really don't know what it is. Like, sometimes people don't think I'm Black, so I don't know if they think I'm Arab or what. Like what they're mad at. It's mostly like people thinking that I don't speak English*

*or being surprised at how well I speak.* And there was a point around the election, where it was constant. I felt like I was being stared at everywhere I went, and it was making me really angry because I'm like, it's rude! I mean, the day after the election, I stayed home, didn't go to class, didn't go to work. I thought about not wearing a hijab, briefly. So, *I was being more careful. Like I definitely was much more aware of my surroundings and less trusting of strangers.*

*--Saba, Domestic Graduate Student; Black (Afro-Caribbean/Bajan); American-born*

Saba has endured microaggressions including surveillant staring and derogatory comments for being a Black Muslim woman. But she has also been perceived as Arab, and thus immigrant, thereby facing prejudice for an identity that she does not embody but that is ascribed to her because of the veil. This occurs through perceptions of her English language capability (which can also be rooted in anti-Black racism), as well as viewing her as Other. These additional social markers of identity convey that Saba is not just racialized as Black, but also as non-Black and thus, depending on her interactions and encounters in public social spaces, she faces different marginalizations that must be navigated. Jamilla, a domestic graduate student like Saba, who also identifies as Black, conveys similar experiences not just in relation to off-campus prejudices but also to encounters on-campus:

I went to her office [senior administrator at MASU] and she just automatically assumed I was from another country. *She was like, "Yeah, so you have a visa,*

*right?" And I'm like, "No, I'm American."* Just an assumption that all Muslims are from another country.

She reflects on an experience with a senior administrator that immediately assumes that she is foreign as a result of her veil, and thus, must be an immigrant, thus erasing her African American Muslim identity. This complicates the status of veiled Black Muslim women who are navigating identities that they do not necessarily occupy but are still impacted by the consequences and social prejudices associated with perceptions of those identities.

### **Revisiting Gendered Islamophobia: Twice Racialized Intersectionality**

As discussed in Chapter 5, socially accepted racial categorizations in the US use phenotype and socially perceived markers of race or ethnicity. Individuals can also be racialized as Muslim--including being seen as foreign, 'other' or a perpetual immigrant--as a result of physical features, skin color, or having an accent. Gendered racialization also occurs in this process for both men and women; however, these experiences may be exacerbated for veiled women<sup>109</sup>. Because of the focus on racialization of Muslim men, women as hypervisible Muslims only when veiled, and the broader societal definitions of

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<sup>109</sup> Selod (2018) expands on what that means for South Asian/Arab Muslims in terms of racial experiences and surveillance of brown bodies. Specific notions of Muslims as enemies within, the hijab as a symbol of anti-feminist values and cultural transgression yet, surveillance of Muslim bodies reinforces inequalities through institutionalized policies via the War on Terror and Islamophobic rhetoric.

what it means to be Muslim in America, scholars have neglected what gendered double racialization may mean for women who are invisible Muslims (do not cover in public). Additionally, it is also easy to overlook the Black Muslim experience (being racialized twice and subject to stereotypes of both being Black and being Muslim) or White and Muslim (losing the privilege of whiteness and ‘becoming Brown’ and simultaneously being considered foreign/immigrant)<sup>110</sup>. Because Muslim identity is now viewed under a lens of racialization, and race is also gendered, groups are doubly marginalized by social identities that have been redefined and continue to change within current and historical sociopolitical contexts. Essentially, religious identity is not just another intersection of one’s identity for Muslim people in the United States, but works alongside societal racial definitions thus, resulting in the concept I have developed of *Twice Racialized Intersections*.

*Twice Racialized Intersectionality* emerges from the findings discussed in Chapter 4. For Muslim women, intersecting social identities overlap more than once. The literature documentation the racialization of Muslims (Selod, 2015; Considine, 2017) discussed in both Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, indicates the intersecting factors of race that contribute to racialized identities such as one’s language, clothing, nation of origin or

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<sup>110</sup> Losing the privilege of Whiteness has been studied more after 9/11 (see Love, 2017 for the breadth of work in this area) however, the compounded effect of the already understudied intersection of anti-Black and anti-Muslim prejudice with increased media coverage and political rhetoric surrounding refugees has also impacted other segments of the Muslim community.

religion, anti-Muslim sentiment has also shifted perceptions of Muslim communities and people. The racialization of religion post 9/11 lumps together diverse groups of people (Muslims, Sikhs, Arabs, South Asians etc.) into the racial construction of ‘apparently Muslim’ (Singh, 2013; Singh, 2015) which are further exacerbated by other embodiments of foreignness including skin color, ethnic clothing, or having an accent. Muslim women experience multiple forms of racialization because of their gender (wearing the hijab), race/ethnicity, immigrant/citizenship status (real or perceived), and the racialization of religion. Because Muslim identity is perceived as a secondary racial/ethnic status in the context of the United States, processes of racialization occur twice for some Muslims as a result of societal perceptions of their perceived race (based on physical characteristics), and again, as Muslims. While this also impacts White/White-passing Muslims<sup>111</sup>, this framework addresses a gap in the literature and enhances our understanding of gendered Islamophobia as a layered form of racism that can disproportionately impact women as Muslim men remain invisible<sup>112</sup>.

Gendered Islamophobia centers gender and religion but not race. Regardless of

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<sup>111</sup> White Muslims (including White-American converts and Iranians in this sample) who were once invisible in American society, also experience racialization in different ways. For example, while they may still identify as White (on official documents or socially), for veiled women or even bearded men that associate with veiled women in public spaces, they are met with Islamophobic and sometimes, xenophobic hostility. In this way, it is also important to consider how privileges associated with White identity in American society is changing and transforming the lives of White or White-passing Muslims that are now more socially visible as a result of cultural or physical markers.

<sup>112</sup> Both veiled and unveiled Muslim women, as well as Muslim men in the sample acknowledged the additional vulnerability of veiled Muslim women as immediately identifiable as Muslims in comparison to those who could more easily attempt to conceal their identity.

racial/ethnic identity, anyone can practice Islam, however, the racialization of Muslim people in the United States, and the specifically orientalist perceptions of practitioners of Islam as being Arabs, foreigners, immigrants/non-citizens, and having specific physical appearances, adds a secondary racialized intersecting social location to Muslim women's complex experiences.

Twice Racialized Intersectionality posits four central tenets:

1. There are socially accepted categories of race/ethnicity in the United States, that change over time (Omi and Winant, 1994), this includes White, Black (African American), and Asian. wherein people can endure racial/ethnic discrimination.
2. Racialization of Muslims contributes a second layer of racism that this religious minority group faces that is in addition to their actual racial/ethnic identity.
3. Gendered racialization, specifically linked to the hijab, and enduring legacies of orientalism, including viewing Muslims and the hijab as other and foreign, results in an experience of racism for some groups (including Black women) as discrimination interconnected to gender, anti-Blackness, Islamophobia, and xenophobia.
4. Finally, Muslim-adjacent communities, those who are not Muslim but can 'pass as Muslim' through commonly accepted notions of physical Muslim

identity (skin color, hair texture, phenotype, ethnic dress, etc.) are also impacted by this layered form of racism.

Twice Racialized Intersectionality emerges in various instances throughout the sample. For example, when Saba is asked about her racial/ethnic identity she ‘checks the box’ as Black/African American and addresses other nuances of her identity (of Caribbean descent). However, Saba wears a turban and thus, in broader society, she is not just met with Islamophobia, but also xenophobia as she is initially treated as a foreigner, specifically, perceived as a non-English speaker. Her experience of race occurs more than once because of the additional racial meanings ascribed to Muslim identity in the US, however, she still has to navigate anti-Black racism, and at times, anti-immigrant sentiment. Saba’s experiences of discrimination are not solely tied to the box she checks or how she physically presents in public spaces, but also tied to how others socially categorize her based on their perceptions of Blackness, Muslimness and foreigner.

Sociopolitical context also shapes the experiences of individuals and communities; thus, it is important to consider how multiple experiences of racism through a second racialization lens impacts people of color. Specifically, in this sample, Black Muslim participants found themselves twice racialized in that they were subject to discrimination related to identities that were socially ascribed to their bodies. Veiled Black Muslim women in particular described the repercussions of facing anti-Black racism while simultaneously enduring ‘Brown’ stereotypes rooted in both anti-immigrant

sentiment and anti-Muslim attitudes, thus compounding their experiences of discrimination. The added layers of prejudice towards identities that they did not ascribe to their own bodies did not exclude them from enduring bias in social spaces. In this way, Twice Racialized Intersectionality ultimately encourages consideration of the impact of experiencing racial consequences through ambiguity that results in individuals being racialized multiple times.

This framework is also supported by how women of color specifically, resist and respond to these additional experiences of racialization as discussed earlier in this chapter. For example, Jamilla, a light-skinned, Black Latina, burqa-clad woman, has a clear understanding of societal expectations that view her as oppressed, passive, and quiet (notions similarly discussed by Laila in Chapter 4). However, colorism also informs her experience as the color of her skin and other physical features makes her somewhat racially ambiguous when she covered. In social spaces she sometimes retaliates by engaging with racially gendered stereotypes such as that of the ‘loud angry black woman’ thus, utilizing agency that shocks and deters discrimination by disrupting racialized and gendered assumptions of Muslim women as submissive victims. At the same time, she is dispelling public perceptions of her as a passive foreigner, or non-English speaking immigrant, that are rooted in ideas of citizenship connected not just to her veiled status

(gender) but also perceptions of her racial/ethnic identity<sup>113</sup>. Ultimately, because she is seen as an immigrant foreigner, when she is met with open disdain, she responds in a way that dispels notions of her being a foreigner by embracing stereotypes that mark her as both American and Black.

Religion in this framework is just not another intersection of one's identity (like gender, sexuality or ability), but is a secondary process of racialization on an already raced group. In a recent article, Selod (2018) focuses on the experiences of Muslim Arab American and South Asian immigrants in the years after 9/11, arguing that Muslim identity has changed via racialized religious identity that has resulted in a downward shift in the racial hierarchy and new racialized experiences, specifically, the loss of whiteness for Arab Americans and the loss of model minority status for South Asians (Selod, 2018). Ultimately, racial and religious identity intersect by gender to resituate Arabs and South Asians in the racial hierarchy (Selod, 2018), while Twice Racialized Intersectionality adds that the intersection of anti-Blackness with xenophobia during the Trump Era marginalizes Black bodies as further unassimilable through markers of otherness. The perspective introduced in my framework emphasizes that racialization of Muslims occur,

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<sup>113</sup> Jamilla further discusses anti-immigrant she experiences on and off campus as multi-layered. One of her examples includes meeting with a senior administrator at MASU and immediately being asked if he had a VISA. As a Muslim American and an African American, the immediate assumption that she was a foreigner offended her as she felt like her American identity was made invisible. The assumption of Muslims as non-American was a frequent theme in the sample, specifically for veiled women, and more so disturbing for veiled Black women (Saba, Jamilla, Khadijah, Aminata, and Amira) which could be linked to the hijabophobia phenomenon further discussed in Chapter 4.

as does gendered racialization (linked to racial/ethnic categorization) but, it happens *twice*. Therefore, some Muslims exist at a double racialized intersection as both their racial categorization and their racialized Muslim identity intersect with socially imposed constructions of citizenship. This can also be examined through the lens of White Muslims in the sample. Specifically, Muslims who have historically self-categorized as White (Arab, Iranian, Afghan, etc.) and have subsequently, lost the privilege of whiteness, essentially being de-raced, and then re-raced as Brown/foreign and thus, simultaneously othered. In the sample, both men and women who ‘check the box’ White expressed hesitation and confusion regarding being forced into a White identity in which they still experienced racism as a result of their religious or cultural affiliations. As discussed in Chapter 4, unveiled women who are ‘invisible Muslims’ are not necessarily impacted by gendered Islamophobia until they reveal their Muslim identity and are immediately racialized and thus, face ethnic discrimination, xenophobia, and Islamophobia. Specific encounters like these that center the immediate experience of a secondary process of racialization also lends support for a theory of Twice Racialized Intersectionality.

Considering the dual nature of Muslim discrimination has been limited by a focus on the racialization of Muslim men and subsequently, other Brown communities that can be socially perceived as Muslim (including Sikhs, for example, as discussed in Chapter 2). The lumping together of various diverse populations (including Black Muslims,

Middle Easterners, and South Asians) has limited our recognition of the processes of dual racialization of women. Furthermore, given the findings examined in this chapter and based on Muslim women's complex intersecting identities wherein resistance through countering or embracing stereotypes as agency occurs, this framework also enhances understandings of multiracial feminist theory (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Specifically, this analysis demonstrates the significance of race and racialized religion as a dual oppression faced by some women of color in American society. Finally, as discussed in Chapter 4, the intersectional nature of bias incidents can further our understanding of gender-based violence. Unveiled or rather, socially invisible Muslim women experienced bias harassment more similarly to the experiences of other women more broadly. On the other hand, veiled women who were hypervisible experienced harassment in more Islamophobic and xenophobic ways. This is perhaps most clearly seen at the intersection of anti-Black racism with perpetrators who were more frequently white women, thus encouraging further exploration of the power advantages and disadvantages among women across intersecting identities.

## **Chapter 7**

### **CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

#### **Summary and Discussion**

As a non-member of a religious minority community that has faced increasing prejudice, discrimination, and violence more pronounced since 9/11, as a researcher, I was concerned that many would not be trusting of an outsider. As discussed in Chapter 3, my identity had differing impacts on the data collection, however, participants' willingness to share their stories, and in many cases, relive their trauma, with little benefit to themselves, demonstrated core cultural values that all participants spoke about. For veiled women, the most stigmatized of the group, their desire to participate in the study with the hope that there would be understanding, tolerance, and perhaps even change, again speaks to the personal and cultural values embodied by the Muslim community, including compassion, generosity, integrity, resilience, and humility. In every interview, I saw aspects of this, including participants' forgiveness of those who had wronged them, understanding and tolerance towards verbal and

physical acts of violence towards themselves and their families, resilience in the face of compounded trauma.

The first interview I conducted was with Amir, and while he was initially resistant because he mainly wanted to discuss the Travel Ban in relation to earlier sanctions against Iranians, he also discussed his reluctance to point out unfairness or criticism of Americans or US policy as he did not want to “force ideas or be pushy”. Amir’s experiences changed my approach to the data collection and how I was asking what I was asking and resulted in my reconsideration of the data that was already available on the Muslim student experience. While I credited his reservations with me to my outsider status, it was not until much later that I realized that this was rooted in other factors including where he was from, his status as an international student, and the censorship and compounded traumas he had already endured. On the other hand, my fourth interviewee Sabrina was the complete opposite. We met for about four hours and Sabrina frequently became emotional. At the end, she confided that the interview had been like therapy for her as she had never spoken about many of these incidents and did not realize how deeply it had hurt her. Both Amir and Sabrina were the first in terms of a pattern of reserved acceptance or passionate engagement as a result of their experiences with Islamophobia. A year after completing data collection and during the final

weeks of writing the dissertation, I once again met Sabrina at a talk I was giving on the study just days after the Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand. Sabrina was surprised at how emotional she became but also stated that she was now interested in studying the experiences of Arab women during the Trump Era. Ironically, Sabrina, as well as many other graduate student participants initially mentioned during their interviews that they would not study Muslim issues in the US as it could result in further surveillance and targeting they did not want to draw further attention to themselves.

This research project centers the complex experiences of diverse Muslim students during a complex historical sociopolitical period in the United States that fostered racial tensions. Anti-Muslim rhetoric and Trump Era policies made many fearful, mistrustful, and overall, apprehensive about discussing their experiences. Throughout the course of the study, participants realized that this project was intended to examine the consequences of diversity initiatives that further marginalize them and to also gain a better understanding of the inter-related nature of off-campus and on-campus bias incidents. Through the participants, it is my hope that we can begin to understand the unique intersectional predicament of Muslim Americans, immigrants, and international students both on and off-campus; a generation that is doubly impacted by the realities of a post 9/11 environment and the Trump Era,

including vulnerability to violence as examined in Chapter 4, and the consequences of Islamophobia in higher education, as described in Chapter 5.

This study was informed by the specific time period in which data was collected, colloquially known as the Trump Era. The Trump Effect could also be observed on campuses nationwide with the surge of Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric, as well as the spike in bias incidents against marginalized groups. In this study, I demonstrate how violence against Muslim women, specifically, gendered Islamophobia, is exacerbated by social intolerance and acceptability of prejudice that seems to have normalized the experiences of bias. While the impact of specific policies (such as the Travel Ban) can be measured more specifically, the larger implications of gender-based violence and racism remain invisible as a result of marginalization of impacted groups, as well as unreported incidents, an inadequate response to reported incidents, and a sociopolitical climate that may normalize such acts in public spaces. Furthermore, this dissertation contributes to knowledge surrounding the racialization of Muslims: specifically related to the risks associated with unveiling Muslim identity. Finally, this study also examines bias during the Trump Era on college campuses and the impact on Muslim American and international students across diverse identities. Policy implications regarding supporting diversity initiatives on campus that are inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive are also provided.

### **Contributions**

Overall, this dissertation contributes to examining the diversity of the Muslim experience, including across gender (such as veiled and unveiled status), and race (acknowledging white-passing privilege associated with some Muslim identities but also twice racialization), captures the Muslim student experience during a hostile social and political climate situated after 9/11 but early during the Trump Era. Furthermore, this study adds to understandings of gender-based harassment informed by anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment, expands our knowledge of intra-gender violence, and normalization of gendered Islamophobia. This study also proposed a theoretical framework (Twice Racialized Intersectionality) that builds on understanding processes of racialization and the intersectional nature of discrimination, while also providing recommendations for addressing on-campus racism at various levels.

### **Hypotheses and Related Results**

The overarching research question for this dissertation asked how Muslim students made sense of their identities and experiences on college campuses during the Trump Era. Findings indicated that intersecting identities, specifically, gender, race/ethnicity, as well as national background/immigrant or international status, formed students' ideas of perceived discrimination both on and off campus, as described in Chapters 4 and 5. Secondly, the racialization of Muslims in the US, similar to post 9/11 experiences, reshapes Muslim identity and navigation of social and cultural norms that

are rooted in both anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment. Given this, students engage in selective admission of identity, when they can. While this is more difficult for veiled women, all participants engage in various levels of codeswitching wherein they choose when to reveal, conceal, or modify their identity as a self-protective measure. Finally, while it may be expected that perceived crimes would be reported, and formal help-seeking behaviors would occur, this study also shows both a lack of mechanisms to report specific religious-based offenses on campus and a lack of awareness or importance to reporting, as well as an even more disturbing trend: the perception of normalization of violence against Muslims among the victimized population.

### **Gender-Based Violence and Islamophobia**

As described in Chapter 4, the first major contribution of this research demonstrates that unveiled Muslim women experience harassment in ways similar to all other women; however, the intersectional nature of such incidents can further our understanding of gender-based violence. In line with this, the underlying racial and anti-immigrant tone of gendered harassment may be more sexualized for women who do not veil and thus, the perpetrators are likely to be men. On the other hand, women deemed hypervisible as a result of socially racialized markers such as the hijab, experience harassment with more Islamophobic and xenophobic undertones and in

many cases appeared as an intra-gender phenomenon that could be linked to orientalist ideas surrounding the Muslim headscarf in Western spaces. An added layer of this intersecting marginalization is observed among Black women and thus calls for further research specifically among Black immigrant and refugee Muslims. Another aspect of these findings includes the ways in which women code switch between revealing and concealing vulnerable identities which informed the theoretical framework that emerges from this study.

### **Twice Racialized Intersectionality**

I expand the research on the racialization of Muslims (Selod, 2015) discussed in Chapters 2, 5, and 7. Black Muslim women experience racialization via their Muslim status, but I argue that this is additionally compounded by their social racial/ethnic categorization and perceived immigrant status that is ascribed via the hijab. The racialization of Muslim people in the United States, specifically, orientalist perceptions of practitioners of Islam as being Arabs, foreigners, immigrants/non-citizens, and having specific physical features, adds a secondary racialized intersecting social location to the Muslim experience. *Twice Racialized Intersectionality*, introduced in Chapter 6, requires acknowledging that there are socially accepted categories of race/ethnicity in the United States, that include White, Black, Asian, and so forth that change over time (Omi &

Winant, 1994). Secondly, racialization of Muslims contributes a second layer of discrimination that this religious minority group faces (Selod, 2017). Thirdly, gendered racialization, specifically linked to the hijab, results in an experience of racism for Black women as discrimination related to both anti-Blackness, Islamophobia, and xenophobia. Finally, Muslim-adjacent communities, those who are not Muslim but can ‘pass as Muslim’ through commonly accepted stereotypes of who is Muslim, are also impacted by this multi-layered form of discrimination. Thus, this framework builds on intersectionality, racial formation, and racialization of Muslims and can shed light into understanding the twice-racialized experiences of Muslim women who veil, particularly African American women, Black immigrants, and refugees, which is particularly salient given the rise of bias crimes against these groups during the Trump Era.

### **Diversity and (Ex)clusion in Higher Education**

Finally, this study contributes to understandings of subtle exclusionary practices that are amplified by Muslim students’ lived experiences in a social climate that sends them specific Islamophobic and xenophobic messages. Racializing religious minority students impacts their navigation of higher education and their experiences on campus in a multitude of ways that can be addressed in the classroom, at the peer level, and at the university level. Furthermore, the overall campus climate also impacts students sense of belonging and acculturation. Fully accounting for viewpoints of prejudiced environments

must include not just about microinteractions, but also broader issues of discriminatory acts, behaviors, and incidents on campus that foster already existing racial tensions that are informed by broader historical, social, and political circumstances. In this study in particular, anti-Black racism is compounded for students with diverse identities that are centrally defined by racial/ethnic exclusion. At the university level, there is a multidimensional impact of Islamophobia and xenophobia both in the form of microaggressions and tokenism for students. Added to this, is the impact on students' personal identity, the mental/emotional toll and exhaustion associated with representation in the form of speaking for other marginalized students, stigma related to stereotypes, and exclusion that altogether compounds the trauma that Muslim students face. Microinteractions and encounters with anti-Black, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant bias on campus uphold social and political messages that students are also receiving off-campus that cause further detriment to their perceptions of discrimination and their overall mental/emotional health and well-being. Recommendations for fostering equitable inclusive diversity on campus as suggested by students are included in the next section.

### **Policy Implications**

It was important to capture the experiences of Muslim students after the 2016 Presidential Election. While the immediate impact on international students became

increasingly clear as a result of Executive Orders that banned travel from predominantly Muslim nations<sup>114</sup>, as well as additional restrictions for all international travelers, the changing national climate, including on campuses, had yet to acknowledge the experiences of domestic Muslim students and specifically, graduate and international students. Additionally, gendered experiences of bias against Muslim women across race/ethnicity, and across student status, especially for non-Arab Muslim women, remain scant in the literature and thus far, almost non-existent in terms of post-election anti-Muslim prejudice. Overall, this study adds to the literature regarding Islamophobia, bias incidents on college campuses, and gender-based violence. Furthermore, this research provides an intersectional contribution towards understanding the diverse experiences of Muslim and Muslim-adjacent communities.

Given the above, this research study has a variety of policy implications. First, the inductive nature of the study allows students to provide insight into how institutions that are not very diverse can better support marginalized students. Understanding these experiences on campus provides the university with data to address issues related to

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<sup>114</sup> Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States, passed on January 27, 2017, banned travel of citizens from seven countries, including Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, for 30 to 90 days and could also result in a permanent ban. Nationals of these countries were unable to enter the US, regardless of valid visas, travel documents or possession of a green card that grants permanent residency in the US. Dual citizens of any of the listed countries were also restricted. Student visas to citizens from these countries were prohibited as well. Nationals with American spouses were also denied entry into the US (whitehouse.gov, 2017).

recruitment, retention, and sustainable diversity especially at predominantly white institutions that are actively working towards these goals. Secondly, this study sheds light on issues faced on campus that are not widely discussed, thus enabling university administrators and staff to consider expanding services. This can mean supporting the reporting of religious-based discrimination or providing culturally supportive services for marginalized groups which applies to policy both on and off-campus. Expanding tolerance campaigns and cultural understanding, as well as providing awareness training related to these issues, also means acknowledging that gender-based violence may look different across varying intersecting social locations. There are also implications for resources provided to students and calls for further examination of protective measures including resource availability, as well as cultural networks of support, specifically, having a representative for marginalized subset communities on campus. This study can also contribute to diversity initiatives related to programming and policies while advocating on behalf of students and promoting a sense of safety for all. In terms of policy this can mean reinforcing the commitment to inclusion and safe, supportive learning environments for all students. Understanding student experiences on campus provides a unique opportunity in terms of fostering diversity to benefit *all* students, expanding services, while shedding light on issues on campus that are not widely discussed yet impact various peer groups and their sense of safety, acceptance and tolerance. An inclusive campus includes creating a supportive environment, which

ultimately means empowering students to feel safe on campus and in their communities. Additional recommendations from the perspective of students in the sample are provided in the next section.

**Table 10** Recommendations for Inclusive Diversity on Campus

<u><i>University Level</i></u>	<u><i>In the Classroom</i></u>	<u><i>Peers</i></u>	<u><i>Other</i></u>
<i>Adding major holidays to university calendar or syllabus</i>	<i>Addressing anti-Black, anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant comments</i>	<i>Peer Tolerance Campaigns (Hijab Day)</i>	<i>Unique needs of international students (assimilation)</i>
<i>Intra-Muslim Diversity</i>	<i>Cultural sensitivity from professors/TA's (STEM)</i>	<i>Awareness of microaggressions</i>	<i>Halal/Other Food Options</i>
<i>Prayer space</i>	<i>Awareness of processes of racialization + stereotyping</i>	<i>Cultural &amp; culturally sensitive events (i.e. festivals etc.)</i>	<i>Promoting respect for difference</i>

Student participants in the sample had various recommendations to uphold inclusive diversity that could also improve campus climate. At the University Level, students noted that adding major holidays (Ramadan, Eid etc.) to the university calendars or even a line of acknowledgment on syllabi would provide visibility of their presence on campus as well as validation. Furthermore, an awareness of Intra-Muslim diversity is

needed: Muslim people and communities, like many other marginalized groups, are not a monolith, and therefore, university initiatives should take into consideration that outreach to a Muslim Students Association does not necessarily mean the concerns of that specific demographic applies to other Muslim students on campus across, race, graduate status, and gender. For example, at MASU, the MSA is largely undergraduate, first/second generation South Asian women of immigrant descent. Conversely, the grad MSA mostly includes international graduate students from the Middle East. Respondents suggested other actions that would be more broadly applicable, such as having a prayer space on campus. They further indicated the symbolic impact of sharing information about a prayer space with students as a message that would be culturally sensitive and welcoming.

In the classroom, professors should be made aware of their own biases. Mechanisms for addressing anti-Black, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant comments are a necessary part of inclusivity. This also leads into the recommendation that more cultural sensitivity and diversity training was needed for instructors, advisors, teaching assistants, and staff, particularly in STEM and business fields. For those in positions of power, this also means being aware of our own processes of racialization, and ultimately, how our biases shape stereotypes and prejudicial behaviors towards students.

In terms of peer awareness, students encouraged more events like Hijab Day as a campaign to acknowledge and de-stigmatize the social and political symbolism of the

veil. Additionally, for some students this also meant more cultural and culturally sensitive events that included people from the actual culture versus outsider perceptions of it.

While some participants felt that any specific culturally relevant accommodation would be too much as it could magnify their outsider status or play into notions of immigrants asking for more. Specifically, international student, discussed unique needs related to assimilation, community, and culture. Participants discussed difficulties finding cultural accommodations like halal food both on and off campus. Given this, as well as universities' roles in supporting student diversity, sharing information about potential housing options and ethnic community information could aid students' transitions. Students also acknowledged the lack of food options and connected addressing it to promoting respect and inclusion for difference: as kosher and vegetarian options were usually available, why not halal? While this may seem like a trivial issue, it was an important aspect of students feeling welcome, supported, and addressing it could reduce their sense of homesickness.

Beyond student recommendations for religious minority support on campus, it is also important for the university to consider broader initiatives that can apply to the larger student body. For example, at MASU (PWI), on campus shuttle buses feature advertisements related to off campus housing, as well as help for drug use and alcohol intoxication; this is also a good place to promote inclusivity and tolerance. For example, as a result of gendered Islamophobia towards elderly veiled women using public

transportation, Boston launched a poster campaign against anti-Muslim bias by encouraging bystanders to intervene by sitting with victims of harassment and discussing neutral topics to deter harassers (Domonoske, 2017). Around the city, 50 posters of the bystander's guide to Islamophobia featuring a cartoon by Paris based artist Maeril was implemented as a simple strategy to fight intolerance with education. San Francisco has a similar campaign planned. Given the frequent use of on-campus shuttle buses and community spaces on campus, campaigns that directly address bias could provide support for marginalized students while also educating the larger student body. Non-profit organizations serving Muslim communities are also an invaluable resource for culturally sensitive tolerance campaigns that universities should consider in their efforts to support diversity education.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>For example, Justice for Muslims Collective, a Washington, DC based coalition that serves Muslim residents and works to dismantle structural Islamophobia also provides resources that include social justice actions that students (both Muslim and non-Muslim allies and advocates) can learn from. These actions include standing with the Muslim community, as well as intersectional statements of support and encouragement to listen to grassroots leaders. Such work can also be included in classroom discussions to foster inclusive dialogue in the classroom, present alternative views, and dispel anti-Muslim myths, while supporting collaborations between academic scholarship and urgent on the ground activism.

## **Limitations**

Because of the exploratory nature of this study, the research has some limitations in regard to generalizability. Specifically, I only interviewed students in a Mid-Atlantic state, not necessarily with a large Muslim population. In larger cities, including those with ethnic enclave Muslim communities or long-standing Muslim American populations, as well as recently settled refugees, the impact of Islamophobia and discrimination in public spaces could be either exacerbated or diminished in more seemingly tolerant environments. As noted in the Introduction, post-9/11, some marginalized Muslim and Muslim-adjacent communities were invisible in the literature, and thus, historical experiences including the impact of institutionalized and social violence on these communities were not captured. This study intended to capture the immediate impact of the Trump Effect on religious, racial/ethnic, and immigrant minorities in the early years of the Trump administration thus, centering the visibility of under-studied communities.

Furthermore, the majority of my participants attended a PWI, with only a small number attending the smaller state HBCU, therefore, the benefits of diversity at HBCU's as well as the Black Muslim experience can be examined more thoroughly with an expansion of research that covers the Black Muslim

experience in particular across HBCU's or comparatively, across PWIs in different regions. While Muslim students' experiences on and off-campus, based on other social identities (gender, race/ethnicity, and citizenship/legal status) remains diverse, the thread connecting this research is the risk of racialization linked to gendered Islamophobia and xenophobia that impacts Muslim people and communities in broader society, and not just students. Additionally, this study primarily centers the experiences of young Muslim men and women between the ages of 18 and 39, thus, excluding the intergenerational effect of those who have lived through both 9/11 and are experiencing further trauma as a result of Trump Era violence. Finally, social class as an intersection was not examined, however, it is clear that there are different experiences among Muslim Americans, generally first- and second-generation immigrants, compared to international students, largely wealthier, older, and planning to return to their home countries, ultimately, having the means of escaping American Islamophobia. Furthermore, international students were largely in STEM disciplines where anti-Muslim prejudice seemed to be more overt and participants, more silenced. Given the implications for diversity and inclusion efforts in higher education, it is increasingly important to understand the experiences of racial/ethnic and religious minorities in disciplines that remain largely inaccessible to them.

## **Future Research**

From this data set, further analysis will include exploring thematic findings related to community level towards Muslim students in off-campus residential areas. Furthermore, the interview data can also provide insight into the HBCU experience in relation to sociopolitical and campus climate. While briefly acknowledge in this study, there is room to expand on the experiences of “invisible” Muslims including a gender analysis of white-passing/white and unveiled Muslim people. Additionally, a comparative analysis of Muslim men’s experiences, specifically examining the difference noted among international men and undergraduates, and more specifically, exploring the 9/11 generation in comparison to new immigrant experiences. This can include an analysis of the internalization of racialization and stereotypes, as well as awareness of invisibility as discussed by men in the sample. Furthermore, the inter-related nature of post 9/11 parental trauma (i.e. warnings and fears), in combination with various forms of community surveillance, and issues in educational spaces (bullying and microaggressions), also compounded experiences of Islamophobia that can be further studies. Finally, in terms of on-campus analysis, further examination of Muslim student experiences in STEM, as well as intra-Muslim discrimination, specifically, anti-Black racism that hinders solidarity needs to be further explored.

Future studies need to consider the specific impact on students on campus, particularly in terms of classroom performance, psychological trauma, and consider the

ways in which societal Islamophobia impacts students both in the classroom and more broadly, on campus. The effect of Islamophobia is broad reaching, compounded by experiences in both public and private spaces, policies, media and political rhetoric, incidences of violence and bias towards family, community, and religious spaces, thus, it is important to recognize the trauma and resilience of Muslim people and communities, while also identifying further mechanisms of support including through advocacy, allyship, culturally specific counseling services, or even broader support for grassroots organization that support local communities. Furthermore, research on the prevalence of hate crimes, as well as terminology that distinguishes hate speech and bias incidents from acts that are considered less harmful, such as microaggressions, need to be made clear as many of these are intertwined, with the potential to be minimized, disregarded, or escalate over time into acts of violence.

This research can also be expanded in a myriad of ways, however, the most critical at this time would include further examination of the intertwined post 9/11 Islamophobia and current policies and rhetoric. Secondly, we need a deeper analysis of the Black Muslim experience, particularly for Black Muslim immigrants and refugees, a subset sample that could not be adequately accounted for in this study but are impacted by Trump Era policies and rhetoric as documented in the Communities Under Fire report (SAALT,

2018), and in CAIR'S Targeted Civil Rights Report (CAIR, 2018).<sup>116</sup> Along with this, a social class analysis is critically needed as understanding of Muslim communities progresses. Specifically, it is important to consider the experiences of high-income internationals in relation to first and second generation Muslim American immigrants.

Finally, beyond the effect of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies, it is critical to expand theoretical frameworks surrounding the racialization of Muslims to also understand the experiences of Muslim-passing or individuals racialized as Muslims. Contributions to this body of work would consider how other racial/ethnic minority groups, including immigrants of color, that are also susceptible to Islamophobia (such as Indo-Caribbeans<sup>117</sup>) remain largely invisible in scholarly literature but are also increasingly susceptible to violence, and vulnerable under the umbrella of anti-Muslim bias.

This research was guided by and supported the voices of a diverse group of Muslim Americans and immigrants to center their standpoint in this study. The methodological design centered the voices of the most marginalized of the group,

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<sup>116</sup> This report, available online ([http://islamophobia.org/images/Targeted\\_2018\\_Civil\\_Rights\\_Report.pdf](http://islamophobia.org/images/Targeted_2018_Civil_Rights_Report.pdf)) addresses institutional and individual prejudice against American Muslims in 2017 related to data, impact, and legal responses.

<sup>117</sup> In some ways, Sikhs and Hindus have been marginally acknowledged and fit under Selod's model of racialization of South Asian communities yet, racially and ethnic diverse communities that include both Muslims and Muslim-passing people such as diaspora communities, and specifically, Indo-Trinidadians and Indo-Guyanese, as well as mixed race Caribbean nationals who have also been impacted by post 9/11 and Trump Era policies are largely erased from the literature and only documented by community-based organizations serving these specific communities (Jorawar, 2011; Ahmed & Maulik, 2008).

specifically those at multiple understudied intersecting social locations. Beyond contributing to sociological understandings of gender-based violence, victimization, and racialization, this study also expands our knowledge of violence and trauma, specifically, hate speech, bias incidents, and microaggressions both on campus and in broader American society.

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## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX A. DIRECTORY OF OFFICE NAMES

International Student Office (ISO)
Office of Institutional Research (OIR)
English Language-Learners Institute (ELLI)
Office of Religious/Spiritual Life (ORSL)
Black Culture Center (BCC)
Saudi Arabian Scholars Program (SASP)
Diversity Center (DC)
Graduate Office (GO)

## APPENDIX B. PWI DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

#	Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity OR Nationality	Grad	UG	International	Domestic	In US	Veil
1	Amir (M*)	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	Y		Y		1 year	
2	Saif (M)	Middle Eastern/White (Saudi Arabian)	Y		Y		1 year	
3	Zoya (W)**	Asian/Indian	Y		Y		1 year	
4	Sabrina (W)	North African (Black) /Middle Eastern (Arab Moroccan)	Y			Y	Born US Citizen	
5	Rabia (W)	Middle Eastern/Other (Turkish)	Y		Y		3 years	Y
6	Zahra (W)	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	Y		Y		2 years	Y
7	Imran (M)	Asian (Indian)	Y		Y		2 years	
8	Soraya (W)	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	Y		Y		3 years (Permanent Resident)	
9	Maryam (W)	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	Y		Y		6 years	Y
10	Ismail (M)	Middle Eastern (Turkish)	Y		Y		1 year	
11	Ramin (M)	Middle Eastern/White (Iranian)	Y		Y		(Permanent Resident)	

12	Saamiya (W)	Asian (Afghani)	Y			Y	Undocumented (Naturalized Citizen in 2016)	Y (but stopped wearing)
13	Malikah (W)	Black/African American		Y		Y	Naturalized Citizen (born in Ghana)	Y (only wore post-election)
14	Noura (W)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)		Y	Y (ELI)		9 months	Y (removed in December 2016 to enter US)
15	Salim (M)	Asian (Indian)	Y		Y		1.5 months	
16	Alia (W)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)	Y		Y		6 years	Y
17	Aisha (W)	Asian (Pakistani-American)		Y		Y	Born US citizen	
18	Abdullah (M)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)	Y		Y		4 months	
19	Faisal (M)	Black/African/ME (Lebanese)		Y		Y		
20	Laila (W)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian)		Y	Y		5 years	
21	Fatima (W)	Black/Middle Eastern (Moroccan)		Y		Y	15 years	
22	Habiba (W)	Middle Eastern/Black (Egyptian)		Y		Y	Born US citizen	Y
23	Youssef (M)	Middle Eastern/White (Egyptian)		Y	Y		Born US citizen	

24	Said (M)	Middle Eastern/Asian (Omani)		Y	Y		1.5 years	
25	Bilal (M)	Black/African (Moroccan)		Y		Y	2 months	
26	Sana (W)	Asian (Indian)		Y		Y	3 years	
27	Rania (W)	Middle Eastern (Egyptian)		Y		Y	4 years	Y
28	Tahira (W)	Asian/ME (Afghan)		Y		Y	8 years	Y
29	Qasim (M)	Middle Eastern (Oman)		Y	Y		1.5 years	
30	Diana (W)	Middle Eastern/Asian (Jordanian)		Y	Y		Born US citizen	Y
31	Zahir (M)	Asian (Bangladeshi)		Y		Y	17 years	
32	Amal (W)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabia)		Y	Y		8 years	Y with niqab
33	Mira (W)	Middle Eastern (Turkey)	Y			Y	22 years	Y
34	Khalil (M)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabia)	Y		Y		3 years	
35	Kabir (M)	Asian (Bangladeshi)		Y		Y	Born US citizen	
36	Zishan (M)	Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabia)	Y		Y		4 years	
37	Ahmed (M)	Asian (Pakistani)		Y		Y		

38	Jamilla (W)	Black/Hispanic (Puerto Rican)	Y			Y	Born US citizen	Y (Hijab and abaya)
39	Malik (M)	Black/Latino (some Mexican)	Y			Y	Born Us citizen	
40	Sadia (W)	Asian (Bangladeshi)	Y			Y	Naturalized US Citizen	Y
41	Adnan (M)	Asian (Pakistani American)		Y			Born US citizen	
42	Khadijah (W)	Black/African American (Other: Dominican)		Y			Born US citizen	Y (turban)
43	Saba (W)	Black/Afro-Caribbean (Bajan)	Y			Y	Born US Citizen	Y

\*While these respondents had not been in the US for at least one year, and therefore, were initially outside of the study parameters, their insights as new international/immigrant students to the US provided unique insight into their experiences that were very different from their counterparts who had been in the US for a longer period of time and also had more positive and negative experiences.

\*\*Jamilla was one of two phone interview participants from the PWI phase of the study. She had recently graduated, resided in another state and had an infant child. Because other out of state, former students had contacted the PI about participating in the study, an IRB Amendment was already in place. Jamilla was also the only participant from the PWI to receive her gift card incentive via email in order to protect her mailing address.

\*\*\*Saba was the second and final phone interview participant from the PW phase of the study. She had initially expressed interest in participating in the study in October of 2017 but was unable to. She was interviewed in May of 2018 before the second phase (HBCU) part of the study was closed.

### APPENDIX C. HBCU DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

#	Pseudonym (HBCU)	Race/Ethnicity OR Nationality	Grad	UG	International	Domestic	W	M	In US	Veil
1	<b>Aminata</b>	Black/African (Ivory Coast)		Y		Y	W		Born US Citizen	Sometimes
2	<b>Kalif</b>	Black/African American		Y		Y		M	Born Us Citizen	NOI
3	<b>Abdul</b>	Black/African American (Sierra Leone)		Y		Y		M	Born US citizen	
4	<b>Nasreen</b>	Asian (Pakistani-American)		Y		Y	W		Born US Citizen	Y (hijab)
5	<b>Amira</b>	Black/African American		Y		Y	W		Born US Citizen	Y (hijab)
6	<b>Solomon</b>	African (Sierra Leone)		Y		Y		M	Born US Citizen	Beard*
7	<b>Ahmad</b>	White	Y			Y		M	Born US Citizen	Beard

\*Kalif was the only Nation of Islam participant in the sample (at both the PWI and HBCU).

\*\*Ahmad was a the only white American convert in the sample (at both the PWI and HBCU) and identified as an Ahmadiyya Muslim. The Ahmadiyya Muslim community are a minority within the Muslim sect and in some regions (like Pakistan) it is illegal to practice resulting in specific discrimination and persecution in Algeria (2016-17), Bangladesh (2003-04), India (2012), Indonesia (2008-11), Saudi Arabia (2006-07) Palestine (2010), and the United Kingdom (2016-17).

## APPENDIX D. IRB APPROVAL LETTER

*University of Delaware IRB Approval from 06/23/2017 to 06/22/2018*



RESEARCH OFFICE

218 Halligan Hall  
University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware 19716-1351  
Ph: 302/831-2136  
Fax: 302/831-2928

DATE: June 23, 2017

TO: Aneesa Baboolal, MA, PhD Student  
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [979441-2] Examining Diverse Minority Student Perspectives on Campus

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: June 23, 2017

EXPIRATION DATE: June 22, 2018

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # (5,7)

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.