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The Self-Perception and Campus Experiences of Traditional Age Female Muslim American Students

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Abstract

Religion and spirituality have been found to contribute to the well-being of American university students. Although practiced by a small minority, Islam is the fastest growing faith in the United States, indicating a growing campus presence. The purpose of this study was to identify campus experiences that influenced the identity perception of traditional age Muslim American women. The conceptual framework included theories of identity negotiation, intergroup contact, and religious identity as well as campus climate structures developed to improve diversity. This phenomenological study took place at 2 public 4-year universities in California and included interviews with 6 participants. Interview protocol was framed by 4 research questions and focused on classroom and campus experiences that affected the choice to wear or refrain from wearing the hijab, campus satisfaction, and how student services might support a positive religious climate. Data were analyzed through continuous comparison of codes developed from organization of significant student statements into units of meaning, context, and synthesis of significance of events experienced. Themes that emerged were harassment, stereotyping based on media portrayals, and student and faculty ignorance of Islam. The participants expressed a deep personal and spiritual identification with their faith and requested campus spaces for this expression. This study may contribute to positive social change through the initiation of education and training programs for campus policymakers, student affairs personnel, faculty, and staff regarding the unique needs of religious minority groups, including Muslim American women.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the young women who have struggled to develop and assert their religious identities while pursuing the means to make a positive difference in a global community through higher education. It is because of them and their struggle that tolerance, acceptance, and the ability to embrace pluralism in its richness may have its greatest success.

This dissertation is also dedicated to those in my life from whom I have inherited life-long learning and the desire to pursue education. First, my grandfather, Lorris M. Dimmitt (1884-1981), former Superintendent of King County Schools in Washington State, whose antique desk awaits me upon completion of this degree. Second, this is for my parents, J. Gilbert and Helen Koller, who dedicated their time and careers to teaching not only their students but their children. Third, for Dr. Collen McElroy and Dr. Lois Phillips Hudson (1927-2010), both English professors at the University of Washington, who inspired and encouraged me to write to the edge of my ability and beyond. Fourth, to Dr. Cheryl Keen, who personifies positive social change through education, action, and mentorship. Finally, this effort is dedicated to my best friend, companion, and life partner, J. Kim McNutt. Without you none of this would have come to pass.

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Finally, I would like to recognize the six women in this study who allowed me into their lives and provided me with insight and admiration into their faith and identities. So much of this belongs to them.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

American college and university campuses are more diverse now than in their 400 year history. Race, ethnicity, culture, gender, and socioeconomic status all represent the multiple identities students share within the larger framework of being American. It is religion, however, that is one of the most fundamental characteristics in defining one's individual or collective sense of self and belonging (Cole & Amhadi, 2010). In the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks many perceptions of minority students, specifically Muslims, present a challenge for educators and administrators in creating a positive learning environment in light of prevalent negative views regarding Islam (Muedini, 2009; Shammas, 2009). Within this religious group, women have received a mixture of pity, disdain, and admiration (Zine, 2008) from Western theorists, who according to Middle Eastern scholar Edward Said (1979), have imposed an Orientalist image upon these women, one that portrays them as simultaneously oppressed and hypersexual (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010; Said, 1979, Zine, 2008;). Media stereotyping of Muslim women as subservient, or participants in terrorist activities, made more identifiable in the symbol of the hijab—the Muslim head covering—has frequently complicated or challenged Muslim American women's choice to express their religious identities (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010; Muedini, 2009).

The college experience represents a crucial time in a young adult's social and personal identity development as well as the potential for interaction with those from previously unknown groups including racial, ethnic, and religious minorities (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009). Given the current challenges

Muslim women face as an outgroup in society and on campus, it is imperative that their experiences be collected and understood in order for university policymakers and academic affairs leaders to take steps to improve or maintain a campus climate conducive for the full development of all students. The implications for building a better understanding of this growing segment of women in higher education is twofold: a meaningful learning and social experience for American Muslim women on campus and an informed understanding of these women by other students and faculty that may lead to tolerance or even pluralistic attitudes and actions.

In this chapter I begin with a background and summary of the research literature related to the perceptions of traditional age female Muslim American undergraduate students—both those who choose to wear the hijab and those who do not. A statement of the problem addressed by this research and its relevance and purpose is provided as a context for the research questions that guide this study. A conceptual framework, the nature of the study, necessary definitions, assumptions, scope, delimitations, limitations, and significance of this research precedes a final discussion outlining the implications for social change.

Background

The relationship between higher education campus climate and the personal and group identities of Muslim American women, in particular, an understanding of identity formation by choosing to wear the traditional hijab or veil on campus, has received limited attention by researchers. Connections between choosing to reject or participate in

this traditional religious practice and the campus climate experience must be examined in order to more fully understand the challenges these women encounter.

Most of the research regarding campus climate and the treatment of minority groups has been concentrated on racial issues (Hurtado, Milem, Clatyon-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). More recently attention has expanded to examine the role of women in higher education; currently more than half of those students searching for their classroom on the first day of instruction. Many of these students are bringing with them spiritual paths that they assume will continue to develop during their college years (United States Census Bureau [USCB], 2012). The importance of the role of religion and spirituality in the lives of college students has been brought to light by the University of California at Los Angeles's (UCLA) Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). This longitudinal study that took place from 2004 to 2007 with an initial national sample of 112,232 college students from 236 institutions found that the majority of students acknowledged that spirituality or religion played an important role in their lives and well-being.

Current research has had limited success determining whether religious affiliation (as opposed to spirituality and religious struggle as reported by Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 2010) has had an impact on graduation rates and academic achievement (McFarland, Wright, & Weakliem, 2011). The data regarding retention in higher education and their connection to religion has only marginally pointed to small retention increases for religious majority students enrolled in campus religious activities (Butterfield & Pemberton, 2011). Several higher education studies have followed Tinto's (1998) theory of retention and attrition that argued the likelihood of retention increased

with integration and socialization and pointed toward the importance of providing minority students with an environment that includes both in order to encourage growth.

The combination of gender and spiritual/religious development on campuses can be a factor in determining group and personal identity perception (Astin et al., 2010). Prior to the terrorist hijackings of September 11th, Cole and Ahmadi (2003) investigated a small sample of immigrant and American Muslim college women who veiled to discover how this choice impacted their collegiate experience. Even before the intense negative attitudes toward Islam surfaced after September 11th, many of the women complained of negative or discriminatory behavior directed toward them, so much so that many chose to remove the veil. A separate study conducted from 1996-1997 by Read and Bartkowski (2000) revealed a more complex response from 24 Muslim women; their reasons for choosing to veil had less to do with increased negative attention and more with personal theological, political, or personal choices.

The present research regarding Muslim American women and higher education as it pertains to identity construction is limited. Mir (2009) has written of Muslim women and their campus experiences regarding sexual identity and practices. Seggie and Sanford (2010) and Rangoonwala, Sy and Epinoza (2011) have explored the role of campus climate and its relationship to identity and personal well-being for those who choose to wear the veil. While there are numerous studies pertaining to the benefits of diversity, including pedagogy that promotes religious awareness in order to increase tolerance and promote pluralism (Antonio, Milem, & Chang, 2012; Gurin et. al, 2002; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005), studies concentrating on traditional age undergraduate

Muslim American women is scant. The gap in the research points to a need to further understand and improve the experience of Muslim women in higher education with the goal of providing learning that is supported and promoted through student affairs programs.

Problem Statement

Muslim students can be an integral part of a university religious diversity experience and have the potential to guide the campus community in embracing their presence and appreciating their heritage in a multicultural and multireligious society (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010). According to the HERI 2010 study, Muslim students acknowledge more than any other religious minority group that their faith had shaped their identity (44%) and influenced their approach to life (33%). This landmark longitudinal study assessed the spiritual and religious development of undergraduate college students and concluded that religion and spirituality played an important role in the lives of most students (Astin et al., 2010).

Recent studies conducted by the Pew Research Center (PRC), however, indicated that 28% of American Muslims reported they experienced suspicion from non-Muslims with 22% reported being called offensive names (2011, p. 46). Obvious forms of discrimination or religious marginalization may or may not surface on college and university campuses; however, subtle expressions of Islamophobia (frequently unconscious or unintentional) in the form of microaggressions (such as stereotyping Muslims as terrorists and believing that religious traditions other than Christianity are illegitimate) are a part of the daily experiences of many Muslims, including college

students (Nadal et al., 2012). In the case of Muslim American women, particularly those who wear the veil or other outward symbols of faith, these microaggressions may discourage the healthy development of personal and social identities, and therefore, deplete their college experience. While classroom and campus experiences may or may not have an impact on whether a Muslim American student chooses to wear the hijab as a reflection of her identity, exploration of how these students perceive their interaction with the campus environment and its relationship to identity formation and its expression (wearing or not wearing the hijab) needs to occur.

The role of faith and spirituality in college students' lives has recently been found to be a key component for student well-being during college years (Astin et al., 2010). Given the rise of Islam to the fastest growing religion in the United States whether through birth, immigration, or conversion, and the frequency of discriminatory treatment in American society of both women and Muslims in general, it is paramount that leaders in higher education are equipped with a better understanding of how these women perceive themselves as members of the college community in order to provide them with the tools to succeed and grow personally and academically (Maslim & Bjorck, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation was to identify on campus factors and experiences that influence the self-perception of traditional college age Muslim American women, both individually and collectively. As women, and as a distinct cultural and religious minority, these students present a challenge and opportunity for those charged with providing an environment that allows them to develop personally and academically; one

that has received little attention to date on many college campuses. A better understanding identity formation that includes religion, gender, and community engagement can be valuable in designing or modifying existing campus policy and/or academic structures.

Research Questions

The focus of this study was to determine how traditional age undergraduate Muslim American women view themselves in relationship to their citizenship and religious identity on campus, how these women view wearing or not wearing the hijab, and what improvements they perceive could be made by student services or academic affairs to insure a positive campus climate for these women.

RQ1: How do traditional age Muslim American women seeking bachelor's degrees at a Southern California public university perceive their engagement with the campus environment socially and individually?

RQ2: What campus influences impact traditional age Muslim American college women's identity perceptions?

RQ3: How do traditional age Muslim American college women describe experiences that affect whether they wear or do not wear the hijab on campus?

RQ4: In what ways would traditional age Muslim American college women believe student services and/or academic affairs could support a positive climate that allows their engagement and identity development?

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework seeks to explain key constructs and terms, situates the research within prior theory, and identifies the phenomena to be analyzed and its justification for examination ("Conceptual/Theoretical Framework," 2010). The selection of a conceptual rather than a theoretical framework for this study allowed for fluidity and flexibility not only in designing the research methodology, but in interpretation of the emerging data without the constriction of firm or unyielding theoretical constructs. That being said, several theories guided the explanation of identity development of female Muslim American college students and their campus experiences.

Personal and Group Identity Theories as Framework

Tajfel's (1969, 1982) social categorization theory explores the relationship between intergroup and group behavior (i.e., there can be no intergroup behavior without prior classification of groups). Originally employed in psychology to explore racial prejudice, Tajfel (1969) claimed that individuals live in a social environment that is constantly changing, and this change is related to the activities of the group(s) to which one belongs. In addition, these shifting relations between groups require continuous modifications in understanding the forces changing life's circumstances. These attributions are based on "the process of categorization, assimilation, and search for coherence" (Tajfel, 1969, p. 81). For Muslim American women, a college or university setting provides a plethora of environmental forces that impact her ingroup or outgroup status and may cause her to define and redefine her status within these collectives.

Building on social categorization theory, Turner, Oakes, Haslam, and McGarty (1994), proposed a self-categorization theory that explained the mechanisms through which group processes shift member self-perception from personal to social depending upon social context. They argue that self-categorization is intrinsically flexible with a continual competition ongoing between the self-identity (categorization) at both individual and group levels, and that "self-perception varies along a continuum defined by the conflict between the two and their shifting relative strengths" (Turner & Oakes as cited in Turner et al., 1994, p. 456). In the case of Muslim American female students, this theory guided the exploration of social pressures (peers, campus influences, or societal norms) as they influence identity compared to that of ingroups such as family and community. The theory behind self-categorization argues that there is a collective self derived from a subjective perspective and includes both a personal and social identity at two different levels. Within this concept, Turner et al. explain:

> Personal identity refers to self-categories that define the individual differences from other (in-group) persons. Social identity refers to social categorizations of self and others, self-categories that define the individual in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories. Social identity, therefore, refers to the shared social categorical self ("us" vs. "them"). (p. 454)

Self-categorization, therefore, is a fluid integration of personal identity as it relates to a social group and is highly dependent upon situational circumstances.

A sister to self-categorization theory, bicultural acculturation theory (Tadmor & Tetlock, as cited in Stubbs & Sallee, 2013) posits that individuals and/or groups are faced with choosing one identity over another in any given situation (i.e., religious/Muslim versus cultural/American). Originally applied to expatriates engaging in international business environments, I utilized this theory to help understand Muslim American women students' accountability to family, community, and religious values on the one hand, and non-Muslim teachers, friends, and classmates as well as popular culture on the other, both in the classroom and in extracurricular settings.

Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory sought to explain, predict, and provide mechanisms to overcome racial prejudice. In order for positive contact to occur all groups must be perceived as equal in status, strive for a common goal, achieve intergroup cooperation, and have the support of formal/informal authority, law, or custom. Pettigrew (1998, 2008) reformulated and expanded on this theory, taking into account individual differences, multilevel social contexts, and the possibility that negative outcomes may result.

Finally, Peek's (2005) stages of religious identity development, constructed from working with young Muslims, suggest that religious identity is first ascribed, later chosen, and finally declared by a collective or individual. Peek's identity model is based on the assumptions that identity is attained through social and evolutionary processes, that the length of time taken to proceed through these stages varies from person to person, and that it pertains to a specific group of individuals in a particular social and historical environment (p. 223).

Campus Climate Framework

Campus climate frameworks have been based upon empirical evidence and research regarding the benefits of racial and ethnic diversity in higher education. The campus climate framework put forward by Hurtado et al. (1998) stressed the importance of university leaders and policymakers in acknowledging the role of institutional history of inclusion/exclusion, structural or organizational diversity, the psychological ramifications of diversity on student groups, and monitoring the behavioral results of interaction among various groups. Building on this multidimensional framework, Gurin et al. (2002) and Milem et al. (2005) studied the impact and success of exposure to diversity on campus and in the classroom, coursework that emphasized pluralism, and intergroup dialogue to provide a clear roadmap for American college campuses to implement diversity programs.

Using Hurtado et al.'s (1998) framework, Stewart, Kocet, and Lobdell (2011) categorized and provided recommendations for achieving religious pluralism in the 21st century. Colleges or universities might fall into one of four categories: a) apathy, where religion, spirituality, or secularization is "muted," b) awareness, a campus state where religious or secular diversity exists or is tolerated rather than embraced, c) acceptance, or active incorporation of nonmajority religious beliefs and diverse perspectives, and d) active engagement that "connects religious pluralism with social justice advocacy to address local, national and global issues" (Stewart et al., 2011, p. 16).

Social categorization (Tajfel, 1969, 1982), self-categorization (Turner et al., 1994), intergroup contact theory (Allport 1954; Pettigrew, 1998, 2008), bicultural

acculturation theory (Tadmor & Tetlock as cited in Stubbs & Sallee, 2013), and Peek's (2005) religious identity formation theory explored in depth in the literature review of Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

A phenomenological research design was used to better understand, illustrate, and analyze the perceptions and experiences of Muslim women in higher education. According to Moustakas (1994), "in phenomenological studies the investigator abstains from making suppositions, focuses on a specific topic freshly and naively, constructs a question or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that provide the basis for further research and reflection" (p. 47). In order to discover the personal stories, perceptions, reflections, and descriptions of their conscious experiences, it was decided that this would be the most effective approach. A phenomenological research design that consisted of personal interviews was employed. Research was conducted at two sites, both 4-year public universities in Southern California—that currently or formerly engaged Muslim students in cocurricular activities. The study was limited to Muslim American women who had attained this status either by birth, immigration, or conversion, and who had completed 1 academic year of fulltime study on a college campus. With the permission of students and university, all communication was recorded, and notes taken for accuracy in transcription. Interview protocol is fully described and outlined in Chapter 3 and in Appendix C.

Definitions

This section introduces and defines terminology in the study and its derivation from practical, theoretical, theological, and cultural sources. Since some of the words or terms listed here are Arabic and have dual meaning, a clarification of usage is made.

Campus climate: Perceptions, outlooks, and expectations that define a higher education institution and its members (students, faculty, and staff). These traits are more flexible than the organizational culture that represents the customs and beliefs of the institution (Hurtado et al., 1999).

Ecumenical worldview: Defined and measured by Astin et al. (2010), it is the extent to which one is: interested in different religious traditions, seeks to understand other countries and cultures, feels a strong connection to all humanity, believes in the goodness of all people, accepts others as they are, and believes that all life is interconnected and that love is at the root of all the great religions. (p. 21)

Hadith (narrations): A term that refers to second-hand reports of Muhammad's personal conversations, traditions, and lifestyle that began to be collected soon after his death. They are used as legal and theological adjunct texts to assist in the interpretation and implementation of Qur'anic instruction. The full collection of these hadiths is known as the *Sunnah* (clear path) and is second only to the Qur'an in theological importance (Read & Bartkowski, 2000).

Hijab: The most frequently used word to describe the outer and most noticeable piece of clothing worn by a Muslim woman is the *hijab* or veil. In Islam, the word has two meanings: In the broadest sense, hijab means a show of modesty in dress and

behavior required in the Qur'an for both women and men, while in the contemporary vernacular the word has come to represent the head covering of Muslim women that specifically covers the hair and not the face (Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009). It is this piece of clothing that has become the most recognized symbol of Islam and is at the heart of the controversy that surrounds the suppression of women, particularly in the Middle East.

Hijabi: A term used within the Muslim community to refer to a woman who wears the hijab.

Identity: The perception and conceptualization of the self as an individual or a member of a group as it may pertain to social, cultural, religious, or national affiliation. Individuals may identify with one or more complementary or competing identities (Stubbs & Sallee, 2013).

Islam: One of the fastest-growing yet controversial and misunderstood of the major religions (Abu-Ras, Ahmed, & Arfken, 2010; Maslim & Bjorck, 2009). The word itself means *submission* in Arabic, and centers around the Qur'an, the recitations that Muslims believe are the revelation of God's word to his Prophet Muhammad in the early 7th century C.E. As with Judaism and Christianity, Islam has a diverse ethnic, racial, and theological contingency with its largest division between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. While it is beyond the scope of this research to discuss the ideological differences between these two sects, it should be understood that students may or may not identify with one of these two subgroups that since ancient times have experienced a rift in theological and political perspectives.

Islamic feminism: A controversial term and form of activism that refers to assertion of women's rights as they are found in nonpatriarchal readings or interpretations of the Qur'an, sacred texts, or historical contexts in order to bring about gender equality (Mernissi, 1991; Mir-Hosseini, 2011).

Islamophobia: The fear of Islam as a religion, and a social discomfort or hostility with towards Muslims in general. The term was first introduced by the United Kingdom's Runnymede Trust Report (1991) and defined as an unfounded fear and hostility towards Muslims that stemmed from the belief that Islam is an inferior, maladaptive, violent, and politically manipulative religion. The report also demonstrated that anti-Muslim prejudices were frequently encouraged by other religions, in particular, Christianity.

Qur'an: Its meaning and purpose in Islam cannot be understated. It is a source of sacred history, thought, law, and a spiritual path for believers. According to Nasar (1991),

> If the soul of the Prophet is the fountainhead of Islamic spirituality, the Qur'an is like that lightning which having struck the human receptacle caused this fountainhead to gush forth or like the water descending from heaven which made streams to flow from this fountainhead. (p. 3)

Religion: According to Tisdell (2003), religion is a structured community of faith that has a written doctrine, creed, and code of behavior.

Spirituality: A personal belief or experience of the divine, or a higher purpose through which meaning is constructed; it is about an awareness and interconnectedness of

all things. Although religion and spirituality may be interrelated, one is not necessary for the practice or experience of the other (Tisdell, 2003).

Student affairs: A higher education office comprised of members that seek to promote teaching and development, encourage understanding and respect for diversity, individual worth, and support for student needs (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 2013).

Assumptions

The first assumption of this study was that the participants selected would offer honest, complete, and thoughtful answers to all interview questions. It was also assumed that these young women are willing and free to express themselves without judgment and to ask questions of the interviewer if she did not understand an inquiry or need further clarification. Student commitment to participate and respond to data summaries were also anticipated. Finally, it was assumed that these young Muslim American undergraduates would provide valuable insights into their experiences that shaped their identities as individuals and as a group of unique religious minority students. These assumptions were necessary in order to provide confidence in accurate cataloging and interpretation of participant responses.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was comprised of traditional college age Muslim American female undergraduates attending two 4-year research universities located in a large city in Southern California. All participants had completed 1 fulltime academic year of study on campus and were U.S. citizens of birth, or immigration. The reasoning for the selection

of this demographic was (a) to sample the most common age group of college undergraduates, (b) to categorize the experience of American rather than immigrant or international women so as to have a common understanding of American culture and social norms, and (c) to understand identity construction of these early adult learners as it pertains to individual and collective religious personas (Gurin et al., 2002).

It was beyond the scope of this research to investigate the experiences of female Muslim international or exchange students and their perspectives. While the literature regarding this outgroup is informative and has been intermittently referenced in order to establish a comparison to American students, it is politically, socially, and demographically divergent from the planned research participant pool. Investigation of the phenomenon of student identity formation and education experience provided the opportunity for data collection through interviews and focus groups as opposed to case studies or a personal narrative.

As the author of this study, it must be disclosed that I have a complex and unique educational, theological, and sociological background that has inspired this research. Although I hold a Master's degree in theology, I do not identify with Christianity in the traditional or doctrinal sense. I have expanded my theology throughout the course of my life and education that has included membership in a Reform Jewish temple, and residency in a rural Muslim village in the Middle East. I consider myself a spiritual and ecumenical feminist formerly employed as an experienced college professor in the diverse racial and ethnic environment of South Central Texas, engaged with students from multiple religious backgrounds.

Limitations

The limitation of this study was the small participant sample from a single metropolitan location in the United States. All of the women were affiliated and contacted through the Muslim Student organizations on campus known for attracting students with leadership characteristics and pride in their faith and heritage; therefore, they may represent an exclusive percentage of Muslim students in higher education. Generalization of Muslim American undergraduate women in higher education was avoided, and the experiences of these women were understood in terms of their exclusive personal perceptions and interpretations.

An additional limitation included the timing of the research during the summer vacation schedule of the universities chosen for the participant pool. While one of the institutions was a large, public institution of over 40,000 students, difficulty in contacting students that would normally be on campus during the school year caused an increase in the time it took to complete this study.

Significance

Astin et al.'s (2010) examination of the HERI (2010) longitudinal study regarding the importance of religion and spirituality in higher education indicated the need for further exploration of those who practice Islam in their college years, including differences in gender. While studies have been conducted in the United Kingdom, Turkey, and Canada regarding the treatment and identity formation of Muslim women in higher education, relatively few have been published regarding this phenomenon in the United States. The experiences of the Muslim-American females (including recent

immigrants and established citizens), however, cannot be easily compared to European, Asian, or other national female identities according to Shirazi and Mishra (2010) and Carvalho (2013).

The significance of this research was to discover barriers that may prohibit Muslim women from expressing and developing their full academic and religious potential while in higher education, building upon characteristics that promote positive personal and collective identities. This is particularly important in a post September 11th environment where these women are often stereotyped, oppressed, and even confused regarding openly expressing or obeying their faith by wearing the hijab (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010). The existence of national (superordinate) and minority group identification that constitutes dual identities (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007; Hopkins, 2011) and/or hybrid self-perception that shifts, transforms, and merges during college years (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010) deserved examination to provide these women with the support and services they need on campus.

The implications for positive social change were contingent upon gaining a better understanding of the experiences that shape identity formation for Muslim American undergraduate women. As this segment of society continues to grow and participate in communities, its success can be accentuated by a campus environment that promotes meaningful learning, religious and spiritual growth, and personal fulfillment.

Summary

Institutions of higher education offer a unique opportunity to provide a meaningful cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious interaction with diverse student groups for the purpose of achieving positive academic and democratic outcomes (Hurtado et al. 1998). The majority of campus climate research, however, has been directed at racial minorities leaving a gap in the literature regarding how religious outgroups negotiate their campus identities. Both gender and religious status for Muslim American women undergraduates put them at risk for marginalization in a primarily White, Christian, and male privileged environment. In addition, those women who choose to wear the hijab, particularly since the attacks of September 11th, may be seen as symbols of a volatile and controversial faith (Rangoonwala et al., 2011; Seggie & Sanford, 2010).

The recent focus on the importance of spirituality and religion for college and university students underscores the need for an in-depth understanding of Muslim women as they represent the largest group (both men and women) that claims a relationship between faith and identity (HERI, 2010). In addition, a positive program for interaction and engagement with diversity has the potential to increase tolerance and pluralism on campus (Gurin et al., 2002).

The literature review that follows in Chapter 2 provides a background and in-depth analysis of the current research concerning Muslim American women in higher education, their identity construction, and the challenges that they face on campus. In particular, the choice to wear the hijab as the most recognizable symbol of Islam in a post September 11th society is addressed (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010; Muedini, 2009). Campus

climate diversity frameworks, social, individual, group, and religious identity theories are considered and applied to the literature in order to draw a clearer picture of the identity negotiation of traditional college age Muslim American women.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Traditional college age Muslim American women represent a growing segment of the diverse higher education landscape. As members of Islam, a religion whose members are increasing more rapidly than any other faith in the United States, these women simultaneously gain high visibility, particularly if they choose to wear the hijab, and are potential targets for discrimination in the wake of the events of September 11th (Aziz, 2012; Ghumman & Jackson, 2010; Gurbuz & Gurbu-Kucuksariz, 2009; Muedini, 2009; PRC, 2011; Rangoonwala, et al., 2011; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Sirin & Katsiaficas, 2011). Research has demonstrated that identity formation and development is prominent during early adulthood; therefore, it is imperative these young women have the opportunity to thrive in a campus climate that understands and encourages their gender, cultural, and religious identities (Arnett, 2000; Torres et al., 2009). This literature review includes recent scholarly articles, both empirical and theoretical, concerning the experiences of Muslim women in higher education, their identity formation and negotiation, and their reasons for choosing to wear or not wear the hijab, the most visible symbol of their faith. In addition, research that emphasizes the importance of religion and spirituality in higher education as a component of student well-being is presented. This chapter is organized according to four major topics after a discussion of the conceptual framework upon which it is based: the role of religion and spirituality in the lives of college students, the complexities surrounding traditional age Muslim American women in higher education, the identity factors surrounding the decision of these students

to wear the hijab, and the integration of theory and the literature concerning their well-being within the campus climate framework.

Literature Search Strategy

In order to collect and analyze recent research concerning Muslim American women in higher education, the importance of the hijab, and religious identity, multiple sources were accessed. Peer-reviewed journals, books, established research organizations such as the Brookings Institute, UCLA's HERI, the PRC, and various Internet sites provided valuable research and survey data in order to accomplish this task. My online research employed search engines available from Walden University and public sources that included Academic Search Premier, EBSCO Host, Education Research Complete, Google Scholar, Lexis Nexus, ProQuest Central, SAGE, Taylor and Francis Online and Wiley Online Library. Keyword and Boolean phrases were as follows: *Muslim American women and higher education, Muslim American female college students, Muslim college/university students, colleges, universities, hijab, veil, headscarf, campus climate, religious identity, spirituality, Islam, 9/11, September 11, post-9/11, religious discrimination and Islam, religious minorities, gender, Islam and the media, Muslims and the media, Orientalism, hijab and oppression, hijab and resistance, social identity theory, self-categorization theory,* and *intergroup contact theory.* Google Scholar reached across and synthesized data bases unlike other search engines; therefore, all terms were used in searching this site.

Although past and present research regarding identity negotiation of traditional college age Muslim American women is not prolific, there is ample evidence of the treatment of Muslim Americans in the United States and the challenges they face post- September 11th. Peer reviewed articles that reflect current and historical phenomena were used to supplement and support my analysis of the specific demographic of Muslim American college women. In addition, there is a plethora of literature concerning the impact of majority religious groups (including several forms of Christianity) in higher education as they relate to minority religious and racial subgroups. Finally, the role of spirituality and religion in higher education has been the subject of recent research and provided insight into religious identity struggle and formation and its importance to students of all faiths.

Conceptual Framework

The study of religious identity and its formation by both individuals and groups has evolved from theories based on constructivism (unique personal experience) and social constructionism (cultural meaning) in an attempt to explain and understand the significance of this human characteristic (Beckford, 2003). In addition to developing identities based on religious affiliation, many men and women simultaneously assert national and gender personas that may operate together, separately, or at odds with their religious identities (Mir, 2011; Stubbs & Sallee, 2013; Zahedi, 2011). This study built on theories of identity (individual, group, and social) and campus climate diversity structures and established a conceptual framework with the purpose of gaining a more

comprehensive understanding of this process through the perceptions of traditional age Muslim American female college students.

Individual, Group, and Social Identity Theories

Tajfel's (1969, 1982) social categorization theory posits that individuals exist in a social environment that is constantly in flux, related to group behavior, and requires continuous reevaluation of these forces. The ongoing process of social categorization, group assimilation, and search for unity can lend insight into young college students who encounter a dynamic environment that may require them to define and redefine their personal, group, or social identities (Torres et al., 2009; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). Sirin and Katsiaficas's (2011) study of Muslim American emergent adults suggested the Muslim community not only provides buoyancy to its members when discrimination is perceived, but that women in particular will engage in activities that clarify their identities to non-Muslims (stereotype busting). Conversely, Rangoonwala et al.'s (2011) research of Muslim college students found that participants who claimed lower Muslim identity appeared to have better college adjustment (although those who wore traditional Muslim dress reported higher adjustment regardless of claimed Muslim identity).

Self-categorization theory as presented by Turner et al. (1994) argues that group processes shift member self-perception from personal to social in relationship to context. Self-categorization is, therefore, highly dependent upon context and circumstance. Research conducted by Stubbs and Sallee (2013) revealed that Muslim American college students shifted or moved between cultural (mainstream American) and religious

identities (both social and individual), asserting one over the other depending upon peer group, living arrangements, and situational context. Mishra and Shirazi (2010) pointed out that Muslim identity in itself is not fixed but complex, heterogeneous, and evolutionary. In their research with young Muslim American women, they found that many selected or rejected aspects of hybrid or multiple identities according to their theological interpretation of the Qur'an or other sacred texts.

Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory was originally developed to understand and overcome racial prejudice; Pettigrew's (1998, 2008) subsequent expansion has recently been applied by others to include religious discrimination. According to Allport, four elements—equal group status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and the support of authority—must be present to lead to the reduction of prejudicial behavior between groups. Recent research by Jung (2012) concerning interreligious contact demonstrated that a higher frequency of interaction with Muslims by Americans of other faiths predicted a slight overall improved attitude toward this minority group. Using data from the Portraits of American Life Study, Jung measured the frequency of adult (*n* =2,610) conversational experiences with Muslims on a ordinal scale (1-5) over 12 months ranging from no contact (1) to daily conversations (5). The analysis revealed that each additional engagement improved the likelihood of respect for Muslims by 18.5% for most groups; however, Evangelical and Black Protestants produced the opposite reaction with negative perception increasing with each interaction (Jung, 2012, p. 120). According to Jung, Evangelical Christians may view Muslims in competition for souls in so far as personal salvation is concerned, and therefore, view them as a spiritual threat. Jung also

postulated that since Black Protestants have witnessed a growth in African American conversion to Islam they, like Evangelicals, may perceive Islam as spiritual competition thus falling short of Allport's prerequisite of group cooperation (p. 124).

Pettigrew's (1998, 2008) research on the future directions of Allport's (1954) theory acknowledged that a very small percentage of intergroup contact may lead to increased prejudice, distrust, and conflict when a group is confronted with others it views as threatening. This is particularly the case when encounters are not voluntary, superficial, or one group is considered unequal in status. Type of contact may determine whether a positive or negative reaction occurs. Pettigrew (2008) observed that the majority of the data confirms intergroup contact leads to constructive interaction because research has been more focused on positive outcomes than those that are less successful.

Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner's (2009) study of racial and cultural outgroups concluded that acquaintance with Muslims had a positive statistical relationship to favorable views of this group—approximately 25% greater based on analysis of PRC data. Similar to Jung's (2012) research, their findings revealed that those groups who identified with religious traditionalism, including Evangelicals, had a negative view of Muslims although this was not necessarily based on contact. Policymakers and administrators of both private Christian and public secular institutions of higher education might benefit from further research into the specific challenges these groups pose to the success of intergroup contact on campus.

Religious identity development consists of stages of ascription, choice, and declaration of collective or individual distinctiveness based on the assumption that

identity is evolutionary, separate, and pertains to groups in unique social and historical contexts (Peek, 2005). According to Hogg, Adelman, and Blagg (2010), religious worldviews may feel personal, but in reality are collective belief systems that have a wider reach than other ideologies since they attempt to explain the nature of existence and provide hope of an afterlife. Empirical findings support the claim that religious identification promotes individual psychological well-being and serves the dual function of a social support system (Ysseldyk et al., 2010). Keddie's (2014) research in the United Kingdom with younger students (ages 11-15), however, demonstrated that religious identity may fluctuate, coexist, or even merge with other religious belief systems, especially during the early adult development years.

Religious identity as understood through the theories described indicates that individuals operate in a fluctuating social environment that requires continuous evaluation and self-reflection depending upon prevalent forces (Tajfel, 1969, 1982). These group processes, in turn, shift member self-perception from individual to social dependent upon context (Turner et al., 1994). According to Allport (1954), intergroup contact may lead to the elimination of prejudice or progress toward pluralism, but only if equal status, common goals, cooperation, and structural support are present. Finally, religious identity development may move through stages throughout a person's life, evolving as circumstances or experiences modify or solidify identity perception (Peek, 2005).

Campus Climate Framework

According to Hurtado et al. (1998), students arrive at college with a formed sense of identity originating from their communities, parents, or religion, and that these influences are important to their growth. For many college or university students the development and negotiation of identity through social and personal experience may also be directly influenced by campus climate, curriculum, and mission. Higher education as an institution, however, "has not decided whether it should merely reflect our society or whether it should try to consciously shape the society," thereby missing the opportunity (or responsibility) of introducing diversity experiences that may positively affect student's worldview (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 280). As previously claimed by Allport (1954) and Pettigrew (1998, 2008), exposure to those different from one's ingroup can result in greater tolerance and cooperation between previously misjudged or stereotyped individuals or groups. In order to improve campus climate based upon the introduction and application of diversity Hurtado et al. developed a higher education campus climate framework that stressed four critical areas: a) acknowledgement of institutional history, b) structural diversity, c) psychological consequence of diversity, and d) behavioral results of interaction. Originally developed to promote racial equality, this model has the potential to be modified to include religious minorities, who according to Bowman (2011), present a separate and unique group challenges on campus from racial minorities.

Building on the concept of campus diversity as a means for student growth, Gurin et al. (2002) stressed the importance of exposure to diversity in order to achieve tolerance or pluralistic attitudes among students. Contact with diversity is, therefore, vital to

identity construction as it challenges past experiences and stimulates critical thinking; in this way the university setting allows students to make informed decisions regarding their beliefs and values before entering a more permanent community.

In support of Hurtado et al. (1998) Milem et al. (2005), and Antonio et al. (2012) advocated the benefits of campus diversity programs, including curriculum that promotes religious awareness. It is not enough to bring diverse groups of students together; there must be willingness on the part of the student and educators to interact and exchange ideas in the classroom. In much the same way that Gurin et al. (2002) recognized the importance of contact with diversity to challenge preconceived ideas, a carefully formulated curriculum that takes this concept one step further and stimulates discussion may further tolerance and promote pluralism.

Recent analysis of the extensive HERI (2010) data have supported the need for a campus climate framework that promotes diversity to achieve positive experiences for both majority and minority religious groups. Bryant's (2011a, 2011b) analysis of the data concluded that cocurricular activities that are challenging in higher education lead toward an ecumenical worldview. Mayhew's (2011) examination confirmed that college may indeed have an impact on ecumenicism and concurs that creating challenging curricular activities may promote discussion and reflection among religious groups with positive outcomes.

There is a small but salient body of research that supports the need for further investigation into identity formation of traditional college age Muslim American women, and the importance of campus climate in this process. Much of the published literature

has focused on women who wear the veil on campus, interpretation of its personal and collective meaning, treatment by non-Muslim students, and adjustment to higher education (Rangoonwala et al., 2011). The well-documented importance of a positive and inclusive campus religious climate has extended the research to more than individual or single group well-being to that of all religious minorities (Seggie & Sanford, 2010).

Because the conceptual framework covered a broad spectrum of identity formation analysis often based upon minority or outgroups group membership, it was important that the current research bring this into focus and specifically address gender and/or religious needs. The following empirical analysis of the literature examines the role of religion and spirituality in higher education, religious minorities and campus climate, pluralism and ecumenical worldview, and the role of the faculty in this process. In addition, particular attention was paid to Muslim American women in higher education and the meaning of wearing the veil to their identity formation.

The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Higher Education

Before reviewing the literature concerning female Muslim American identity perception in higher education, this section shall discuss the importance of religion and spirituality in the lives of college and university students in the 21st century. The HERI (2010) study of 112,232 freshmen from 236 higher education institutions responded to a six-page questionnaire (UCLA's Cooperative Institutional Research Program and College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey) and demonstrated that these young adults had high levels of spiritual interest (80%), belief in god(s) (79%), and confidence that religion provides strength, support, and guidance (69%) in their lives (p. 5). Astin et al. (2010), in

their book detailing the findings and implications of the HERI study, note that nearly one half of respondents indicated that it is important that colleges encourage their personal expression of spirituality; although one fifth indicated that their professors frequently encouraged queries of personal meaning and purpose, 62% reported that educators never promoted discussion of religious or spiritual matters (p. 37).

Further research by Bowman and Small (2012) using the HERI data found that religious engagement among college students is positively related to hedonic (psychological pleasure and avoidance of pain) and eudaimonic (living life to the fullest) well-being. Double religious minority students—defined as those who are both religious minorities on campus and in American society—were shown, however, to have a decreased sense of well-being relative to mainline Christians regardless of secular or religious campus affiliation. In addition, these same double minority students may experience negative growth at religious colleges, particularly Catholic institutions (Bowman & Small, 2010).

It cannot be ignored that some religious affiliation may negatively influence the pursuit or attainment of higher education for some groups. In the United States 48% of Hindus, 35% of Jews, and 26% of Buddhists hold post graduate degrees. Among Evangelical Protestants, however, only 13% have undergraduate college degrees, with the percentage even less (5%) for those who identify as members of historically Black churches. According to the most recent PRC (2008) survey, mainline Protestants claim 20% of college graduates with 16% of Catholics, 18% of Mormons, and 14% of Muslims earning diplomas (p. 56). With the religious population of America currently trending

toward religiously unaffiliated (31% of those under 30 years of age as compared to only 11% of 65 years of age and over), it might appear that there is a shift away from faith and its importance in the lives of individuals and groups (Jones, Cox, Galston, & Dionne, 2011). These findings indicate that the plurality, depth, and breadth of religion and spirituality must be more clearly understood and explored by higher education policymakers in order to accommodate, encourage, and develop a holistic experience for college and university students.

Studies concentrating on the impact of higher education on religious belief or practice in the United States have largely focused on Christian traditions and type of institution (secular, religious, or elite) and have been mixed. According to an analysis of the National Study of Youth and Religion survey data consisting of 2,532 college students and nonstudents aged 18 to 23, from all 50 United States, Hill (2011) found that college had no straightforward impact on religious beliefs. The results did not suggest that belief was abandoned or transferred to another faith, although skepticism regarding "super-empirical" aspects of religion (God, angels, demons, and an afterlife) did occur (p. 535). In addition, Hill found that attending college is mildly associated with increased inclusivity of other belief systems and institutions. McFarland et al.'s (2010) analysis of five Christian denominations support the PRC (2008) findings regarding the relationship between denominational affiliation and degree earning, with the authors' concluding that increased education for mainline Protestants and nonaffiliated did in fact promote some loss of belief. For Evangelicals, Black Protestants, and Catholics, however, it altered the nature of faith (view of the Bible as inspired by God rather than a literal text). According

to Mayrl and Oeur's (2009) and Bowman and Small (2010), the question has shifted from whether students retain or reject their religiosity during their college years to if and how they reconstitute or realign it to meet their spiritual needs.

Religious Minorities and Campus Climate

Social identity, self-categorization, intergroup contact, and religious identity theories seek to explain and guide personal, group, and social identity construction and negotiation. While the college experience affords opportunities for each of these to form and interact, student identity may be influenced by the climate a college campus provides. Specifically, religious, racial, and sexual minorities attending both secular and religious institutions face unique challenges in a country that is predominantly White (75%), Christian (78%), and has traditionally been associated with male privilege (Mayhew, 2011; Park, 2012; PRC, 2008; USCB, 2011).

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, minority religious groups including Islam, and particularly those who demonstrate their faith through visible means (clothing) are at risk for both overt and microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2012). According to research by Penning (2009), religious outgroups such as Muslims and Mormons are viewed in American society more negatively than other faith-based traditions (atheists exceed these groups and are viewed unfavorably by 53%); however, American Muslims are perceived more positively than their international counterparts. While social and political attitudes have an impact on American perspectives concerning both Muslims and Mormons, it is the religious variable that elicits the strongest response regarding

these two faiths. Penning's (2009) research revealed that the media, personal experience, and education level were directly related to these negative views.

Pevey and McKenzie's (2009) mixed methods interview and survey sample of 20 self-identified Christians attending a Southern university campus indicated that knowledge of Islam is scant among many Americans (confirmed in the PRC, 2010, U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey) and associated with emotional responses including fear. Park's (2012) longitudinal survey sample analysis of 3,008 college freshman from 28 institutions suggested that because religious groups and subgroups are traditionally homogeneous, the higher the frequency of association with the ingroup, the more likely the student is to isolate themselves from outside groups (other religions). A meta-analysis of college students and racial diversity experiences by Bowman (2011) demonstrated that these experiences are not comparable to diversity and religious engagement since religious individuals or groups are less salient than race. Bowman's conclusion that racial diversity in higher education leads to increased civic attitudes through interpersonal contact might be tested in future studies that involve those who visibly define their identities (e.g., wearing the veil).

Pluralism and Ecumenical Worldview

Much of the previous literature and campus climate framework (Hurtado et al., 1998) has been built around racial diversity and its impact on student experience. The widening diversity and religiosity of the youth population in the United States presents educators and policymakers with current and future challenges in order to provide an environment for the student to not only learn, but flourish (Jones et al., 2011). Although

these studies indicate that tolerance and liberal worldviews are more likely to manifest in the college educated and younger demographic, the needs of minority religious groups and the effect of campus climate upon these students must continue to be addressed.

Developing the capacity in college students to live, engage, and contribute positively to a pluralistic society that moves beyond tolerance to acceptance of differing worldviews, is one of the essential goals of higher education institutions (Bryant, 2011a). Organizational characteristics, including type of college or university (public, private, religious, or secular), majority/minority groups enrolled, peer association, and even gender have an impact on this development (Bryant, 2011b; Mayhew, 2011). Studies have shown that students who engage in religious struggle (questioning, understanding, or reinterpreting faith) achieve higher levels of ecumenical worldview than those who do not (Astin et al., 2010; Bryant, 2011b). Exposure to peers who are experiencing this phenomenon or participating in classroom exercises or curriculum that encourage religious pluralism through discussion have been found to increase this tendency in students regardless of institution type (Bryant, 2011b). Friendship and/or contact with religious minorities (Jews and Muslims) for Mainline Protestants and Catholics have been shown to boost pluralistic beliefs and support for these groups—with the exception of Evangelical denominations—making it increasingly important for all higher education environments to offer courses in this area (Brown & Brown, 2011). For those minority students who attend religious colleges that represent faiths other than their own, Bryant and Craft (2010) discovered through narratives that a "spiritual climate is not a singular,

absolute reality," rather it "varies by one's social location…background, worldview, and minority/majority status" (p. 418).

Gender has been shown to have an impact on the development of ecumenical worldview with more women (along with racial/ethnic, religious minorities, and nonreligious students) than men embracing this philosophy (Bryant, 2011b; Mayhew, 2011). Although women in general have traditionally been more religious than men (PRC, 2008) they are less apt to subscribe to conservative gender ideologies often associated with patriarchal religious groups perhaps allowing them to embrace non-majority traditions (Mayhew, 2011; Whitehead, 2011). Achieving student ecumenical worldview, therefore, might include programs that utilize and include women and their perspectives regarding religious alliances.

The Role of Faculty

In an increasingly globalized and multicultural higher education environment, the sensitivity of faculty members to the religious and spiritual backgrounds of students will be necessary to provide a positive campus experience for these individuals. Contrary to popular notions that academia is in tension with religion, Gross and Simmons (2009) found a diverse American professorate that (in secular universities) were able to privatize their faith rather than impose or deny it. Research by Park and Denson (2009) concerning faculty views on racial and ethnic diversity also found that those who regarded themselves as spiritual were significantly more likely to stress the importance of diversity in education. There is evidence of growing or mixed support from faculty, staff, and administrators for the promotion of spiritual and religious education that includes

classroom instruction and cocurricular activities to immerse the student in diversity exercises that encourage inclusiveness (Bryant, Wickliffe, Mayhew, & Behringer, 2009; Mayhew & Bryant, 2013).

Equally important is the role of educators in identifying and correcting perceived bias or discrimination in the classroom. In a survey of 1,747 undergraduates, Boyson, Vogel, Cope, and Hubbard (2009) found that one half of students alleged classroom bias with 22% seeing themselves as the target of overt discrimination in the past year (14% claimed religious discrimination). In the same study, the authors' found that instructors (443 graduate student instructors/fellows and 333 professors) had an inconsistent understanding of bias in the classroom while undergraduates perceived 44% overt bias and 63% subtle, whereas graduate students claimed 25% and 40% and professors 27% and 30% respectively.

Finally, Shahjahan's (2009) research found that faculty strategies that incorporate spiritual pedagogy in the classroom serve as a motivation for social justice. Stoltzfus and Reffel (2009) observed that courses encouraging religious pluralism can be important in assisting students cultivate a balance between racial, ethnic, or religious identity.

Muslim American Women and Higher Education

There are no definite census numbers or percentages that account for how many Muslims currently reside in, or are citizens of, the United States as government agencies are prohibited from asking questions regarding religious affiliation. The PRC's (2008) comprehensive study of religion in America estimated that Muslims comprise 0.6% of the population and are of the most ethnically and racially diverse groups in the nation (no

single racial or ethnic group makes up more than 30% of the total). Although a relatively small portion of the American landscape, it is estimated that Muslims represent 2% of those enrolled in higher education (over 3 times their overall population percentage), twice as many (26% versus 13%) than among the general public (PRC, 2011; Stubbs & Sallee, 2013). If Muslim gender enrollment mirrors that of the general U.S. population, then women would represent 56% of Muslim students attending institutions of higher education (USCB, 2011). Given the small size of this complex demographic, educators and policymakers may be unaware of how to meet the needs of this often overlooked student group.

As previously stated, personal identity is often far from monolithic—individual, group, and social personas overlap and shift with circumstance and need (Hogg et al., 2010; Hopkins, 2011; Mishra & Shirazi, 2010; Stubbs & Sallee, 2013). At a time when emerging adults are searching for, and/or negotiating identities on college campuses, women who claim affiliation with an often politically maligned religious minority may find themselves asked to address their national loyalties as well as justify their commitment to a religion that is often misrepresented as oppressive or anti-female (Ahmad, 2009; Aziz, 2012; Mir, 2009). These young women are faced with several challenges: how to adhere to their religious beliefs amid a secular and/or Christian majority environment, assert their equality as American citizens when they are often perceived to be foreigners, and overcome the misinterpretation of their religious gendered expressions such as wearing the veil (Hu, Pazaki, Al-Qubbaj, & Cutler, 2009). In order to comprehend how young Muslim American women develop their modern personas and

choose to identify themselves on college campuses it is important to understand the source of this misrepresentation and the impact it has on their gendered, religious, and American identities.

The Effect of the Media on Identity Formation

The single most consistent theme expressed in this literature review was that media portrayals of Islam and Muslims are not only overwhelmingly negative, they are also the primary source of information the general public relies upon to form their views and opinions of both this faith and the faithful (Ali, 2013; Jackson, 2010; Kalkan et al., 2009; Penning, 2009; PRC, 2011). Researchers doing content analysis have found that consistent references in film, news coverage, television, broadcast political rhetoric, and cartoons continuously portray Muslims as terrorists and have contributed to the adoption of discriminatory laws in some states, the denial of religious freedom (blocking the building of mosques in some communities), and covert/overt aggression (Ali, 2013; Amer & Hovey, 2012; Awad, 2010; Aziz, 2012; Jackson, 2010; Muedini, 2009; Shammas, 2009). In part, Islam has been recast as a political ideology rather than a religion, or a religion opposed to democratic values, and its adherents as violent, evil, and untrustworthy (Ali, 2013; Aziz, 2012; Jackson, 2010; Nadal et al., 2012; Navarro, 2010).

According to Jackson (2010), the media is viewed by the public as educational in that its message contains norms or models of acceptable behavior. Images such as Princess Jasmine in Disney's *Aladdin* are marketed to young children. A more disturbing stereotype widely disseminated by Fox News was former Speaker of the House and 2012 presidential candidate Newt Gingrich, who claimed that the initiators of the controversial

Manhattan mosque project were the same as "Nazis" (Ali, 2013; DeLong, 2010; Jackson, 2010). Generally, the media's producers provide their audience with what is considered socially acceptable; therefore, according to Jackson's research of American print media since September 11th, the lack of objection from the majority of Americans to the plethora of these images implies the legitimacy of identifying Islam and Muslims with terrorism.

Jones et al. (2011) identified common perceptions among Americans regarding Muslims and their attitudes as reflected by the media outlet they trust most. The survey methodology was designed and conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute and consisted of telephone interviews of random samples during August 2011 of 2,450 adults 18 years or older. When asked if American Muslims were not important to the U.S religious community, 43% of the general public agreed. Sixty percent of Fox News viewers approved of this statement compared to 41% of those who watched CNN or the 29% of those who got their news from public television. When asked if Islam was at odds with American values, the general public weighed in with 47% agreement; Fox News viewers registered 68%, broadcast news 45%, MSNBC 39%, and public television and CNN tied with 37%. For all questions, the difference between Americans who had confidence in the conservative Fox News stations compared with other media sources, the percentages that expressed negative views toward Islam was a minimum of 19 points (Jones et al., 2011).

Negative depictions of Muslims are not unique to the U.S. media, and are also commonplace in parts of Europe, partially over fears of increased immigration from Asia

and North Africa and the lack of perceived assimilation into secular societies (Byng, 2010; Guven, 2010; Haw, 2010). Navarro's (2010) analysis of television programming and news found Muslim women were stereotyped as ignorant or submissive in the Spanish media, while women who wore headscarves in the French social imagination were perceived as threatening the Republic and its values. Legal action in France currently forbids female students the right to wear the veil in schools. The French government perceived Muslim girls as in need of liberation from oppressive religious norms, while at the same time precluding them from making their own personal and informed decisions (Al-Saji, 2010).

An exploration of Muslim British women and identity formation by Haw (2010) found that many participants in her study felt socially isolated and confronted with images they perceived were projected upon them by a wider public, even scapegoating them for society's ills. Byng's (2010) analysis of 72 articles published in the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post* between 2004 and 2006 detailing the ban on the hijab in France and the debate in Britain revolving around the niqab, or face covering, depicted Muslim women as not only oppressed, but as a homogenous group that included Muslim American women. In all accounts the voices of strong, feminist, and religiously independent devotees to Islam were ignored. Instead of representing the complexities and strengths of female Muslim identity both in the United States and abroad, these media outlets ignored the educated aspects of these women and instead chose to make them either victims or perpetrators of an oppressive or threatening religious segment of the population.

Complex American Identities

The Muslim American population in the United States originates from, and is composed of, a wide array of racial, ethnic, and geographical locations. According to the PRC (2011) although 37% were born in the United States, more than three-quarters are either the first generation to be born on American soil (63%) or the second generation (15%) with one or both parents born in another country. Only 22% belong to third, fourth, or later generations. The lion's share of U.S born Muslims whose parents were also born in this country (69%) are converts; the majority are African American (63%).

Muedini's (2009) interviews with Muslim American college students noted that many of these individuals perceived a difference in the identities of African American, Arab, South Asian, and European Muslims within the larger U.S. community. This echoes previous findings by Seggie and Sanford (2010), however, shared negative experiences since September 11th has blurred many of these separate identities and brought many Muslim Americans together in solidarity (Ali, 2013; Keddie, 2011; Zahedi, 2011). The tendency to stereotype all Muslims as Arab or of Middle Eastern descent in the American media is not only incorrect, but presents the perception of Islam as a religion of uniformity (most Arab Americans are Christians) (Awad, 2010; Pevey & McKenzie, 2009). In addition, conversion to Islam by some Americans may suggest a meaningful identity formation by choice that defines itself in opposition to a dominant culture or an objectionable value system (Maslim & Bjorck, 2009).

Generational factors may also influence Muslim American attitudes, particularly for young women. According to Hu et al. (2009) age at immigration may play a part in

the veiling decision: younger immigrants in this study of 33 first generation Muslim American women were far less likely to wear the hijab in public than those who immigrated after age 20. The desire among recent immigrants to assimilate may be impressed upon first generation offspring through pressure to eliminate traditional dress; specifically, many women have been discouraged to wear the hijab (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010; Read & Bartkowski, 2000). On the other hand, the opposite may occur as demonstrated in a case study of several high school young women in Texas and New Mexico border cities who routinely left the house in family sanctioned attire only to remove it, apply makeup, and go about their daily school experience defying their parent's modesty instructions (Hamzeh, 2011).

Given the extraordinary racial, ethnic, generational, and national diversity it is not surprising that young Muslim American women have cultivated multiple and complex identities and strive for growth and development within the higher education environment. As a religious and frequently racial minority (30% White as compared to 75% in the general population) they have the opportunity to add to a constructive campus dialogue that encourages pluralism. At the same time, these students may feel pressure to balance the expectations of college life (alcohol consumption, dating, and attire) with traditional Muslim values that may not be clearly understood by their peers (Abu-Ras, et al., 2010; Stubbs & Sallee, 2013).

Studies have shown that young American Muslim women are willing to assert their collective and individual identities not only on college campuses through involvement in Muslim Student Associations (MSA), but through community activism

(Sirin & Katsiaficas, 2011). After experiencing discrimination, marginalization, and misperception in the years after September 11th, these young women are beginning to declare themselves in their communities in positive ways recognizing the need for local and national dialogue in order to improve their standing on the national stage (Sirin & Katsiaficas, 2011; Zahedi, 2011).

The Meaning of the Hijab and Identity Formation

The most visible religious and political symbol of Islam in the United States and abroad is the hijab, or headscarf worn by Muslim women (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010; Muedini, 2009). Simultaneously viewed as a tool of female oppression, a symbol of defiance, or a personal representation of religious and spiritual obedience, the hijab is a modern lightening rod for both Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Botz-Bornstein, 2013). In the section that follows, I discuss different interpretations, meanings, and symbolism associated with the veil as viewed by traditionalists, Western and Islamic feminists, and the young Muslim American college women themselves. I provide an analysis of U.S. political and ideological perceptions of the veil as separate and unique from those in other parts of the world and its importance in creating an American identity for young women who choose to wear the headscarf. Finally, I discuss the choice by many Muslim American college students not to wear the hijab, the forces that impact this decision, and the meaning it holds in relationship to their identity formation.

The Choice to Wear the Hijab

A distinction must be made between Muslim women who live in the United States and those who reside in countries that function as political theocracies, or where cultural

and social pressure to wear the hijab take precedence over personal and legal freedoms. Wearing the veil is first and foremost a choice for Muslim American women, although the meaning of this choice may not be fixed (Davary, 2009; Mishra & Shirazi, 2010). The decision to veil is a matter of personal conviction and reflects a chosen identity in a country where there is religious freedom to express this choice in spite of negative stereotypes or misinformation. Muslim American college students are different from their European, Middle Eastern, or Asian sisters who may be either culturally pressured to veil, or subjected to legal constraints and restrictions on physical attire that prohibit them this form of expression (Al-Saji, 2010; Botz-Bornstein, 2013; Byng, 2010; Guven, 2010; Seggie & Austin, 2010; Shirazi & Mishra, 2010). Unlike parts of Europe that have forced young women to choose between their educations or being true to their religious convictions, electing the veil in the United States does not present a legal dilemma. The separation of church and state theoretically implies the absence of religious privilege, whereas elsewhere, secularism infers the absence of religion prompting legal action to prevent religious symbols in the public schools. In addition, America has a long tradition of valuing the independence, equality, and the creation of a self-directed personal identity (Shirazi & Mishra, 2010).

In order to gain perspective on the complexity of this symbol and its meaning to Muslim American college students, an understanding of often competing or conflicting interpretations of the veil must be explored. Traditional and feminist interpretations of the Qur'an and the *hadiths*, or sayings of Mohammad recorded after his death, provide a theological basis for many women to wear (or not wear) the veil. Anti-oppressive and

feminist reactions, modern Muslim feminist reinterpretations, and the rising perception of the hijab as a symbol of resistance to intrusive government policies or social stereotypes present multiple bases for this choice. The literature reveals that Muslim American college students draw from a diverse array of meanings attached to the hijab, and create personal and collective identities based on these meanings.

Traditional Interpretations

For many Muslim women wearing the veil is an act of religious obedience, and/or an expression of modesty as required in the Qur'an and subsequent hadiths of the Prophet (Dunkel, Davidson, & Qurashi, 2009; Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009). According to a recent study by the PRC (2011) 36% of Muslim American women report always wearing the hijab out in public, 24% admitted they wear it most or some of the time, with 40% claiming they never wear it at all, a decrease of 8% since 2007 (p. 31). Wearing the hijab is most common among those women with the highest religious commitment (59%), and is 14% higher among the native born. In a survey of 118 Muslim American women (61% college students) 90% of those who indicated that they wore the hijab some or all of the time stated that they did so because Islam and the Qur'an required it while 69% claimed its purpose was to show religious modesty (Tolayman & Moradi, 2011, p. 387). Not unique to Islam, the veil has been a part of both Jewish and Christian traditions and remains in place in many orthodox communities (Davary, 2009; Zahedi, 2011). Carvalho (2013) observed that assuming the veil varies with social context and is often perceived as a barrier to secular values, particularly when women reside in communities that are not primarily Muslim. McDermott-Levy's (2011) study of 12 female nursing

students from Oman studying in the United States observed that these women found comfort from the stress of attending a foreign college by maintaining their religious practices and gender roles, including modest attire.

For many young women, wearing the veil predicates that she who wears it practices traditional family values, particularly sexual purity (Davary, 2009). The headscarf may simultaneously function as a marker of her unwillingness to participate in activities counter to the teachings of her faith, while at the same time protecting her or serving as a "do not disturb" sign to would be offenders (Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009). Wearing the hijab, especially in a coeducational environment, provides the student with the ability to mix with those of the opposite sex without sexual tension or perceived objectification. Although a few students acknowledged that the burden of maintaining sexual discipline and distance had been laid at their feet instead of the personal responsibility of the men themselves, they recognized that this was an integral function of the hijab (Read & Bartkowski, 2000).

Finally, Bilge (2010) argued that "taking the veil" may be construed as divine submission; a religious act in and of itself that should be taken seriously (p. 23). As previously discussed, religion and spirituality play a significant role in the lives and well-being of college students. Research confirms that perceived support from Allah, religious leaders, and other believers are important to the social and psychological health of many Muslim women although they may not actively seek this reinforcement (Bjorck & Maslim, 2011; Herzig, Roysircar, Kosyluk, & Corrigan, 2013; Ribeiro & Saleem, 2010). Social expectations play a part in influencing women to wear the hijab not only in

conforming to cultural and religious doctrine, but as a physical manifestation of Islam itself and may function as a personal or collective reinforcement of religiosity. The veil "exemplifies a performance of a moral identity, in which acquisition of symbolic modesty becomes more prevalent than seeking active religious duty" (Guruz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009, p. 395).

For young college women who view the hijab as an obedient gesture or a symbol of their faith, many in the literature voiced that this provided them with the opportunity to represent Islam in a positive light to their peers. Rather than hiding her minority religious status, one participant in Mir's (2009) study of Muslim American female college students stated, "Once I put on the scarf, I have to act—like, I would *want* [sic] to act as a Muslim woman should in front of the community" (p. 244). In this way, the student fulfills the expected behavior and image of the reputable Muslim woman.

Feminism and the Hijab

A prominent view of the hijab in Western society is that it is an instrument of oppression imposed upon women by a patriarchal religion and culture (Seedat, 2013). While this may certainly be the case in many parts of the globe where political and religious extremist groups prohibit women from receiving an education or even basic human rights based on their gender status, this has become a focus of concern in democratic countries such as the United States, France, and Great Britain (Al-Saji, 2010; Byng, 2010). Many traditionalist Muslim women, however, view this perspective and the Western feminism that supports it as "anti-family, anti-men, and consumed with sexual liberation" (Zahedi, 2011, p. 193). The feminist positions regarding Islam and the veil

are multifaceted: a) Western popular feminism views the veil as the embodiment or denial of a woman's right to exert her sexual freedom through religious mandates and holy texts, and exposes her to shame, guilt, or ostracization if she does not comply, and b) Muslim, or what has come to be known as "Islamic feminists" reinterpret sacred texts, historical contexts, and challenge the restrictive male-imparted potency to the veil to unseat the dominant political oppression of woman and reframe it as a new female celebrated identity (Mernissi, 1991; Mir-Hosseini, 2011; Seedat, 2013). Each must be considered as a possible influence on the identity formation for young Muslim American students.

The idea that a Muslim women would choose to wear the headscarf without pressure from family members, or the fear of social and spiritual consequences has been the held up as suspicious by many Western feminists (Aziz, 2012; Bilge, 2010). Portrayals of hijab wearing women as uneducated, unthinking, and manipulated prevail in the modern media and fuel the perception that these women are victims of a repressive faith (Ali, 2013; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Zahedi, 2011). In the course of the modern immigration debate within many European countries, the practice of veiling is viewed by many as counter to Western values of female equality prompting legal restrictions on the practice to "protect" Muslim immigrants, and therefore, society from archaic cultural norms (Bilge, 2010). Images of the Taliban's horrific treatment of young school girls in Afghanistan, proposed marriage laws that allow for pre-pubescent girls in Iraq to be married off with the consent of their fathers without the right to refuse sex, and the 51 million female circumcision victims in Egypt and Nigeria do little to ease these

perceptions (Chumley, 2014; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2013). The veil itself has become a marker of sexual submission and marginalization that stands for all aspects of the plight of Muslim women irrespective of nationality.

As previously discussed, Muslim American women are unique from their European, Asian, or Middle Eastern counterparts as they are generally highly educated and enjoy the freedoms of speech and religious expression often denied them elsewhere. Much of the Western feminist rhetoric and media coverage, however, has focused on the behaviors not observed in the United States that many young Muslim American students feel the need to constantly combat or explain that they also find this behavior repulsive and not in any way representative of Islam (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010). One student in Ali's (2013) study of Muslim college students in the United States noted that Americans believe that:

> Men are aggressive and scary, and women are submissive and stupid. This is what people see. When people see Muslim women getting an education they don't take it seriously. The think we will just get married have babies and that will be the end of it. (p. 13)

In addition, if these young women choose to wear the veil they may risk the label of "terrorist" as this garment is not only viewed as a tool of subjugation, but of a radical political ideology that is unpredictable, suspicious, and dangerous (Aziz, 2012). The combination of submissive or oppressed female in contradiction (or collusion) with the stereotype of terrorism present a difficult challenge both in the classroom and on campus

for many Muslim women who choose expose their identity with this disputed and often confused symbol of their faith (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010).

Islamic Feminism and the Hijab

The term "Islamic feminism" has attracted extensive intellectual commendation and criticism since it was considered a scholarly and activist movement in the 1990s. It is neither a homogeneous nor unified ideology and is contingent upon "local, diverse, multiple and evolving" social and personal experience (Mir-Hosseini, 2011, p. 71). While there is disagreement over the compatibility of Western feminist movements and an authentic exegetic interpretation of the Qur'an without patriarchal influence, it at the very least stimulates a dialogue that aims to find a spiritual and political space for feminine equality through reinterpretation of sacred texts and/or historical precedence for the promotion of human rights (Mir-Hosseini, 2011; Seedat, 2013). Claiming women are in need of protection, shelter and special care, Islamic fundamentalism according to Zahedi (2011), has carefully selected and rigidly interpreted religious texts to support a suppressive agenda. Not unlike modern Jewish and Christian feminists who do not seek to abandon their faith due to the political or religious marginalization this undertaking seeks to reclaim a religious heritage from those who have hijacked it for their own gain (Ahmed, 1992; Mernissi, 1991; Mir-Hosseini, 2011).

Within this loosely cohesive structure, the subject of the veil has become not only a religious-political point of contention; it has become a generational one. Ahmed (1992), one of the preeminent scholars of the Islamist feminist movement explains:

> Establishment Islam (institutional and legal Islam) articulates a different Islam from the ethical message the layperson justifiably hears or reads in the Quran, and…continues to be the established version of Islam, the Islam of the politically powerful. These profoundly different meanings of Islam both exist simultaneously, the personal meaning as a source of ethical and spiritual comfort…and the political; and these meanings are at the root of the profoundly different views of Islam held by the preceding generation of feminists and the current generation of women adopting Islamic dress. (pp. 225-226)

For Muslim American college students, the immediacy of an oppressive political regime that required submission to tradition by wearing the veil is not, or may never have been, a personal or social reality. Instead, this generation of women has the freedom to select the hijab and act in harmony with their own spiritual and religious beliefs, not those of lawmakers who claim to have their best interests at heart.

The Hijab as a Symbol of Political and Cultural Resistance

Final motivations for wearing the veil gaining prominence with young European and American Muslim women, involve the formation of identities that are counter to Western political or sexual norms. The establishment of a "loud" identity by wearing the hijab to defy religious marginalization, Islamophobia, or negative political rhetoric establishes the wearer as proud, fearless, and a positive example of Muslim activism (Mir, 2011). This phenomenon is not unique to the United States and Europe and has been the topic of discussion in India where Muslim women are in a distinct minority (Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, & Howarth, 2012). On the other hand, some women in the

existing literature indicated another, more personal demonstration against social norms: a rebellion against the perceived obsession with female attractiveness and judgment based upon physical appearance (Aziz, 2012; Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009). By refusing to comply with cultural or sexual norms, these women have chosen the hijab as a means to remove a sexual barrier that may complicate or inhibit cross gender contact.

Many young, educated, and professional Muslim American women have declared their identities beyond religious duty and personal modesty. According to Gurbuz and Gurbuz-Kucuksari (2009) stigmas attached to Muslim identity, particularly since September 11th, can be reconstructed by asserting communal and personal positive power. In this way Muslim students claim that wearing the hijab is a liberating experience in contradiction to the stereotype of oppressed victim or threatening terrorist. One woman in Mir's (2011) study of college students who wore the veil expressed that it was her duty to assert Muslim American rights which included wearing the hijab after the backlash against her faith stating: "It's about Muslims in the US standing up for themselves.…If everyone stays in their shell, there's nobody going to call out when the one house is raided….Either we all step forward or none of us do!" (p. 554). Clearly, these are not the words of an oppressed woman.

Another phase of identity development and struggle universally prominent among teenage and emerging adults is what Botz-Bornstein (2013) referred to as "coolness"; an action or concept that is at odds with the status quo. The cool person is "usually in a non-power position and challenges those who have power in masked and ironical ways" (Botz-Bornstein, 2013, p. 249). Can wearing the hijab be cool? Aside from modern day

terminology that brings to mind marketing a consumer value such as fashion, coolness in America is a rebellion against subversion originating in Black segregation when overt resistance was impossible without personal injury. An African American who experienced abuse without the power of justice to redress it had to appear submissive or unresponsive to ridicule (cool/calm) while at the same time subverting the discriminatory action (Botz-Bornstein, 2013). In much the same way, a veiled Muslim woman may appear to fulfill the Western stereotype of female oppression while intentionally wearing the veil thus asserting her chosen identity.

Taking the concept of coolness a step further, Muslim lifestyle magazines specifically targeted at young, fashion conscious women have helped create an industry that promotes stylish traditional (and nontraditional) attire (Lewis, 2010). By exerting their power to consume, young American Muslim college students can participate in identity development by exercising her choice of clothing that is modern, attractive, and distinctly Muslim. Magazines such as the North American *Muslim Girl* (now online only), targeted the 18 to 24 year age group and included articles on self-development that were "cognizant with faith as well as fashion" (Lewis, 2010, p. 65). The cover girl alternated monthly between a model wearing the hijab and one who did not.

A separate form of resistance for Muslim American women is the choice to ignore popular pressure to publically exhibit physical beauty in traditional Western style dress or make-up. Prevalent as an influence on young women, the multi-billion dollar beauty industry comprised of mass marketers, television, film, and fashion magazines collaborate to promote physical beauty as healthy, desirable, attainable, and necessary for

professional success and personal happiness. As previously stated, many Muslim American women describe the choice to wear the hijab as liberation from the pressure to appear physically beautiful, allowing them to be judged on their intellectual abilities rather than their sexual appeal (Dunkel et al., 2009; Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009; Read & Bartkowski, 2000). Tolaymat and Moradi's (2011) study of 118 U.S. Muslim women found that incidences of reported perceived sexual objectification were less for those who wore the hijab than for those who did not. Whether the hijab symbolized personal and collective religious modesty and deterred demeaning behavior, or covered what has culturally been considered sexually attractive (long hair), is unknown. It is possible that college age women find the veil an equalizing force in the classroom and on campus to redirect focus to their academic abilities and away from the exclusively sexual aspect of their gender.

The Choice Not to Wear the Hijab

Just as women who choose to wear the veil may see this commitment as an integral part of their religious, feminist, political, or fashion identity, many traditional college age Muslim American students do not. Most of the literature has focused on the reasons for veiling rather than abstaining or removing the hijab. What both groups have in common is that they have been found to recognize and respect their sisters' personal choice in this complex and controversial matter (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010; Read & Bartkowski, 2000).

The concept of religious belief or obedience for many women who do not wear the hijab is grounded in the concept that Islam cannot be reduced to a physical

representation, but is an internal and personal faith that no garment can define. Many of these young women neither bow to social pressure to conform to Western values of beauty or modesty, nor are they any less inclined than their veiled counterparts to stand up for their Muslim identity or tackle the oppressed female or terrorist stereotypes prevalent in American culture. These women may consider themselves Western feminists, Islamic feminists, or neither; they are Muslim Americans that establish their identities through their actions rather than their overt expressions and find their own liberation through their religious choices and personal responsibilities.

Read and Bartkowski's (2000) pre-September 11th study of veiled and unveiled Muslim women living in Austin, Texas is a valuable narrative that demonstrates the complexity of the choice to wear the headscarf before the intense political focus on Islam and its frequent misinterpretation by the media. It is one of the rare studies that specifically investigated the reasons women chose not to wear the veil and presents the most diverse responses of any of the current literature reviewed in this chapter. In keeping with Islamic feminism's objection to the veil several of the women remarked that they opposed it since it has been used as a tool to control women within a patriarchal society. One participant remarked, "Men can't control themselves, so they make women veil," thus rejecting a view of many veiled participants that the hijab was God's divine remedy for men's lack of sexual control (Read & Bartkowski, 2000, p. 408). The women in this study, however, did not accuse their veiled counterparts of succumbing to gender submission. Veiled participants in Shirazi and Mishra's (2010) research echoed that no

one should ever force a woman to wear the hijab, indicating that it must be the sole decision of the women herself.

Another common theme expressed by women who did not select to wear the hijab was that Islam required inward piety, not outward symbols. One woman in Zahedi's (2011) study of post September 11th Muslim women insisted, "Beliefs are personal and private and should not be publically displayed. I do not want to wear my beliefs outside. I am a Muslim but hijab does not define me or my beliefs" (p. 199). Stubbs and Salle (2013) found similar sentiments from students who lived on campus and did not wear the hijab:

> The headscarf is supposed to show your modesty, but I really feel like you don't have to wear the headscarf…You can show your modesty the way you carry yourself, the way you dress yourself and the way you interact with people. (p. 460)

These students stressed that their faith was not only personal, but that outward expressions of compliance were not necessary to their personal identities. Still others have researched the scriptural component of wearing the hijab and determined that it was not obligatory, similar to the conclusions of their Islamic feminist counterparts (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010).

While many of the interviews with Muslim American college students have supported the notion that refraining from wearing the veil is not contingent upon outside pressure, other participants have removed the headscarf due to discrimination, harassment, or peer pressure. Cole and Ahmadi's (2003) research revealed that those

who removed the veil did so because they felt isolated or alienated on campus, or experienced negative reactions from peers. Zahedi's (2011) inquiry into the perceptions of discrimination a decade post September 11th involving interviews with Muslim college students revealed that some felt that the hijab put them at risk: "[The] hijab is supposed to provide you with safety; it no longer did so I removed my hijab" (p. 190). Some participants only wore the veil when going to mosque, putting it on in the parking lot after experiencing harassment as they walked to services (Mishra & Shirazi, 2010). Even in high school, some young women felt pressured to remove their headscarves only to take the practice up later in college when they felt more secure in their Muslim identifies (Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009).

Finally, many women choose to remove or refrain from wearing the hijab in order to increase or maintain employability. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in 2012 there were 784 charges filed by Muslims for religious discrimination in the workplace compared to 330 in 2001. In addition, many employers have changed their dress policies since September 11th to discourage or forbid female workers from wearing the hijab (Aziz, 2012). The problem seems to be ongoing as demonstrated in Cole and Ahmadi's (2003) initial study of Muslim women who veiled, with one respondent noting that she quickly discovered that she would not be hired if she wore her hijab. A study conducted by Ghumman and Jackson (2010) of 219 American Muslim women found that decreased employment expectations existed to a greater extent among women who veiled versus their Muslim nonveiled counterparts. Removing the

hijab in this incidence has a direct impact on career trajectory and earning potential, not to mention emotional stress.

Theory, Campus Climate, and Student Considerations

Both groups—Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab, and those who do not—deserve the opportunity for a positive experience in higher education. Policy makers and student affairs personnel must work to ensure institutional mechanisms are in place to offer a nonthreatening, embracing, and engaging college climate. Using established frameworks and theories in conjunction with the current research, campuses can provide numerous avenues for support, growth, and identity development for young Muslim women.

Equality and Historical Climate

Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory and Pettigrew's (1998, 2008) subsequent research provides insight into why many Muslim students have experienced unfair treatment by their peers and faculty and how leadership can change this pattern. The first condition mandates that equal group status must be established in order for successful interaction to occur. Muslim women must be seen to be equal in every way to their non-Muslim peers in order for learning outcomes to be achieved. As demonstrated by Park's study of race and religious student interaction (2012), the effect of contact with outgroups where lower status is assumed can lead to negative consequences if not properly handled. It is the responsibility of university and college policymakers and administrators to assure that faculty are educated in religious diversity and sensitivity so an inclusive philosophy is integrated in the classroom (Shahjahan, 2009). Faculty must

also be prepared to assist minority groups, including Muslim women, in overcoming any stereotyping they might face, and mitigating any classroom tensions that arise (Boysen, Vogel, Cope, & Hubbard, 2009; Stolzfus et al., 2009).

Hurtado et al.'s (1998) historical legacy dimension of the campus climate framework, along with Milem et al. (2005), and Antonio et al.'s (2012) proposals for campus diversity insist that to overcome any past racial or gender discrimination, it is imperative that modern colleges and universities take a hard look at their previous and present policies regarding minorities (including religious minorities), and how they can address and improve any shortcomings. Campus policies of inclusion should originate with leadership and be widely disseminated to create a culture of diversity. The addition of ecumenical religious spaces have been shown to be an important part of the college campus climate for many Muslim students and should be provided (if possible) to assist in group and individual support (Hopkins, P, 2011; Johnson & Laurence, 2012; McDermott-Levy, 2011; Seggie & Sanford, 2010).

Common Goals and Structural Climate

Allport (1954) and Pettigrew's (1998, 2008) second provision is the establishment of common goals to provide a meaningful learning and social experience to prepare the student to contribute and flourish within the larger community. Through structural/organization policies that create a diverse campus community, instructors can enhance diversity engagement with pedagogies and curriculum that bring understanding and appreciation of religious minorities (Stoltzful et al., 2009). Seggie and Sanford's (2010) study found that student expectations of fairness and equal treatment were not

consistently realized, with all participants expressing disappointment in the limited number of faculty from minority racial, ethnic groups the their lack of inter-religious awareness. If, as Peek (2005) theorized, religious identity's third evolutionary stage—a declaration of a collective or individual distinctiveness—means wearing the hijab on campus, it is important that faculty and administrators create a secure environment for this expression. Mishra and Shirazi (2010) concluded in their study of 26 Muslim American women that not only do ethnic and cultural differences exist between international and American Muslim groups, but these women do not perceive their religious identities uniformly.

Intergroup Cooperation and Behavioral/Psychological Climate

The third component for successful intergroup contact is cooperation (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998, 2008) and involves the behavioral and psychological aspects of campus climate (Hurtado et al., 1998). Group efficacy can have a direct influence on the positive social categorization of young college students, including religious minorities (Tajfel, 1969, 1982). Intergroup dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim students that is expedited by an instructor or group leader can be helpful in removing barriers to learning, perceived discrimination, and misperception (Boysen et al., 2009). Gurin et al.'s (2002) theory that complex social structures (diversity exposure) promote critical thinking can be facilitated in the classroom and through campus sponsored activities to help reduce anxiety and increase empathy toward outgroups (Stoltzfus & Reffel, 2009). Bowman and Small's (2012) findings based on data collected in the HERI (2010) study, concluded that double religious minority students have decreased well-being during

college compared to their White Christian peers. These outcomes reveal the need for examination of campus policy in order to correct these trends (Milem et al., 2005).

Authority and Behavioral/Psychological Climate

Support from authorities, law, or custom is the fourth criteria for successful intergroup contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998, 2008) and is reflected in the structural and behavioral campus climates through federal, state, and university mandates (Hurtado et al., 1998). In public institutions the separation of church and state must not be in name only; campus cultures that reinforce Christian beliefs and traditions while ignoring or marginalizing those of religious minority groups are culpable in potentially compromising these students' college experience or forcing them to suppress their identities. Self-categorization or the identity shift between personal and social depending upon context should not be employed as a survival tactic by students to avoid ostracization or to subvert their religious identity in order to avoid negative stereotypes (Turner et al., 1994). As educational environments collectively shape identity, the merging of diverse worldviews can create a context for growth or fragmentation, and it is important that Muslim women have the resources and mechanisms in place to insure fair and equal treatment (Bryant et al., 2009).

Summary and Conclusions

This literature review began with a presentation of the importance of a positive campus climate for the identity formation of traditional college age Muslim American women, and the strategies for collection of data in order to build a conceptual framework for this study. An in-depth review of the current empirical literature was arranged

according to the following topics: the role of religion and spirituality in the lives of college students, the complexities surrounding traditional age Muslim American women in higher education, the identity factors surrounding the decision of these students to wear the hijab, and the synchronization of theory and the literature concerning student well-being.

The role of religion and spirituality for college and university students has recently gained attention with the HERI (2010) longitudinal study confirming the importance of both in the lives of traditional age students, including Muslims. What has not been widely explored is the specific role that religion plays in campus experience of Muslim women and how this impacts identity development. These young women, unlike their Christian majority peers, face a myriad of challenges including religious and politically motivated discrimination fueled by media misrepresentations. An ethnically, racially, and geographically diverse demographic, the literature has only been capable of capturing the portions of the complexities of their experiences.

While several studies have been focused on Muslim women in higher education and their choice to wear the hijab, very little of the research has been targeted toward traditional college age American citizens who have spent a minimum of 1 year of fulltime scholarship in an on-campus environment. The choice to wear the hijab and its impact on identity formation or reformation has not been extensively explored, and very little effort has been spent to juxtapose this action with Muslim women who choose *not* to wear the veil. The need for further scholarship in this area is necessary to understand how current or future campus climate plays a role in this decision making process.

Finally, this literature review synthesized the current research with social categorization (Tajfel, 1969, 1982), self-categorization (Turner et al., 1994), intergroup contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998, 2008), and religious identity development (Peek, 2005) theories. In conjunction with the campus climate framework of Hurtado et al. (1998) these laid a foundation upon which the literature forms meaning and provides policymakers with direction for future higher education improvements.

Chapter 3 details the research design and justification for this study, defines my role as researcher, and provides a complete description of the methodology to be employed, including data collection and analysis plan. Issues of trustworthiness (internal and external validity, and dependability), and ethical procedures are addressed.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this dissertation was to identify influences and experiences that contribute to the self-perception and identity formation of traditional college age Muslim American women. As part of a unique religious and cultural minority, these students provide a challenge and opportunity for policymakers responsible for promoting a campus environment that encourages them to grow individually and academically. In order to understand the complexities and needs of this group, it is important to research the meaning of their experiences both in the classroom and on campus to discover best campus practices and policies that encourage growth and development.

In this chapter I describe and support the selection of the research design chosen for this study and its alignment with the established research questions. My role as investigator and participant is discussed and any personal bias disclosed. Methodology will be described in depth and include participant selection, procedures for recruitment, participation, instrumentation, data collection, and an analysis plan. Finally, issues of trustworthiness that involve credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, and coding reliability are detailed. Ethical procedures and Institutional Review Board (IRB) documents are included as necessary and explained.

Research Design and Rationale

As discussed in the literature review, the choice to wear or abstain from wearing the hijab is often linked to religious, political, social, or other personal and group identity factors. The meaning of this action cannot easily be established through quantitative means such as surveys or other variable measurement tools, therefore, a

phenomenological research design was selected to better examine and understand the perceptions of these young women. Empirical phenomenological research was appropriate to define the framework of personal or collective experiences, provoke a complete account of the experience, and comprehend its constructed meaning as the participants describe it (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2006). At the center of phenomenological design strategies are a curiosity regarding the stories of others and their fundamental significance in the complexity of human awareness and behavior. The process of selecting specifics from the beginning, middle, and end of an experience involves reflection that may afford new meaning for both the participant and researcher. Although there are limitations that preclude an individual from fully comprehending the lived events of another, the quest for understanding is profoundly connected to the personal, social, and cultural desires of human beings and their need to share the meaning of their existence with those around them (Seidman, 2006).

The selection of an ethnographic research design for this study would have shifted the focus from understanding the meaning of a shared phenomenon (identity development) to that of determining the shared values and beliefs of Muslim American women in higher education (Creswell, 2007). This form of research requires extensive observation and immersion in the culture under study and would be cumbersome on such a large university campus if not intrusive. While significant data might be obtained through this type of study, the time involved in properly collecting information also prohibited its use in this situation.

Previous research of Muslim American women has used case study as a vehicle to understand their experiences in a higher education setting (bounded system). The goal of this form of research is to provide in-depth comprehension of a few participants (cases) and to analyze common themes. My selection of phenomenology rather than case study centered on my interest in the identity formation process of Muslim American women, and for this reason, multiple participants were necessary. Rather than examining the special experiences of a limited number of students, my study sought to capture the meaning of these experiences and its relationship to self-perception.

Research Questions

The focus of this study was to determine how traditional college age Muslim American bachelor's degree-seeking women develop, define, or redefine their identities in relationship to their American and religious self-perception while in higher education. The following research questions guided this dissertation:

RQ1: How do traditional age Muslim American women seeking bachelor's degrees at a Southern California public university perceive their engagement with the campus environment academically, socially, and individually?

RQ2: What campus influences impact traditional age Muslim American college women's identity perceptions?

RQ3: How do traditional age Muslim American college women describe experiences that affect whether they wear or do not wear the hijab on campus?

RQ4: In what ways would traditional age Muslim American college women believe student services and/or academic affairs could support a positive climate that allows their engagement and identity development?

Role of the Researcher

As a phenomenological researcher I functioned as an interviewer-participant. I was responsible for recording the context and content of revealed lived-experiences, details, and reflections of all participants (Seidman, 2006). In order to accurately ascertain the core of an experience, I engaged with the research as an authentic observer to the information expressed as well as maintained honesty and consciousness of my own perspectives or preexisting beliefs (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). One of the most problematic tasks for the phenomenological researcher is to achieve liberation from previous expectations, or what Husserl (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) referred to as the *epoche*, a Greek word meaning to stay away from or abstain, "where all meanings are equally accepted and are likewise characterized by and through objective research interpretations" (p. 84).

I did not encounter any conflict of interest, ethical dilemmas, or other research conundrums during my work at California City University (pseudonym), or as the study expanded, to Southern University (pseudonym). I had no ongoing personal or professional relationship with any student or faculty member attending or employed at either of these institutions. I am not currently, nor have been previously employed by California City University (CCU), a research institution with an enrollment of over 40,000 students in one of the largest cities in the United States, or the smaller Southern

University (SU). I was previously employed as a professor at a small college in the San Antonio area and this did not create a power discrepancy between those who choose to be a part of this study and myself. Since the expression of individual experiences and the connotations they embody for the participant are at the center of phenomenological investigation, privacy, and confidentiality was my upmost concern.

Methodology

To effectively research the identity formation and negotiation of traditional college age Muslim American women in higher education, I originally selected Seidman's (2006) practice of in-depth interviewing to encourage students to recreate their experiences through focused, yet open-ended questions. Seidman's (2006) three interview sequence attempts to: a) establish the groundwork or context in the first interview by asking the participant to elucidate as much as she can about her identity formation and how this corresponds to her college experience, b) encourage the participant to relay specific details of her experience as a Muslim American woman who attends a university in Southern California, and c) contemplate the meaning of her experiences in an effort to make sense or meaning of the details (in context) that contributed to in her self-perception. This is the goal of Interview 3.

I had originally designed an alteration to Seidman's (2006) three interview structure substituting focus group sessions for the second encounter rather than one-on-one interactions to encourage additional details from peers that otherwise may have been overlooked during individual conferences. For students who might have felt embarrassed disclosing personal details in a focus group setting, personal interviews were to remain an

option for the second interview protocol. As the research progressed, however, the methodology was modified including the elimination of the focus group due to time and logistical constraints and is fully described in Chapter 4.

Grounded in a structure that calls for three separate points of contact with each participant, Seidman's (2006) interview protocol stressed the importance of context, details, and meaning that evolve or is discovered more thoroughly through each encounter. According to a review by Dilley (2004) of Seidman's first edition, the interviewer's role in the process is to understand that

> Meaning is not "just the facts," but rather the understandings one has that are specific to the individual (what was said) yet transcendent of the specific (what is the relation between what was said, how it was said, what the listener was attempting to ask or hear, what the speaker was attempting to convey or say. (p. 128)

Recent research by Kirtley (2012) employed Seidman's (2006) model without using interviews to collect data. Through the use of literacy narratives completed in three stages, she was able to evaluate student perception of their technological ability to assist in improving learning outcomes. Reda's (2010) research regarding the lack of undergraduate classroom engagement followed the interview model to discover how to better elicit responses from students in classroom discussions. Both of these researchers acknowledged Seidman's (2006) philosophy of understanding meaning through multiple interactions.

Participant Selection Logic

The study was limited to Muslim American women who had achieved citizenship status either by birth or immigration and had completed 1 academic year of fulltime study on campus. All women identified themselves as Muslim either through upbringing, conversion, or other declaration. The selection of traditional college age students, typically ages 18 to 24, was based on studies that demonstrate identity formation is active during these emerging adult years (Arnett, 2000; Torres et al., 2009). The exclusion of international students, those who had not attained American citizenship, or had completed less than 1 academic year of full-time study on campus was designed to narrow the focus to the experiences of women who were immersed in both American and campus culture. No previous studies discussed in the literature review have established both of these criteria; the recent data represent a very broad swath of campus experience and American cultural engagement that do not specifically address the needs of this student group. In addition, since wearing or abstaining from wearing the hijab has been demonstrated in the literature to have a significant impact on Muslim identity, the hope was that a fair representation of both types of individuals would volunteer for this study.

To gather sufficient and appropriate data purposeful sampling was used to select participants who met the above criteria for the interview sessions (Patton, 2002). I used criteria and snowball sampling to attain adequate sample size and achieve variation. Participants were contacted through campus MSA's, however, members of these associations are often in leadership positions, highly motivated, academically successful, and represent an elite segment of a university population. Snowball sampling that

included women who are not members of the MSA was pursued to assist in acquiring a more conventional student representation. Variation in the sample was not achieved as it pertained to hijab status as only one student who wore the hijab signed up for the study (others were invited but declined). Academic majors included a range of subjects from the physical, health, and social sciences and provided a depth of student interests increasing the diversity of the sample. Racial and ethnic diversity was extensive and included students of African American, Hispanic, Pakistani-Arab, and Afghani descent.

Participants were made aware in writing of the established criteria for this study that was listed in a sample email/letter provided in Appendix A. Any ambiguity or questions were resolved through additional written or verbal correspondence. Since citizenship status and year of study is considered protected or personal information outside of government or university records, verifiability could only exist insofar as the student agreed to honestly comply with the research criteria.

Patton (2002) noted that sample size is contingent upon what the researcher wants to know, the reason for the study, the risks and benefits involved, what constitutes credibility, and what can be accomplished with available time and resources (p. 244). Two criteria—adequate numbers to reflect the target population and saturation of data to the point where the investigator is no longer discovering anything original from the sample—unite to establish when the study has run its course (Seidman, 2006). My research sample was originally to consist of nine individuals with the expectation that a minimum of seven participants would finish the two interviews and focus group session based on the standard participation in phenomenological research of one to 10 persons

(Starks & Trinidad, 2007). The final participant group consisted of six students who had the opportunity to contribute at multiple points during data collection to assure the sample's representation of the phenomenon was sufficient. The addition of a second campus later in the data collection process helped insure diversity within the participant group. While much of the qualitative investigation regarding identity formation has been performed using case study or ethnography and may have consisted of a larger (or smaller) sample size than the six here, multiple opportunities for students to add, elaborate, change, or correct information after the original interview helped ensure sufficient and rich data collection.

California City University currently allows over 50 religious organizations to be affiliated with the campus under the direction of the Student Affairs. The MSA has a permanent office on campus and its members fall under the jurisdiction of CCU. I submitted documents for administrative review to the office for Human Research Protection where it was determined that an IRB was not necessary for my research on campus. Once this was successful, an IRB application was filed and approved by Walden University (# 07-17-14-0356858). When both of these were completed, I contacted officers at the MSA and explained the process and value of the study and negotiated a forum (a Sisterhood meeting) where members had access to information regarding the research and participation. Recommendations from these participants of other students who met the criteria for this research but were not members of the MSA were encouraged (snowball sampling). A formal letter of cooperation was not submitted to CCU since their partnership consisted of distribution of invitations such as emails and did not require

individual identification of potential participants or collection of data. Initial contact was through introduction by MSA members both in person, on Facebook, and through emails that detailed the nature and purpose of the study. Contact with participants took place on the CCU campus or through arrangements to meet in a public coffee shop, communicate through email, phone, and Skype.

In an effort to increase sample size, a second university, Southern University (SU) was selected. Forms were submitted to the IRB on this campus where it was determined that no formal IRB was necessary for this research. I was, however, required to enlist a faculty member as a coresearcher, and this position was filled by the acting Dean of Education. Once this was procured, Walden approved my application to modify the research study. I immediately contacted the advisor to the inactive MSA and was put in touch with former group members.

Building a trusting and respectful relationship between the researcher and participant is not only an ethical obligation, but necessary to obtain candid and rich data (Seidman, 2006). For this reason during the introductory meeting students were given (or emailed) a copy of the "Consent to Participate in Research" form completed and attached in Appendix B, and a list of established criteria for participation (introductory email/letter). If a future participant was not present at the initial meeting, she was contacted via email with the same documentation attached. Each participant selected a pseudonym and understood that she would be identified by this name during the data collection, analysis, and dissertation submission process. Due to the personal and religiously sensitive nature of the information collected each student was informed that

she had the choice to participate or refuse to take part in the study, or agree to participate and later change her mind. She was informed that her decision not to take part would not be held against her, and that she could ask all the questions she felt necessary before she made her decision. My contact information was supplied to address questions or concerns that arose during the data collection process.

Instrumentation

Phenomenological data can be obtained through participant observation in the context where the phenomenon is experienced, individual or group interviews with those who have experienced the phenomenon, or a combination of both (Aspers, 2009; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). For the purposes of this study personal interviews of 60 to 90 minutes in duration were the only instrument of data collection. Campus observation or document assessment was not employed as a research instrument since determination of meaning was performed by the participant herself and not inferred or derived from secondary sources. Audio recordings were used to insure accuracy; participants were fully informed and consented to this protocol. A hand-held recording device as well as my laptop computer with recording software was used to capture the data during each interview session. No objections by any student arose regarding these recordings or note taking. All audio recordings were transcribed by me as soon as possible following each interview with multiple checks for accuracy. I was the only individual with access to these recordings.

First set of interview questions. In order to put the experiences of traditional college age Muslim American women into context, a series of questions aimed at

encouraging each student to narrate as much as possible about herself, her history, and her campus experiences was designed. Building on Seidman's (2006) interview protocol and in alignment with the research questions, the first interview question set sought to understand and define context through the participant's reconstruction of her personal story and history. With the exception of the first demographic and background question, these attempted to lay groundwork for understanding the importance of past experiences and their relationship to campus life. I avoided "why" questions, and instead concentrated on eliciting descriptions through "how" inquiries in order to encourage each woman to participate or relive her past.

Second set of interview questions. Although phenomenological research is frequently performed through a series of personal interviews, I had originally chosen to utilize the focus group as a means for encouraging students to share their lived experiences and build on those of others. Although some have objected to this form of data collection in phenomenological research claiming that it contaminates or influences the responses of other participants, others insist focus groups may encourage and prompt responses that might otherwise have been neglected in individual interviews (Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook, & Irvine, 2009). As an option for those students who might have felt uncomfortable sharing personal information in a group setting, I had arranged to substitute a personal interview for the second data gathering session.

According to Seidman (2006), the second interview should stimulate participants to provide a reconstruction of experience with as many details as possible being expressed. The emphasis on this phase is on description and recollection of events which

may be enhanced, clarified, or probed by other students who have had similar (or different) interactions. The second set of interview questions focused on classroom and campus experiences as a result of wearing the hijab, or related to being a Muslim. Although the students were unable to participate in a focus group interview, the essence of Seidman's description and recollection was accomplished through probing questions and encouragement to elaborate and return to the questions after reflection.

Third set of interview questions. The final interview questions focused on the participants' reflection upon the meaning of their experiences on campus. In order for each student to construct meaning for each event or phenomenon, this required that they inspect how campus influences have interacted to assist in their present state of identity development. According to Seidman (2006), participants need to extensively review their current experience within the context in which it occurs. The exploration of past actions to more fully understand the events synthesized with detailed descriptions of their present experience, created conditions for reflecting upon their current situation. In order to accomplish this, the first and second interview question sets established personal history and details of experience so that they combine or merge to create meaning for the student. In all interviews searching questions, discussions, and conversational dialogue was used to assist in creating an atmosphere that was both productive and comfortable for the participant.

Upon completion of the interview processes, all participants will be thanked and informed that a summary of findings will be available within a reasonable time period for their review. Updated contact information will be requested in the event that participants

need clarification, have additional questions, or resolution to future inquiries or concerns. All students will be assured that data will be kept secure and confidential and used only for the purpose of this dissertation unless otherwise approved by the participant.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of this research was to understand the identity formation of traditional college age Muslim American women as it exists within a university campus climate. In order to gather the most effective responses (data) that aligned with the research questions, the interview questions were designed help the student define context, details or reconstruction of experience, toward meaning and reflection. The complete interview questions are listed in Appendix C.

The goal of phenomenological research is to discover and understand the lived experiences of participants; therefore, evolutionary rather than pre-established coding was used to select segments of data for organization into common themes (Hatch, 2002). Although I am grounded in the themes and outcomes of the recent literature and the common premises and subjects that might lend themselves to a-priori coding, my desire was to refrain from preconceived expectations allowing the data rather than the researcher (myself) to form commonalities before the data were collected. No qualitative computer software such as NVivo and MAXqda was used for coding purposes. My previous experience with both programs has found them useful, but difficult to negotiate or appreciate without the assistance of personal instruction.

Creswell (2007) identified a method of phenomenological data analysis that includes six steps:

1. Describe the researcher's personal experience in order to identify any bias (bracketing).
2. Develop a list of significant participant statements.
3. Organize these statements into similar units of meaning.
4. Write a description of the context in which the experience happened.
5. Provide a description of how and when the experience happened.
6. Write a synthesis of the phenomenological meaning or essence of the event. (p. 159)

I used a variation of method of analysis as a guideline to align emergent coding from interview transcript data.

Seidman's (2006) in-depth three interview protocol allows data from each session to be analyzed and used to inform each subsequent contact with a participant. Since all interviews were completed at one "sitting" subsequent follow-ups provided students with the opportunity to build on previous responses. After each interview I transcribed and evaluated student responses and gathered together themes, and significant statements to assist in data collection summaries. Although interview questions are listed in Appendix C, modifications in the form of probing questions were used with each student in order to maximize the richness of responses. At the conclusion of the interviews, I analyzed and compared data for themes, patterns, and significant statements from all participants.

Research into human phenomenon does not always produce predictable or uniform results. Each and every response is the lived experience or perception of the participant and deserves to be treated equally. According to Miles, Huberman, and

Saldana (2014) the researcher needs to "find the outliers and then verify whether what is present in them is absent or different in other, more mainstream examples" (p. 302). The "outlier" can be a means to test and strengthen the generality of other findings while protecting the researcher against personal bias. When discrepant cases or statements presented themselves in this study, each was faithfully represented and analyzed within the context of personal and group experience, and included as a part of the rich tapestry of human complexity.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Phenomenology seeks to discover and understand the meaning of events by those who have participated in the experience. At some juncture, however, the researcher must have a philosophical understanding of the phenomenon and decide the amount or method in which his or her personal understandings will be introduced into the study (Creswell, 2007). The challenge for the researcher is to be cognizant of any previously understood meaning of the phenomenon through personal experience or literature examination, while separating this knowledge from the meanings made by the participants.

The credibility of the research can be threatened in two ways: researcher bias and reactivity (Maxwell, 2013). Selectively including only data that fit a preconceived outcome or expectation was avoided by participant verification of accuracy though data summaries. In terms of reactivity, or researcher influence during an interview session, this is next to impossible to achieve as the interviewer cannot help but guide or direct the participants' responses. The key to avoiding leading the participant only in the direction

of the researcher's choice is to understand how one might influence the student at the onset of the investigation (Maxwell, 2013).

Credibility was accomplished in this research through prolonged contact with each individual (interviews, email, data summary reviews) so as to establish a thick description of the phenomenon under investigation. Any areas of uncertainty were reported and speculation labeled as such with "rival" explanations actively considered (Miles et al., 2014, p. 313). Transferability or the application of the research findings to other contexts required careful interpretation of the data, not simply a combination or synthesis of one or more previous outcomes with the current study. According to Miles et al. this can be accomplished through detailed description in order to permit informed comparisons and a diverse sample from which the data originates. My goal was to select traditional age Muslim American college women who wear and refrain from wearing the hijab so as to balance their responses with the relatively small amount of data that exists to provide information that leads to further research in this area.

Dependability concerns consistency and long-term stability of the research (Miles et al., 2014). The use of audit trails or reviews by my committee chair and/or methodologist assisted in reliability assurance. Confirmability in interview protocol is connected to the reactivity bias risk previously mentioned; this required reflexivity and awareness of philosophical assumptions regarding the entire research process (Maxwell, 2013). Committee member evaluation assisted in assuring coding reliability.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical guidance for my fieldwork was based on Miles et al.'s (2014) checklist and included the worthiness or contribution of the project, my competence as a researcher and interviewer, collection of informed consent, disclosure of purpose and information, and the benefits to both the participants and future researchers. The costs and reciprocity of the study were considered as well as any harm or risk to the participants. Honesty and trust between researcher and subjects included the protection of their privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Intervention and advocacy must be guarded against; research integrity and quality, ownership of data, conclusions, and the use and misuse of results were other points of ethical importance (Miles et al., 2014, pp. 58-66).

Institutional Review Board documents. All research was performed in accordance with IRB protocol utilizing proper information and consent forms. This study was approved by Walden University, CCU, and SU and forms were filed in accordance with the requirements of each institution. A copy of my completion of the National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research examination certification was be submitted with each application indicating that I am qualified to conduct human research and understand the limitations and ramifications of this type of study. All participants were asked to select a personal pseudonym to represent their names throughout the study.

Ethical concerns. I did not encounter any ethical problems involving the recruitment process, interaction with MSA members, student-participants, or university personnel during my research at CCU and SU. All data collection were my sole responsibility and was stored in my personal computer, flash drive, and online Dropbox

(password protected). Written documentation and transcriptions were kept in my personal home office.

The nature of fieldwork involves unpredictability and fluidity; participants were allowed to leave the study before completion, object to questioning, or refuse to answer any question that made them feel uncomfortable. If a student chose to drop out of the research process, I immediately contacted students who had previously expressed interest in the study, or asked for referrals from other participants for a replacement. Any student who raised objections with a question were allowed to refuse to answer (this did not occur); this would have been noted as a part of the study's findings and for future consideration.

Treatment of data. All data were kept confidential. Some students were aware of others participating in this research through membership in campus MSA's, or through referral from their peers. Some students used their Facebook accounts to contact their friends regarding this study and to aid in snowball sampling. Participants may have also decided to relay their pseudonyms to one another, thus identifying themselves to others within the student group.

All data obtained by the researcher were kept secure and confidential. A research summary was provided to each participant upon completion of all interview transcription for their review. Upon completion of the research, the information was securely stored and will remain so for a period of 5 years and then destroyed. No archival data were used in this study. As previously discussed, there was no professional or personal conflict of interest or power differentials.

Summary

This chapter began with a reiteration of the central purpose of this study—to explore the meaning of identity and its formation in traditional college age Muslim American women. The research questions and subquestions were restated and their relationship and interaction with the study instrument. My role as a phenomenological researcher (interviewer-participant) was detailed and Seidman's (2006) interview methodology was modified and explained as the best system for data collection in this study. Each interview goal and process was described; the rationale for the use single interview with multiple student opportunities for elaboration to encourage latent experiences was explained. The participant selection, logic, instrumentation, and interview protocol were outlined and justified. The data analysis plan that includes Creswell's (2007) methodology of grouping significant participant statements into themes and relevant codes was employed. Issues of trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability have been described with appropriate strategies outlined that insured all standards were met. In the conclusion of this chapter I discussed ethical procedures that described treatment of human subjects, IRB requirements, data collection and storage, and future handling of information.

In Chapter 4 I will present the details and summary of the findings of this study. The interpretation and analysis process will be explained with portions of the interview transcripts used to demonstrate the participants reflections and understanding of their experiences on campus. Interview responses will be correlated and synthesized with the research questions and supported with data.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to identify the experiences of traditional age Muslim American women in higher education and to assess the meaning of these experiences and their impact or influence upon their self-perception both individually and collectively. Particular attention was paid to identity negotiation and the choice to wear or refrain from wearing the Muslim head covering known as the hijab. In order to create an environment where these women may have the opportunity to flourish as a religious minority, it is important to better understand the complexities of their experiences, both in the classroom and on campus. Research in this area is essential to assist policymakers and student affairs personnel in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of campus programs. I begin this chapter with a review and discussion of the research questions and their alignment to research methodology and interview questions. A background and description of the campus settings, demographic characteristics of the participants, a detailed account and justification of data collection and analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results of this phenomenological research follow.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided the design and methodology for this study. Interview questions were created to establish context, elicit descriptions through recollections of events, and provoke reflection upon the meaning of those experiences (Seidman, 2006). In order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provided the basis for reflective analysis and interpretation of the phenomenon and its meaning for each

participant, care was taken to align each interview query to the formal research questions as demonstrated in Appendix D (Moustakas, 1994).

RQ1: How do traditional age Muslim American women seeking bachelor's degrees at a Southern California public university perceive their engagement with the campus environment socially and individually?

RQ2: What campus influences impact traditional age Muslim American college women's identity perceptions?

RQ3: How do traditional age Muslim American college women describe experiences that affect whether they wear or do not wear the hijab on campus?

RQ4: In what ways would traditional age Muslim American college women believe student services and/or academic affairs could support a positive climate that allows their engagement and identity development?

Settings

The initial campus setting was a public, 4-year research university in Southern California (pseudonym: California City University) that has an enrollment of over 40,000 students. Known for its religious diversity, this institution houses dozens of faith based organizations including a large MSA with membership in the hundreds. Most of the students I interviewed lived on or near campus, typical of a large portion of the student population. In addition, the women's component of the MSA was highly organized orchestrating activities through their website, emailed newsletter, and private Facebook page.

At the time of data collection, tensions existed among members of the MSA at California City University (CCU), the campus administration, and other student groups that were perceived by MSA members to be pro-Israeli due to the recent conflict between Israel and Palestine in the Gaza strip. Many MSA members were actively involved in voicing their disapproval of any involvement that campus leaders might have in politically or financially supporting Israel and calling for divestment from these causes. This issue permeated the descriptions of the experiences of one participant at CCU.

The second campus setting was a public, 4-year state university that offers bachelor's and master's degrees in Southern California (pseudonym: Southern University) with a largely commuting student population under 15,000. Although the university's enrollment was much smaller than CCU's, it enrolls a diverse racial and ethnic student population including a many with Hispanic, African American, Arab, or Afghani descent. Unlike CCU, only a small number of students live on site. The university lists its MSA under Cultural/Multicultural Organizations (and refers to it as the Muslim Student Union) rather than placing it in the category designated as Religious/Spiritual that includes only four Christian groups and one nondenominational organization. No other religious groups have representation on campus. Although the association maintained a Facebook page, at the time of my data collection the MSA was inactive due to lack of student participation and perceived campus support according to the two students interviewed from this institution.

Data Collection

The initial methodology outlined in Chapter 3 indicated that Seidman's (2006) three interview and/or focus group protocol would be followed in order to establish multiple contacts with the participants, and therefore, obtain rich data. The expectation was that each participant's expression of her experience would evolve and develop more thoroughly with each interview and eventually lead to a layered compilation of meaning through reflection. The phenomenon of identity formation and negotiation of Muslim American traditional age college students through their campus experiences was to be put into context (Interview 1), detailed by specific incidences (focus group or Interview 2), and contemplated for meaning (Interview 3) and was to include nine participants on a single campus (CCU), unless saturation of the data were reached earlier.

It became evident early on in the data collection process that Seidman's (2006) three points of contact interview structure was impractical, if not impossible to implement with the busy schedules of university undergraduates. Once the IRB approved the application to research at CCU, I contacted several female MSA officers in August 2014 via email and presented them with the introductory email/letter provided in Appendix A. Return response was limited as students were not back from summer vacation for the new fall semester; however, one student who did not wear the hijab responded with interest and participated in the first interview.

Between August 2014 and early November 2014, I emailed MSA officers who had initially agreed to be community partners in finding participants over 10 times with limited success. Once school was back in session communication was more productive

and an MSA officer invited me to attend a Sisterhood event on campus where I presented the details of the study to approximately 20 women. I received interest from six students (all wore the hijab) of whom only one followed through with the actual interview process, despite several emailed requests to schedule the first interview. Two graduate students at CCU, however, expressed interest in reflecting upon their experiences as undergraduates at that institution and my IRB modification request was granted to interview them as well as recent alumni. No students who chose to refrain from wearing the hijab expressed interest in participating.

Upon receiving limited response from possible participants from CCU, another venue to expand the participant pool was considered necessary to reach the target of nine participants. I selected the smaller SU campus with its diverse student body and shorter distance from my home and again the original IRB proposal was modified and approved to include the second campus. The use of phone and Skype communication was also approved in lieu of personal interviews due to time and space limitations of the students.

All interviews were conducted between August and November 2014 and ranged from 45 to 90 minutes using these venues. Contact with a former officer of the nonfunctioning MSA at SU was made through campus links and a personal interview was set up with her on campus. Snowball sampling resulted in another former MSA officer and recent alumni scheduling interviews. All SU interviews consisted of a single in depth session rather than the previously designed three interview process (Seidman, 2006). Due to the participants' busy schedules, I asked all three sets of questions in one

session, followed up by email within 24 hours, and again after transcription of the participant's voice recordings in the form of data summaries for her review.

Due to the fluid circumstances of qualitative research and the challenges of working with a hard to reach population, four changes to the original methodology were established:

1. Data collection was expanded to include a second campus.
2. The participant pool was expanded to include graduate students and/or recent alumni.
3. The method of communication was expanded from face to face contact to phone, Skype, or email communication.
4. The interview questions were asked in one, rather than three interviews or a focus group session.

Regarding the last change, the reality that busy college students would make time to participate in three 60 to 90 minute interviews became increasingly unrealistic. All three interview set questions were posed to each participant with a follow up email, Skype, phone, or personal interaction to give each participant time to reflect upon and/or add to her original statements. My adoption of Seidman's (2006) multiple interview goals of creating context, description, and reflective meaning remained intact, however, each participant was encouraged to provide rich data within a single interview with the understanding that there would be optional future formal or informal contact opportunities. Hein and Austin (2001), referring to phenomenological methodology, stated,

> The specific method used depends, to a large extent, on the purposes of the researcher, his or her specific skills and talents, and the nature of the research question and data collected. Of equal importance, the method chosen should be viewed as providing only a general guideline—one that the researcher then modifies to meet the particular needs of the study. Thus, phenomenological methods are adapted to the characteristics of the particular phenomenon being investigated. (p. 3)

In the case of the Muslim American women in higher education, the phenomenon I investigated included student immersion in campus activities, academic commitment, and socialization. Saturation was reached, not by interview quantity, but through substance—comprehensive, rich, and thematic phenomenological experiences shared in interviews.

Empirical phenomenological research relies on a thick description of experience, making it incumbent upon the interviewer to extract the memory of an event in three dimensional terms (Englander, 2012; Giorgi, 2009; Hein & Austin, 2001). Prior to all interviews, contact was made with each participant via email, phone, or in person to provide them with information and background to the study and an understanding of the purpose of the research and sign consent forms. According to Englander (2012), "this gives the participant time to dwell and ponder on the experience…. and can aid the researcher in getting a richer description during the interview" (p. 27). At that time, several students made inquiries into how the research might affect them, its future use, and the reason for my interest in their stories. This initial interaction combined with the actual semistructured interview and their opportunity to respond to individual data

summaries that were emailed to all participants for comment, provided each student with multiple occasions to share her lived experiences and their meanings. While depth and reflection upon lived experience is certainly a requirement for phenomenological research legitimacy, the main purpose of the interview process was to afford the student ample opportunity to express her perspective so as to capture a detailed description of her experience as she perceived it (Giorgi, 1997). Participants indicated they had sufficient occasion to do this throughout the study.

Sample Size

The number of participants needed to achieve data saturation was originally projected to be nine, with the expectation that a minimum of seven participants would complete three points of contact (two personal interviews and one focus group session, or three personal interviews). This goal was based on Seidman's (2006) criteria that sufficient representation of the target population and the eventual lack of new discoveries combine to determine when the research had run its course. According to Starks and Trinidad (2007), purposeful sampling based on criteria to recruit participants who have experienced similar phenomenon does not need large samples to generate rich data; phenomenological research may be performed with as few as one individual (although this is disputed by Giorgi, 2009) and as many as 10. Creswell (2007) observed phenomenology studies that ranged from a single participant to an astounding 325 but stressed that all members must have some experience of the phenomenon under investigation.

The same circumstances that made the three interview process impossible to achieve (students' preoccupation with campus, academic, and social activities) were responsible for reducing the number of participants to six. According to Giorgi (2009), it can be argued that what needs to be valued is the number of occurrences of the phenomenon being researched, not the number of participants who report the experience:

> Depending upon the amount of raw data collected, at least three subjects are always required because it is important to have variations in the raw data. The greater the amount of data obtained from each subject, the fewer the number of subjects required….In any case, it is the structure of the phenomenon that we are seeking, not the individualized experience of the phenomenon. (p. 198)

Englander (2012) noted that it is the phenomenon that is the object of investigation and it should be relegated to highest priority status.

Representation and Demographics

Original criteria sampling stipulated participants to be Muslim American women undergraduates between the ages of 18 and 24 who had spent 1 year of full time study on campus or graduate students and recent alumni that would be able to reflect upon their undergraduate experiences. The actual sample consisted of women ages 20 to 28 and included three undergraduates (all of whom had achieved 1 year of on campus study), two graduate students, as well as one recent alumnus. To achieve variation in the participant pool, it was originally planned that there would be an equal representation of women who chose to wear the hijab and those who did not. Surprisingly only one woman who chose not to wear the headscarf volunteered for this study. According to

Giorgi (2009), the structure of the meaning of the phenomenon under investigation may collapse if an "essential constituent" is removed from the study (p. 199). This student's unique perspective concerning her identity and treatment for not wearing the hijab made her participation indispensable in providing a balance to those who did choose to wear the headscarf. Shortly after the interview this student experienced the death of a family member, and my attempts to reach out to her on several occasions for a second interview were not successful.

The six participants interviewed for this study consisted of an ethnically diverse group of young women. All but one was born in the United States. Most were first generation American citizens. Table 2 details the students' chosen pseudonyms, hijab status, campus attended, age, and education. All students transferred to their respective 4-year institutions from community colleges in the state of California.

Table 2

Participant Characteristics and Demographics

Pseudonym	Hijab	Campus	Age	Education status
Yasmine	No	CCU	22	Undergraduate
Raiyla	Yes	CCU	21	Undergraduate
Sakinah	Yes	CCU	23	Graduate
Aisha	Yes	CCU	23	Graduate
Sana	Yes	SU	20	Undergraduate
Gulzareena	Yes	SU	28	Alumni (graduated 2012)

Yasmine was the first student interviewed and the lone student to choose not to wear the hijab. A fifth year undergraduate, Yasmine was 22 years old at the time of her interview. A first generation American, she was of mixed European, Central Asian, Middle Eastern, and North American descent. Her mother also did not wear the hijab.

Sakinah is a 23 year old second year master's degree candidate at CCU who also completed her bachelor's degree there. She has worn the hijab since the fifth grade (shortly after September 11th). Her parents initially discouraged her from wearing the headscarf.

Raiyla has worn the hijab since her first day of college at age 18. She is now 21 years old and a third year undergraduate. Her mother is African American and a convert to Islam; her father is Catholic and originally from Central America.

Sana is a 20 year old undergraduate who has worn the hijab since her sophomore year in high school. One other sister wears the headscarf; however, her mother and another sister do not. Her parents did not encourage her to wear the hijab.

Aisha is a 23 year old graduate student who has also worn the hijab since the fifth grade. She was awarded a scholarship to study in a Muslim country overseas after graduation which she recently completed before beginning her graduate studies. Her mother wears the headscarf.

Gulzareena was born in a Muslim country in Central Asia and did not wear the hijab in the United States until she was 21 or 22 years old. She graduated from SU in 2012 and is now 28 years old. English is not her first language.

Data Analysis

Creswell's (2007) method for phenomenological data analysis includes a description of researcher bias (bracketing or phenomenological reduction), listing significant participant statements, organization of these statements into units of meaning, description of context, and synthesis of the significance or essence of the event. In addition, the researcher must be descriptive within the phenomenological reduction process and search for essential meanings within variations (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994). Manen (as cited in Starks & Trinidad, 2007) noted that phenomenological analysis is principally a writing exercise; it is through the writing and rewriting process that categories emerge, and units of meaning within the experience can be discovered. The researcher ultimately composes a story of common experiences bringing the reader to share the experience and similar conclusions about its meaning.

Data Organization

Transcription of each interview recording was the first step in the "writing exercise" to establish familiarity with each participant's experiences and the context in which they occurred. All interviews were transcribed verbatim from my hand held recorder or computer audio files and saved in Microsoft Word documents. Total word count of the interviews was approximately 30,000 words. I replayed the recordings multiple times in order to achieve accuracy and to explore the emotional nuances of the communication. Notes taken during the interviews were reviewed and compared to transcripts. Immersion in the data assisted in identifying not only common themes, but in pinpointing gaps or lack of sufficient information provided by the participant. According

to Creswell (2007), inductive analysis involves an interface between themes, collected data, and the participants in order to shape themes or identify "abstractions" that are brought forth from these interactions (p. 39). Data summaries of each interview ranging from two to four single spaced pages were written for all students and emailed with instructions for them to elucidate, correct, or express any other thoughts they might have regarding this research.

Once the interviews were transcribed I initially organized the material by responses to individual interview questions, then by categories designed to consolidate the essence of the phenomenon based on the four research questions that have guided this study from the onset. Segregation of participant responses took place only when based upon experiences on campus that directly concerned wearing or not wearing the hijab. After this was completed, I organized and evaluated outlier themes much like their emergent them counterparts, however, these were not coded.

Emergent Themes and Codes

Codes were assigned to represent the experiences, significant statements, and common stories expressed by all participants during their interviews. The codes were further broken down into subcodes that helped narrow and clarify subtle nuances of each phenomenon and to indicate positive and negative experiences within the same broader code. Themes emerged from repeated analysis of the coding and were organized according to the goal of each research question.

Themes related to RQ1. The first research question focused on the identification of experiences of the students related to their choice of wearing or refraining from

wearing the hijab on campus. Responses to this research question contained the richest and most extensive data collected throughout the interview process. Themes that emerged for those who wore the headscarf included recognition, respect, the hijab as a symbol of "otherness", and the perception of being singled out as a religious minority who often receives hostile or abusive treatment. Yasmine, who did not wear the hijab, also provided extensive themes including her belief that she was judged by her own Muslim community for not wearing the headscarf (especially from MSA), her concern that she would not be regarded as "marriageable material" by Muslim men and their families, and her belief that she had to compensate for her perceived lack of religiousness by holding leadership positions on campus. The codes were *identification* (both positive and negative subcodes), *social* (positive and negative), *respect, perception, harassment, verbal abuse, stereotyping, Muslim community judgment* (with male subcode), *first generation, mother, marriage* (with subcodes), *compensation, fear, watching prayer, community,* and *MSA.*

The second focus of RQ1 was the reasons for choosing to wear or not wear the hijab. Those students who wore the headscarf repeatedly listed their friends as having an influence on their initial choice, with later life decisions based on personal faith. Codes such as *friends, love, respect, obedience, God (Allah) requires, parents, father, mother, Muslim community judgment, identification, media* and *rebellion* developed from the data addressing the second focus of RQ1. Themes that emerged from Yasmine who chose not to wear the hijab focused on individual faith, personal worth, judgment, and included *internal value, Muslim community judgment, actions,* and *religious priorities* codes.

The literature review documented the importance of religious and spiritual life for students in higher education in relationship to their wellbeing on campus (Astin et al., 2010; HERI, 2010). The third focus of RQ1 was that of religious/spiritual life and the effect of the hijab or religion (Islam) on the campus experience. Responses indicated that the larger campus provided a sense of community and support from other MSA members. The most common complaint by the two students from the smaller SU campus was a lack of prayer space or campus support. Codes were comprised of terms such as *community, diversity, Muslim community judgment, prayer room, lack of campus support, watching prayer, harassment,* and *positive academic*.

Themes related to RQ2. Research Question 2 concentrated on student experiences inside the classroom and included events that stood out to each student related to the hijab or being a Muslim. Analysis of interview data focused on classroom experiences produced themes that noted instructor misunderstanding or confusion regarding Islam, other students' eagerness to ask questions (particularly of those who were visibly Muslim), and academic challenges. Codes emerged such as *confusion of culture and religion, identification* (negative subcode), *perception, questions, stereotypes, media, social* (with positive and negative subcodes), *academic* (negative subcodes), and *diversity*. On campus outside the classroom experiences focused on the MSA and community support for CCU, but once again, the lack of support for the smaller SU. Codes included *MSA, community, lack of campus support, fear, negative academic,* and *social* (negative subcode).

Themes related to RQ3. Research Question 3 concentrated on the meaning of the hijab for both those who chose to wear it and the one student who did not. Included were the subcategories that explored each student's feelings about the choices other women made to wear or not wear the headscarf. The first broad theme confirmed that the meaning of the hijab was intensely personal to all the women. Codes reflected concepts such as *internal value, stereotypes, love, obedience, Muslim community judgment, beauty, perception, modesty, God (Allah) requires, religious struggle,* and *positive identification*. Feelings about women who choose to wear the hijab noted the presence of Muslim community judgment and its importance for marriage, as well as the importance of no judgment in decision making in this area. Feelings about women who do not choose to wear the headscarf included the assumption of a religious struggle, the importance of a strong faith (in lieu of the hijab), and personal hesitation to judge on the part of those who wore it. Codes in these two areas included *religious struggle, Muslim community judgment, no judgment, internal value, beauty, modesty, stereotypes, actions, marriage (and subcodes),* and *faith.*

The perceived role of each student as Muslim American women on campus was the first focus of the research established from RQ3. The diversity of Muslim women racially, ethnically, and culturally prompted a range of responses, however, excelling in academics, career, and setting a good example in the face of negative stereotypes was deemed important. The use of codes such as *first generation, perception, diversity, identification,* and *stereotypes* were frequent.

Themes related to RQ4. The final research question concentrated on the subject of improvements or advice and involved any changes the student would make on campus if presented with the opportunity. The greatest frequency of agreement surfaced in this category and included more safe and designated prayer spaces, interfaith education opportunities, and increased campus support. Codes included *prayer room, watching prayer, interfaith education, diversity,* and *lack of campus support.*

Discrepant Cases

The situations and experiences described were chosen by the participants themselves and provide an opening into another world that is made sharable by their descriptions (Giorgi, 2009). It is, therefore, unrealistic to assume all experiences will be uniform or predictably fall into preordained categories. Miles et al. (2014) cautioned against smoothing over or explaining away discrepancies, and urged the researcher to view them as a challenge to overgeneralization or bias. Outlier statements presented an opportunity for bracketing or reevaluation of suppositions throughout the ongoing process of data collection and analysis.

In order to preserve the value of discrepancies, I carefully organized a separate collection of these statements with particular attention paid to atypical settings, context, or events. This was not completed in an attempt to explain away the incongruence of the experience or statement; rather it was done for careful examination of its relationship to other experiences that fell within the mainstream and to verify its position as an outlier (Miles et al., 2014).

The first discrepancy was a remark by the unveiled student that some Muslim women on campus had been forced to wear the hijab. This accusation not only fell outside the common experiences of the participants, but was also absent from the current literature regarding Muslim American women. The second outlier theme involved dissatisfaction with campus policy and the perception that CCU was supportive of causes in direct opposition to those of many Muslim students. Previous research has discovered student discontent with U.S. domestic and international policy (Muedini, 2009); however, no connection or association of any campus with these policies had been noted.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Phenomenology is a qualitative research design with its roots in philosophy, and although subject to the rigor that accompanies any serious research, cannot be quantified (Giorgi, 2009). In lieu of statistical analysis or variable testing qualitative methodology must satisfy its critics that there is credibility to the data, and that transferability, dependability, and confirmability of results have been achieved. Throughout the data collection and analysis process every effort was made to meet the quality and integrity standards necessary.

Credibility (Internal Validity)

Creswell and Miller (2000) noted that the researcher's choice of validity mechanisms is dependent upon two perspectives: the lens or viewpoint chosen to validate the research (other professionals in the field) and his or her paradigm assumptions (constructivist). After determining the paradigm parameters several validity techniques are available to the researcher to establish credibility. Likewise, Maxwell (2013)

suggested eight similar strategies for testing conclusions or that are meant to discover potential threats to the research.

In Chapter 3 I indicated that I would use prolonged contact in the field through the expected three interview sets advocated by Seidman (2006). As previously described, this level of contact with the participant pool was not realistic, therefore, I selected as my first mechanism for insuring validity to be rich description (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Maxwell, 2013). Use of probing questions and requests to elaborate and describe personal experiences led to extensive revelations regarding individual phenomenon(s), context, and meaning. As previously mentioned the transcripts contained approximately 30,000 words (approximately 100 pages double spaced) and contained a range of experiences, emotions, and reflection.

The second validation technique employed was the use of member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Maxwell, 2013). Once I had the original transcripts had been analyzed, data summaries were produced for each participant and emailed for her comments, further reflections, or concerns. This engagement with the student population produced two responses with only minor changes or additions which were incorporated into the final narrative.

Bracketing. The third tool used to assure credibility is researcher reflexivity (Creswell & Miller, 2000). As previously stated, the emphasis of empirical phenomenology is on the structure or commonality of the event that manifests in various or separate instances. In addition, the factual truth of the experience is not a consideration; the "perspective of consciousness", or how the phenomenon occurred as

felt by the participant serves as reality (Giorgi, 2009, p. 87). Credibility in phenomenological research, therefore, requires not only a suspension of judgment of the truth of the participant's statements, but a bracketing of the researcher's own preconceived ideas regarding the research or its participants.

Phenomenological reduction (bracketing) is in fact, the first step in assuring the objective analysis of data through self-reflection in order to achieve awareness of biased dispositions toward the phenomenon under investigation (Hein & Austin, 2001). Unlike the collection of rich data, and member checking, bracketing occurred during the entire course of the data collection and analysis process since both collection and analysis are a holistic and simultaneous (Englander, 2012; Hein & Austin, 2001). According to Gearing (2004), bracketing is comprised of three phases: abstract formulation, research praxis, and reintegration and can be divided into multiple typologies depending upon theoretical frameworks (p. 1432). The first phase requires the researcher to state his or her epistemological and ontological perspective; the constructivist and relativism inherent in phenomenology apply to this step. The second phase of research praxis involves foundational focus (internal and external), temporal, and boundary composition (Gearing, 2004). The internal foundational focus was established in Chapter 3 with my statement of personal education and faith journey, ecumenical participation and affiliation, and personal experience with the Muslim community both locally and internationally. External assumptions included the expectation of negative experiences on campus for those women who chose to wear the hijab as they would be identified more readily as Muslim.

It has been accepted by several scholars that complete bracketing of personal dispositions can never be achieved; however, this should not diminish its usefulness in identifying researcher predisposition (Gearing, 2004; Giorgi, 2009; Hein & Austin, 2001). External assumptions like internal ones cannot reduce or bracket out context, culture, or global suppositions, however, they can be acknowledged in order to aid the researcher and promote awareness of cultural or conflicting perspectives. Reintegration or unbracketing occurs once the researcher has recognized and acknowledged preconceived assumptions and attempted to diminish any negative impact these might have on the research analysis (Gearing, 2004). This process became inextricably linked to the selection of significant statements, emergent themes, and the selection of codes in order to fairly determine the patterns of experience within context. Table 3 outlines the three phase typology of the reflexive (cultural) bracketing and my application of this process to the completed research.

Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

At the conclusion of the research it was important to determine if the results were applicable to similar studies in order to establish transferability. Careful interpretation of data rather than reliance on the synthesis of multiple sources was necessary to establish stand-alone evidence that may be used in future research. Corroborating literature was required to establish depth. According to Miles et al. (2014) transferability is accomplished through the use of rich data, diversity of the sample, reported limits of sample size, and identification of replication of findings in other studies. Data were collected (as described above), sample size was justified and established within the

phenomenological tradition, and parallels to the literature were noted. Diversity of the sample was the result of being gathered from a heavily populated, racially and ethnically mixed participant pool that drew from two structurally different campuses and included undergraduates, graduate students, and recent alumni. Previous studies have had similar success and results with mixed first generation Muslim women on campus.

Dependability involves consistency and stability of the research over time addressing both the quality and the integrity of the study (Miles et al., 2014). Dependability was accomplished though the alignment of the four research questions with the interview queries, and a clear description of my role and status within the participant group before and during all interviews. Many of the findings paralleled those of other research as demonstrated in the literature review in Chapter 2. All transcripts and coding were reviewed by my dissertation chair for comment and confirmability.

Results

Interviews with six participants from two Southern California campuses who identified as Muslim American women undergraduates, graduate students, or recent alumni between the ages of 20 and 28 provided a wealth of information regarding the phenomenon(s) associated with identity formation, campus experience, and the choice to wear or refrain from wearing the hijab. Four research questions guided the formation of interview questions that allowed the emergence of themes and significant statements. The results and research findings are organized by the categories generated by each research question and their emergent themes. A complete summary of these findings is listed in Appendix E.

Research Question 1: Identity and Support

In order to understand the opportunities and challenges Muslim American women face as a part of a larger religious minority group I chose to first focus on how the choice to wear or refrain from wearing the hijab has impacted their campus life. Themes emerged from these personal experiences including identification, socialization and perception of others on campus, harassment or fear for safety, judgment within the Muslim community (for not wearing the hijab), and the importance of the hijab for marriage. Friendship and parental influence (or lack of), spirituality, attention to internal value were also prominent. Finally, a sense of Muslim community and the perception of campus support played a role in satisfaction with their campus experience.

Experiences wearing the hijab. The women who choose to wear the headscarf on campus felt they were distinctive in that they are immediately identified as a religious minority. This recognition formed the basis for several common experiences for students across both campuses and included socialization challenges and opportunities, and awareness of the perception of others.

***Identification, socialization, and perception*.** The first patterns to emerge from the interview data concerning the experiences of students who wore the headscarf stemmed from their perception of being immediately identifiable by Muslims and non-Muslims as followers of Islam. Both professors and students recognized all participants from previous classes or other campus activities with one student at CCU, Sakinah, remarking with laughter that she could not skip class anymore since the professor would notice her absence. Sana, an undergraduate at the much smaller SU, noted that she felt

conspicuous by her absence in class when she was unable to attend due to illness. Her experience was different from Sakinah's, perceiving that she was singled out by her professor.

> I got an email back saying, "you weren't in class today," and I'm pretty sure if someone else wasn't in class they wouldn't have got that email because he doesn't take attendance. The hijab in the classroom kind of gets kind of weird… people look at you.

Gulzareena, a recent alumnus from SU, felt a sense of admiration from her instructors as a result of wearing the headscarf and remarked that "my professor(s)…they trust me you know, and they show a lot of respect." Another student, Raiyla, expressed her pleasure that the headscarf identified her to Muslim women who did not to wear the hijab and remarked that they would frequently give her the traditional Arab greeting of "*salaam alaikum"* when passing her on campus.

Sakinah, a second year master's degree candidate, believed that wearing the hijab assisted her with meeting other Muslim women and making friends since she was new to the Southern California area. Identification as a Muslim, however, created social challenges for some of the students when the hijab became a symbol of "otherness" and made it difficult to make connections with those who did not share their faith or culture. Aisha, a graduate student reflected:

> Within a college environment where there's such a large group of students you obviously sort of try to find similarities…to make your social connections and groupings… so I've found that because I wore the hijab, it would sometimes

> make it difficult for people who were maybe not Muslim to interact with me at a more intimate level than to go, "Hi, you know we're in the same class."

This sentiment was echoed by Sana, who felt that wearing the hijab contributed to her isolation on campus.

> Like say you're in the library and then…we have a huge table, and I'm sitting here like there's 10 other chairs open, but someone will go and sit at the far one. It's like that and even in class too. The last resort would be to sit next to me.

As a student at SU, a university with a less abundant Muslim population than its CCU counterpart, Sana found campus size a challenge to socialization explaining, "On campus it's kind of weird because I think I've only seen two or three other Muslim *hijabis* (women who wear the hijab)…and we don't know each other so we wouldn't go up to each other and kind of talk."

The expectations or perceptions of others factored into Aisha's experience due to misunderstanding of the meaning or purpose of the hijab.

> People sometimes can base their interactions with me on their notions of what the hijab means to them which is not necessarily what it might mean to me. They have the idea of women who wear the hijab…and you might have to say, "This is what your perception is, but that's not necessarily accurate."

Harassment. A common theme among participants was the experience of verbal harassment directly related to their religious affiliation and symbolized by the hijab. All of the women who wore the headscarf felt they had become a visible target of this behavior; two reported the intimidation as ongoing throughout their campus tenure.

Sakinah and others remarked that they encountered staring from others when walking on or off campus, making them uneasy. "There's a lot of staring, whether I'm walking to campus or walking around; there's always staring. I've been wearing it [the hijab] for a very long time and it's one thing I haven't still gotten used to."

Harassment occurred on both campuses, although it was difficult to ascertain if it originated from students, since the universities are state supported and allow access from the general public. Gulzareena recalled one experience as she walked to campus: "I remember I had just parked my car and I was coming toward school…then I suddenly see this one guy and he just turn around and he just look at me and say, 'Oh, terrorist is here.'" She did note, however, that a non-Muslim male friend who was accompanying her became angry over the remarks, and at her request did not confront the individual.

Sakinah recalled an incident that occurred while walking to class that made not only her, but her fellow students uncomfortable: "I remember one time I was walking to campus and this one guy was walking in front of me…he just turned around and gave me just this mean stare…and it made the other students uncomfortable around me too." She recalled numerous incidents where her colleagues were harassed, even shoved, and expressed disappointment that no one in these public spaces came to their defense.

Experiences not wearing the hijab. Only one participant, Yasmine, chose not to wear the hijab. A community college transfer student in her third year at CCU, she was extremely active in MSA and campus government. Several themes emerged from her interview regarding her experiences as a woman who did not wear the headscarf, the most prominent being a feeling of judgment from her own religious community.

Judgment. At the onset of the interview, Yasmine was frank about what she believed to be a pervasiveness of moral judgment by members of the MSA or the Muslim community as a whole. She also indicated that certain cultural or ethnic groups seemed to be driving this phenomenon. "We judge each other," she confided, "and I think that is really unfortunate…we have so many people from so many different ethnicities and different cultures…people from certain areas, especially from the Middle East and South Asian cultures who judge very quickly." She pointed out many of the students of MSA were first generation American citizens who found it "difficult because we're trying to find the balance of tradition and being modern." Yasmine was particularly frustrated with the MSA men, stating:

> For a lot of men, they're kind of raised in a sense where if you don't wear the hijab like my mom, you're not really religious….The men tend to speak out when they shouldn't; fortunately raised by a mother who is Latina, I was always taught at a very young age to speak out….I've had guys come up to me saying, "You're supposed to wear the hijab and if you don't wear the hijab then you should burn."

The feelings of rejection or judgment by Muslim men for her refusal to wear the hijab, and therefore, being perceived as being less committed to Islam because is countered by her strong identification with her mother's example both in assertiveness, and choice not to wear the headscarf.

Marriage. A theme that surfaced during the interviews with several students was the relationship of the hijab to marriage. For Yasmine, choosing not to wear the hijab made her at first glance, "less than marriage material since so many assume wearing the

hijab makes one a good person and those who don't are messing around or …doing bad things." She claimed that it is only when people meet her and get to know her that they realize that she is a person worthy of their respect.

Yasmine related a story about one of her friends who did not wear the hijab who was romantically interested in a Muslim man. This friend told her that she felt "she was not worthy because all of the women in his family wore the hijab so he probably wouldn't even look at me." Yasmine's perception as confirmed through her friend's experience was that if the hijab is not worn, the community perceives the individual as one who has rejected traditional Islamic values such as modesty and keeping one's beauty for her husband. Speaking about herself, Yasmine insisted that the hijab would not play a factor in who she would marry.

> I'm at that point in my life, if someone doesn't love me for me…if the hijab plays a huge factor, then I don't want to be with that person because I do everything else right, and I'm still learning and I'm still trying to perfect it.

Pressure to prove herself a good Muslim because she did not openly demonstrate her religiosity by wearing the hijab, motivated her to hold leadership positions within the MSA and in student government with the hope that she would be judged for her abilities and character rather than her clothing choices.

> I think it's unfortunate for a lot of us women who don't wear it because we're kind of looked down upon….We're having to kind of make up for it by being in leadership positions and showing others that we can be taken seriously.

Her hope in taking on leadership roles was that Muslim men on campus would look beyond the hijab. Referring to a male Muslim friend she commented:

> He said originally he wants to marry somebody who was wearing the hijab, but after meeting me and after meeting a few of our other friends he says that it really doesn't play a factor anymore… because so many women like me and other girls who don't wear the hijab are "good girls; you're independent and motivating girls."

Fear. Although Yasmine was not immediately visible as a Muslim on campus because she has chosen not to wear the hijab, she still prayed in a designated outdoor space (there is no indoor space) on campus with other students. Similar to the experiences of other students, she commented on the uncomfortable feeling of others staring at her or watching her as she worshiped. While taking comfort in a strong MSA community—members may call a hotline for an escort on campus if they feel threatened—she still expressed fear for her safety on campus due to Islamophobic tensions.

> Sometimes I'm afraid of who's watching me when I'm praying because I pray outside….who's watching me? Is anybody looking at me in a certain way? I don't feel safe on the campus that I chose to attend….There are times when I do feel scared being a Muslim woman. I feel that in that sense not wearing the hijab I feel that I am a little bit luckier because I am not pinpointed right away when I am in a group of people as being Muslim.

By not wearing the hijab Yasmine is somewhat insulated from negativity directed at Islam; however, her participation in Muslim activities puts her at risk for behavior that she clearly fears. The size and support of the MSA ("we have each other's back"), she suggested, provides her with resources to mitigate this threat.

Reasons for choosing to wear the hijab. Five of the six participants chose to wear the hijab; all of them claiming that their reasons have evolved and changed over time. For some it was a resolution made early in life; for others it was an adult decision made after spiritual reflection. A variety of influences played a part in the students' choice including peer pressure, rebellion, a sense of identity, and worship.

Friendship. Several students noted that they originally chose to wear the hijab because their friends were doing it. Sana reflected that in her sophomore year in high school she met a group of girls at her local mosque who inspired her to give it a try. "It was like, 'man, if these girls can do it…'. I didn't have the right meaning, the right goal to wear it, so I just wore it just cuz [*sic*] they wore it in the beginning," she explained. Likewise, Aisha admitted,

> When I was in the fifth grade it seemed like the inevitable, logical thing to do because most of my friends did it…my mother wore it, you're going to eventually wear the hijab, so I thought, why not?...I feel that wearing it at that time was actually easier because as a child you know, you don't necessarily think too much about it. It's like, "oh, my friends are doing it, and oh, let's do it too."

Gulzareena, who decided to wear the hijab at age 21, explained that her friends provided her with spiritual support and inspiration, motivating her to read the Quran and follow her faith.

Wearing the hijab was reported to be difficult for some when there was uncertainty regarding its practical and proper fashion. Sana described her experience on the first day she wore it:

> This is really awkward…the first day I didn't know how to wear the scarf so I had hair showing… they were like "man, that girl is just too unorganized." The first day I was like "this is really hard"…I wanted to take it off that day, but you know I said, "I'm going to do it"….I finally I sat down with YouTube and I learned it.

Parents. Unlike the influence friends exerted upon these young women, the preference of parents for their daughters to refrain from wearing the headscarf sometimes resulted in the opposite behavior. Not one student stated that their parents tried to persuade them to wear the hijab; on the contrary, more than one commented that they were actively discouraged. Sakinah, who began to wear the scarf shortly after September 11th, explained her reasoning:

> My parents did not want me to wear it. So I just did it because their reasoning didn't make sense to me. They said, "Well, you should not wear a scarf because the scarf attracts attention and the person is supposed to wear hijab to avoid attention"…so I'm wearing it to rebel against the family, but they've changed over time.

Sana conferred with her parents about her decision and found that they too were not anxious for their daughter to wear the hijab.

> I talked to my parents and they were like, "it's your choice," cuz [*sic*] my parents didn't force me at all…in the beginning they were like, "no, don't wear it." My parents are like, "if you want to wear it, but we're not going to force you." That kind of just gave me another reason when they told me that.

Gulzareena, who was born in a Muslim country in Central Asia, explained the hijab from the perspectives of different cultures:

> In Saudi wearing the…*abaya* (loose over-garment), the hijab, it's…culture because…[it's] mandatory [to] have to wear it …In Afghanistan you have to wear [the] *burka* (full body covering), or you have to wear [a] big scarf to cover yourself. In India it's the same thing; in Pakistan it's optional.

Explaining parental influence upon her choice to wear the hijab she commented, "My dad, he loved it, but he never force [*sic*] us."

Raiyla, whose mother converted to Islam in the mid-1990s, noted that her Catholic father's family was uncomfortable with her initial decision to wear the hijab, hoping that one day she would remove it. Her conversion to Islam was eventually accepted partially due to her mother's positive example:

> So by the time I stared wearing hijab my mom had already gone through like a lot …she had already converted to Islam so everybody knew she…was Muslim for like 20 years now…they see that my mom's a good person so they don't have anything negative to say anymore.

Identity. Another reason to choose the hijab and continue wearing it despite negative experiences was the sense of identity it conferred upon its owner. Those who had worn the headscarf for a considerable amount of time voiced concern that their concept of self would be compromised if they were to remove it. Aisha explained that, "It's become a part of my identity…removing it would be like removing a part of myself….Once you start doing something and you've been doing it for so long, it sort of becomes a part of who you are."

Raiyla found that being Muslim and wearing the hijab helped her establish an identity that transcended her racial and ethnic heritage, although she had misgivings she attributed to fear of media portrayals of Muslims and African Americans. "I identify as Black and Hispanic…but when I thought about how the media portrayed Black people…it was like, I can't do this." Her fear of negative perceptions of African Americans combined with that of Muslims influenced her original decision not to wear the hijab. Her positive experience of community at CCU helped mitigate this fear.

> I think it's important to feel like you belong somewhere ….In high school when I would hang out with the Black people they'll say, "oh, you're too Hispanic for us," and the Hispanic people are like, "you're too Black for us." I was like…I don't have anywhere! I feel like… I belong with the Muslim people because…the most important thing is our core belief….and what we're here on earth for.

Raiyla's emphasis on achieving a sense of belonging outside her racial and ethnic heritage is interesting in that she felt in part, rejection from both her Hispanic and Black

peers for her mixed background. Her preference for belonging to a Muslim collective based on common belief rather than birth is noteworthy since African Americans make up the largest segment of the U.S. population to convert to Islam (PRC, 2011).

Spirituality. Several of the participants indicated that friendships initially influenced their decision to wear the hijab, however, spiritual reflection contributed to a change in the meaning of the veil later in life. Aisha explained,

> As I grew older and then now…why do I continue to wear it? Why…is that I believe that it's something that God would like me to do and so it's out of respect and love, and sort of, I guess you could say obedience even though sometimes that can have a negative meaning.

Sakinah echoed her colleague's response. After rebelling against her parents' wishes she reflected that, "The most recent reason I've been wearing it is actually like pulling away, and brushing aside all others…wearing it for God." Raiyla noted, "It's my choice and I feel like it's an additional act of worship."

Sana's earlier decision to wear the veil as a result of her friends' example was challenged within a month of her original decision.

> This guy was walking past me and he just pulled it off….At that moment I was just like "man, should I really do this?" I wore it for the wrong reason in the beginning, but if I change it… my meaning to wear it…because Allah wants us to wear it and that I should do it for myself…it would make me stronger…and even if he did pull it over that doesn't change me in general.

Her emotional experience forced her to evaluate her decision searching for deeper meaning and the strength to preserve.

Reasons for choosing not to wear the hijab. One participant chose not to wear the hijab, citing the personal nature of her faith rather than outward manifestation in her reasoning.

Internal value. When asked about her decision to refrain from wearing the headscarf, Yasmine commented:

> Everything you do is between you and God…I would rather be a good person in that sense first and then decide to wear it…I want people to learn about me and judge me as a person when they meet me rather than point a finger and saying she's automatically a good person….I want people to know me by my intelligence…my views on issues before anything else.

Yasmine's response confirms the assumption that for many, the hijab identifies the wearer as a good Muslim. Although part of a religious collective she explained, "I want to be more of an individual who people will [know]…that 'she is a religious person…by her actions' rather than what I wear on my head." Yasmine expressed the view that modesty was important to her and dictated by her faith; however, it could be expressed through conservative dress in general rather than the hijab in particular. She described a peculiar experience when she participated in an MSA activity: "We had a 'hijab day' at our university and I went around wearing the hijab…and I was treated totally differently….Nobody looked me in the eye when I was walking around…people were clearing the path for me."

Like some of her colleagues who wrestled with the decision to wear the hijab Yasmine spoke of this as an ongoing process:

> Growing up the hijab was always something that, even up until a year ago I was actually interested in wearing, but decided not to….There is so much more to our religion than wearing the hijab…I told myself I would rather pray 5 times a day, I would rather want to pay charity and fast….And if I choose to wear it in the future I hope that I could be still praying 5 times a day and fasting and doing everything I'm supposed to do and that would just be an extra.

For Yasmine the hijab represents only a part of her faith; one with a lower priority than prayer, fasting, or charity. She does not rule out wearing it in the future.

Religion/spirituality and the campus experience. What is the effect of wearing the hijab and/or being identified as a Muslim woman on campus? Understanding how religious minority groups, particularly those who are marginalized or stereotyped in American society, perceive their treatment on campus and how these experiences influence their growth is paramount to the development of programs or policies that will improve their university years.

Community. All participants voiced the need to find or embrace a sense of community on campus as a part of their religious or spiritual growth. Students attending the larger CCU praised a supportive MSA. According to Yasmine,

> College is where you become an adult, and I want to be an adult. I want to take responsibility for my actions. I think that being at my university fortunately has given me a sense of community that I never really had too much of growing

> up….So I feel a sense that that has helped me in my religion because I'm able to meet other people who are not perfect…because when you think of our religion…[you] think you have to be perfect, then [you] meet other people…and everyone is different in their own way.

The MSA provided the opportunity for Yasmine to meet others in order to counter the perception that one must be "perfect" within the Muslim community.

Sakinah noted that having a prayer space and religious support were integral to her growth.

> The MSA provided a lot of support for the Muslim community for them to practice, whether it's allowing them to pray on campus, providing them with carpets, or other classes related to our religion, so it's definitely had an impact, a very strong impact…And it's the reason why I started to have an interest in learning about my faith.

Raiyla admitted that prior to applying to CCU she had specifically focused on locating a campus that would support and encourage her faith.

> The community's so big and there's always a lot of Muslim girls and we pray on campus….We have a whole lot of activities going on…it's a blessing and …I'm hoping and I pray that …my faith will just increase. And that's what I prayed for when I applied to colleges. Like once I clicked that submit button on the computer…I asked God to put me in a place that would increase my faith…help me to not go down, to only go up.

Gulzareena, who attended the much smaller SU, noted the importance of international students on campus and their contribution to the larger Muslim community.

> Compared to when I started in 2009 until I graduate [*sic*] [there] were …big changes, because once we got more diversity, we got more Muslim students, I should say Middle Eastern students…Muslim students from India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi, Egypt, Turkey, Yemen…I meet with everyone.

Campus support. The MSA at CCU provided support and opportunities for students to pray, learn, and organize activities that assisted in religious or spiritual development. In the case of SU no designated site was provided for prayer; no office or physical space was set up for students where they could regularly meet. When asked if her faith had grown as a result of being on campus Sana responded, "It probably hasn't. The one thing is most schools have a prayer room or some kind of congregation type of thing where people can come together and like pray, I guess. On this campus we're still fighting for that." Both students interviewed who attended SU were MSA officers (at the time of the interviews the MSA was no longer active) and complained that they had tried to get campus administration to help them establish prayer areas or a permanent meeting space with no satisfaction. In addition, they blamed campus administration for the failure of the MSA program and at least one student felt that they were given less assistance than other minority groups. Gulzareena commented on her discomfort when it came to praying on the SU campus and referred to the arrangements at other California universities.

> Most of them have their own place to pray. We don't have that…I have to personally pray different places you know, I have to go hide…I remember I was praying one day…and [I] see a guy…he was standing and he was just watching and he starts saying something like, "oh, my Jesus"…. So it would be better to have a place, and it doesn't have to be Muslim.

Personal safety and fear of harassment were a concern to both students at SU who routinely used the library or conference rooms for prayer in order to escape the social discomfort of praying outdoors.

Several students from both campuses expressed the wish for an interfaith or campus center where they and others could have the opportunity to learn about other religions as well as their own. Aisha took advantage of course curriculum offered during her time at CCU to learn more about her faith.

> Academically, I was introduced to things about my own religion that I didn't know…and I was just like "wow, I'm really ignorant about my own faith"….I felt that it was important to be you know, sufficiently somewhat knowledgeable about my religion: like history, theological history, political history, economic, social, history of the entire region…the Islamic part of the world...more from an academic interest than personally.

Research Question 2: Campus and Classroom Experiences

What campus influences impact traditional age Muslim American college women's identity perceptions? The themes that corresponded with this question were divided into two sections: classroom experiences with faculty and students that were

directly related to wearing the hijab or being Muslim, and outside classroom campus events based on the same criteria.

Classroom experience. Faculty and students may have assumptions regarding Islam that are not separated from cultural norms. Customs or behaviors practiced abroad are often mistaken for religious doctrine, therefore, conflating their context and meaning. Referring to an experience at the community college she attended prior to transferring to CCU, Sakinah explained:

> I was taking a class and there was a professor…she said something was like a Muslim thing when it was actually more of an ethnic….My friend who was Muslim with me she actually approached the professor later on and corrected her…so the professor was like very open to that….She should be careful because it's implying that it's the religion…[it] makes me feel awkward in something that's related to our religion that shouldn't be associated with it.

Another student, Aisha, felt that some faculty members may have disregarded her comments or reflections in class based on her identification not only as a Muslim, but as a religious person in general.

> It's like, "you're not being an objective student; you're bringing in your religious belief." I see now it's because obviously I wore the hijab….Being an identifiable Muslim also makes people question…[my] intellectual abilities because generally speaking, religiosity is seen as a constraint to rigorous and critical engagement.

Her religious visibility may have contributed to the assumption that she was a good Muslim and that her faith made her opinions or conclusions somehow unreliable. Other

students found their professors to be a source of comfort and even spiritual encouragement. Sana voiced enthusiasm regarding her mentorship by her biology professor and Gulzareena relayed that a professor at the community college where she was currently taking career related classes allowed her to use the classroom for prayer when the rest of the students had moved to the lab.

Some students noted that classmates routinely asked them questions about Islam, often based on media stereotypes. Gulzareena observed that students are usually respectful and friendly, but asked questions that concerned her relationships with men. "They will ask silly questions like 'how come you guys don't have a boyfriend…how come you don't date'….I think it's better they know more about Islam…because a lot of people…judge Muslims based on media." Raiyla spoke of predominantly male students asking her about personal themes such as if she had to marry a Muslim man. In one such encounter with a male African American student she responded to his question that she indeed wanted to marry a Muslim man. He then asked her if Muslim men were abusive. When Raiyla pointed out that by saying this he was stereotyping in the same way that African American men are negatively stereotyped, he responded that his assumption came from his visit to the Middle East. Raiyla repeated her answer to the young man:

> Men abuse women, you know. It's not a Muslim man thing, or a Christian man thing, or an Asian man thing, or a Buddhist man thing, or an African man thing, or a White man thing. It's a male…it's a problem with some males, not all of them…so I was just saying, "you know maybe you saw things where you went"…and also some things are cultural and people mix them with the religion.

Raiyla was amused that men she briefly encountered in class asked her innocent, but intimate questions her based on their curiosity regarding the hijab.

> I mentioned that guy who talked like he knew me for what—5 or 10 minutes and he brought up marriage….He's like, "Do you have to marry this kind of guy?" Or guys will be like, "So if I marry you, I can see your hair?"

Other classroom experiences were positive when the subject of Islam and the hijab was discussed directly. Gulzareena had prepared a PowerPoint presentation on Islam in a media course and was surprised when, "I see everybody was shocked. They keep asking questions and you know, they would just want to know about Islam. They want to know about hijab. They want to know about Middle East!"

Some students noted that they felt singled out or avoided in the classroom. Aisha compared an earlier community college experience to her current status on a much larger university setting.

> I'll be in some classes where I feel that…if I'm sitting in a row then people will sort of not necessarily come and sit right next to myself, but that's becoming less frequent and I think…because our campus is quite diverse in terms that we have a bunch of international students…so people are accustomed to seeing people who are not exactly like them.

Sana experienced feelings of rejection at her smaller SU campus explaining:

> In the classroom, you know when you do group projects....You kind of sit there like, "Oh man, I wonder who's going to accept me in their group?"….You don't

> know who's going to be willing to put you in their group. That's one of the main problems I'm having this semester.

Lack of religious diversity or exposure to different religions may have played a factor in student or faculty avoidance or misperception. Sakinah expressed happiness that her assumptions about other students' reaction went unrealized. "Something that has surprised me as a student so far…was how I thought that people would approach me less, but I was very surprised that they were very friendly and they just treated me like any other classmate."

Campus experience. Participants were asked what stood out for them on campus that was related to the hijab or their Muslim faith. As previously described, many of the students expressed discomfort or fear due to Islamophobia making them feel uncomfortable while performing prayers or associating with other Muslims. Gulzareena reflected,

> I remember one day we were sitting in front of the library; we had a meeting so it's all the sisters…and we were wearing hijab and some not, but there were a few guys and we were sitting at this round table…and I told my friend I think we have to go somewhere else. Everybody's looking, maybe they're scared or what? They expected something to happen?

Yasmine expressed anger and frustration with what she perceived was a lack of student government and campus administration involvement regarding personal safety on campus.

> If the people we elect within our student government are not protecting all the students on campus including our community then they need to be called out on that…they need to represent the whole university….And it's so scary because…our university is supposed to be one of the most diverse…in the entire country…. It affects you not just academically, but socially and it affects you mentally.

Other students expressed a range of experiences due to their visibility on campus as Muslims. Raiyla commented that she was surprised "that people are curious and genuinely curious in a nice way….I've had people complement or know that it's called a hijab. It's always nice to experience that sort of thing."

Some participants from CCU reinforced their previous appreciation of their MSA and the sense of community and support it provided. Raiyla found that the MSA's physical presence on campus was comforting.

> I think just the fact that we have so much support on campus….The MSA has their own office, we have our own space to store things, and we have a Muslim magazine and all those things, those immediately made me feel comfortable and I knew where all those places were before the first day of school so that was awesome too.

Although the students who attended SU expressed disappointment at not having an active MSA, they indicated that their campus climate was friendly and that they enjoyed their time studying there; the fact that the MSA was not a success was both frustrating and puzzling. Gulzareena expressed that support needed to come from faculty and

administration. She noted, "We have more diversity, but we're not accepted…[we have] the same rights as the other students have." Sana complained, "It's like the university doesn't show any effort and then we don't show any effort."

Research Question 3: Meanings, Perceptions, and Perceived Roles

How do traditional age Muslim American college women describe experiences that affect whether they wear or do not wear the hijab on campus? Participants discussed the significance of the headscarf, regardless of their personal choices. Although there was overlap between earlier responses that focused on the reasons for wearing or not wearing the headscarf, students commented on their peers' choices and about the roles they might assume as a Muslim woman on campus. The themes that emerged from analysis of data pertaining to RQ3 were the intensely personal nature of the choice to wear the hijab, the assumption of religious struggle and a strong faith regarding the choice not to wear the hijab, the lack of judgment of peers' decisions in this area, and the need to represent Islam in a positive manner on campus.

Meaning of the hijab. Participants revealed the complex and personal nature of the meaning of the headscarf for Muslim women. An overarching theme was that wearing the hijab was a decision or expression of an internal connection between the student and God. In spite of this emphasis on a spiritual relationship, Aisha explained,

> I don't think there is any inherent meaning in the cloth itself….I respect it I guess and value it in that it sort of urges me to you know, adopt a higher moral code I guess by being visibly Muslim…because I know that people will, however, unfortunate that is, people do generalize….But in terms of the meaning itself for

> me, I just think it's like a very sort of personal thing that I do out of love and obedience to God. So that's, I think, the meaning I attach to it.

Yasmine recounted a conversation with a peer who wore the headscarf and later removed it; in doing so she felt judged by the Muslim community. She told her friend, "No, you need to do what you need to do for yourself too; like this is between you and God."

Raiyla, who converted to Islam when she was 12 years old and began wearing the headscarf 6 years later felt that wearing it was an act of obedience that was part of a larger act of worship.

> I decided to wear it out of love for my Creator and because Allah has commanded for women to observe a certain type of dress….It represents another way I can serve God….I still strive in other areas, but I feel like if there's an act of worship that you can do just take advantage [of] and do it; that's how I feel about hijab.

Personal modesty and preservation of inner and outer beauty were expressed by some who wore the hijab. Similar to Yasmine's comments that she wanted to be judged for what was in her heart and by her actions rather than the headscarf, Gulzareena who wore the hijab indicated its meaning referred to

> [the] beauty of [a] woman. You can see everyone, they dress up the way they want…to show their beauty and I think, just like you think of diamond, right? They just put it right in the box [and] you don't like people [to] touch it; you just want to keep it shiny. I think woman [*sic*] beauty it's not…based off your body…it's just based off how you look to others…who you are in reality.

She went on to comment that modesty was not located in the wearing the hijab alone; it must be observed in other areas of dress as well. "Like I see a lot of people, they just cover their head but they wear tight jeans. So it's not just covering your hair; it's bigger than that."

Sana found that the hijab gave her confidence to express herself, even transforming her self-worth.

> For me it means security and personality. Like without it, I really wouldn't know who I am. Before I wore it I really was like this person that would just sit in the corner and not do anything….After I wore the hijab, in my group of friends…I'm the one that you go to if you want to laugh….I feel like the hijab gave me that sense, that sense of courage.

All women asserted the meaning of the hijab was personal in the sense that their decision and purpose in wearing it or not was part of her spiritual journey. Modesty was symbolized as more than simply covering the head and required other forms of physical representation. Awareness existed that within the Muslim community the assumption that those who wore the headscarf were good, and that those who did not were not. For those who chose to wear the hijab this put them in good standing within their community, but identified them as a religious minority to those outside of it. For Yasmine, although she was not recognized on campus as Muslim by her dress, her choice not to wear the hijab was interpreted by some in her community as inappropriate or contrary to traditional values.

Perception of women who wear the hijab. The assumption that many who wear the hijab have found it challenging was based on personal experience and empathy. Aisha commented,

> I use my own experience to think that it's great if they do wear it because it's not easy and definitely a struggle, so if they do wear it I'm like, "Claps to you for overcoming whatever barriers you had to overcome; continue to overcome on a daily basis to have the commitment to wear it."

Raiyla also acknowledged that wearing the hijab can be difficult.

> I can't imagine people who go through really tough times as to why they take it off. I feel bad when I think about negative experiences that other people have had, and I hope that I don't have to go through them as well.

All participants who chose to wear the hijab were hesitant to claim the any sort of religious superiority for doing so. Gulzareena's assessment stressed the importance of indecision; wearing the headscarf then removing it in order to gain spiritual understanding.

> We should never judge anyone because everybody have [*sic*] a different journey through life…but I think stop [wearing the hijab] and starting back is good because it give [*sic*] you the difference….Honestly, I wear it and it's a part of our nature…you know you want everybody do [*sic*] the same way, but….Hijab is for Allah and it's your own beauty. I share my knowledge with them [other Muslim women], not just tell them [to] wear hijab.

Sakinah explained that she does not make assumptions about how "all together" women who wear the hijab are. She believed that some are struggling spiritually but that there was supposition in the Muslim community that those who veil are religious.

Yasmine countered that the meaning of the hijab was significant, however, she believed from her experience that many did not appreciate or value its meaning, therefore, it reinforced her decision to refrain from wearing it.

> Lots of women wore the hijab and…I felt that a lot of them take it for granted and a lot of them thought that wearing the hijab would pretty much be like that's all they needed to do, and doing that would get them into heaven or make them a good person…no matter what their actions were.

Once again the subject of marriage in connection with the hijab surfaced in the participants' responses. Gulzareena remarked, "A lot of Muslim guys, they say…that some girls [are] wearing hijab just to get married….There's only a few people that just wear it for the religious purposes and they stick with it." Yasmine agreed, sharing her experience: "I meet some who do wear the hijab and they're not as motivated, or they use that as a way to get married."

Perception of women who do not wear the hijab. Among those who chose to wear the hijab there seemed to be a perception that those who did not were constantly struggling with this decision. As a convert to Islam, Raiyla expressed her thoughts on the matter:

> I think because obviously, I didn't always wear the hijab and so I know what it's like when you're in between thinking about it….But I don't think any less of

> Muslims who don't wear hijab because I believe the religion is in your heart. With that said, I believe…it's like there's also this idea of faith without reaction is pointless….You need to take action and do some of the practices…the most important practice is prayer.

Aisha also described the struggle that some women experienced in their decision to wear the hijab.

> I understand that there's a lot of things that are happening and considerations they have to go through and it's not an easy thing to just say, "I'm going to wear the hijab now," so I don't look up or down on either. Each individual has their individual relationship with God that no one else really has the right to say anything about….It doesn't affect my interactions with them on a personal level.

Sakinah noted that wearing the hijab is between that person and God, and that no one has the right to judge another. When she finds out one of her peers who does not wear the hijab is Muslim, she notes that, "I get excited when I find out that they are Muslim too!"

Some students referenced strength of faith as a specific requirement when evaluating those who did not wear the headscarf. Sana remarked,

> I feel like it depends on the person. For my sister, I know that her faith is strong and she's just taking longer to realize…not to realize, but to do the step, so I think "it's you're just like me, you just don't wear the scarf but your faith is as strong as mine." We just show it in different ways.

Gulzareena, while not judging her non-hijabi wearing peers, suggested that with increased faith, the hijab would become more important. "It's their rights [*sic*]. I have

friends whose [*sic*] [are] Muslim; they're not wearing hijab [and] they have beautiful heart…you have to have a strong faith. The rest will come."

Perceived role. Many of the participants in this study believed that their status as Muslim American women encouraged them to assume specific roles on campus. Yasmine explained that her obligation was to set an example within her community.

> I feel like we have so much potential and we all were raised in different ways, but all of us are pretty much first generation citizens…and we're so ambitious….I think we're all trying to set examples amongst each other and help each other….Most of us are the first people in our families to go to college so we have to find some sort of community.

Sana felt that her role was to communicate to the broader university population the importance of Islam. Without the presence of an active MSA she believed this role to be individual.

> I feel like I should be able to get out there and show the university…what Muslim students are about, what our religion is all about, what our culture is all about, you know, and bring it to them and show it to them….I feel like I should be able to take a stand and do things for my university to show an Islamic point of view. That's what I should bring to the university.

Sakinah saw her visibility on campus as, "An opportunity not an obligation to show character; to go out of my way to help people." She believed this to be especially important when public perception of Muslims is so poor.

Raiyla emphasized her role in promoting awareness of the diversity in the Muslim population on campus.

> I think for me, because of my diverse background…I mean I was raised both Muslim and Christian, I'm Black and Hispanic, and I'm first generation American….I feel like I fulfill a role of being a different kind of Muslim because a lot of people tend to think that all Muslims are Arab…and say, South Asian….I think it surprises people and it enlightens people….I think sometimes people are surprised because they think that Muslim women are supposed to be like very boring or very quiet, or they're not supposed to do anything, that they're restricted.

Aisha felt that taking on the role of being the face of Islam on campus was too great a burden, and like Raiyla, acknowledged the range of diversity within the Muslim population.

> I don't think there's one particular role of the Muslim American woman…we're so diverse in our backgrounds and our opinions and…reducing it to one role is very difficult…while interacting with people who are not Muslim so that they have the proper impression of us all, but I think that's sort of unfair to give this massive responsibility of representing…It's not necessarily right to expect that the women have to live up to that standard…to respond to that expectation…. I don't want to respond to that by…overcompensating…so I'm not going to try and to take that up as a burden.

Research Question 4: Prayer Spaces and Interfaith Education

In what ways would traditional age Muslim American college women want student services and/or academic affairs to support a positive campus climate that allows their engagement and identity development? Several themes resurfaced during the interview responses to the final group of questions regarding campus improvement: safe and abundant prayer spaces and the opportunity for all students to have a place for interfaith education. In addition, some participants voiced the need for campus activities that promoted cultural and religious interaction and exposure.

Prayer spaces. All but one of the participants, regardless of their university, commented on the need for safe and secure prayer spaces. Those who attended SU complained of the lack of any designated space, whereas those on the CCU campus appreciated their outdoor space, but found it intrusive when others stared or made comments to them while praying. Raiyla commented, "Praying outdoors is not a problem, but it's kind of awkward when you're all by yourself, like praying in the library or behind some building. When we pray with a group of 20 [people]…it feels better." Gulzareena voiced frustration with campus administration that SU did not provide prayer spaces unlike other universities within the same university system. "The only problem we have on campus, I don't know if it's the only one…most of them [other California state run universities] have their own place to pray…we don't have that and we don't get [space] approved." Sana, also a student at SU commented:

> I usually pray in the library and most guys…I know they pray on the lawn over there on the grass and then most girls pray in the upstairs in the conference rooms

> so we're all kind of scattered, but I feel if there was a room for us we'd be more together.

Aisha, a student at CCU, noted that there should be more places to pray as well as "more *halal* (religiously permitted) dining options" for Muslim students.

Interfaith education and activities. Because of the ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious diversity present on both campuses the need for an interfaith center, and/or campus sponsored activities to promote awareness and understanding was voiced by several participants. Sakinah recommended that a special orientation might be held for students as an opportunity to learn about other faith groups. Raiyla suggested, "There should be…a meditation space or something like that, an open space where there will be books from all religions and…all faiths can utilize that room." Gulzareena stressed the importance of educating all students in order to share information.

> We should have a study that will educate others not only about Islam. Muslims should know about Christianity, Catholic, Hinduism, and others should know about Islam. Maybe they can bring… once and a while, [a] lecture [sic]…a scholar from different…it's not like we're converting each other, we [are] just educating and …sharing knowledge.

Sana commented on the diversity of her campus and expressed her wish that activities that educated students about Islam might be created to promote awareness.

> I know that we have an Indian group on campus…and then we have the African American groups and we have the Hispanic groups but it's like when it comes to the Muslims we have…things like "hijab day"….I kind of wish that our university

> pushed for more…that kind of stuff…and so if our university came to us and was like "we want to help you with this," or if we went to them and they were like, "yeah, we'll help you with that kind of thing," then that would be great…just to show a kind of unity.

Outlier Themes

The initial choice to wear the hijab was influenced by peer groups for some participants rather than pressure from family members. At no time during the interviews did any student mention that they were forced to wear or prevented from wearing the headscarf. While parents may have encouraged or even discouraged this practice, the decision to wear the hijab was left up to the individual herself. Yasmine, however, specifically referred to an incident that ran counter to this trend, stating, "I had a lot of friends that came up to me saying, 'I'm wearing it, but I'm forced to wear it.'" The context in which this comment was made involved her response to the question of why she chose not to wear the hijab. In her answer, she juxtaposed the pervasiveness of the hijab among Muslim women against its apparent lack of meaning for some being compelled to wear it.

The second outlier theme involved more than mild disagreement or frustration with campus policy when it came to Muslims and their treatment on campus; dissatisfaction and even anger over CCU's perceived political and financial support of the Israeli government and its policies which were seen as detrimental to the Palestinian people and their situation in the Gaza Strip. Multiple requests by the MSA for the university to divest itself from these causes were denied, thus making the school a

representative of a political cause many Muslims were opposed. Yasmine perceived this refusal as a personal and community affront to the Muslims at CCU, and voiced her anger and isolation over campus leadership:

> Why do I want to give back to a university where I know where my money is going to?....I know who I am plays a role in how I am perceived by the people at the university…a lot of us question why we go to the university….Your background plays a factor in how you are perceived and that is why so many of us, I think we question. I question why did I go here sometimes? Why did I go here if I feel like an outcast?

This theme serves to bring awareness to the larger Palestinian cause that many Muslims support, or to a pan-Islamic identity that brings them together in defense of their international sisters and brothers.

Summary

The four research questions that formed the basis of this study guided interview questions which elicited reflective and meaningful responses throughout the interview process. I collected rich data from each participant and organized according to significant statements, themes, and units of meaning from which codes emerged (Creswell, 2007). I analyzed the results in alignment with each research question and emergent themes. Interview questions designed around RQ1 produced the largest number of responses concerning the perceived engagement of traditional age Muslim American college students on campus. The experiences of those participants who chose to wear the hijab demonstrated that their identities were tied to this symbol of their faith,

making them recognizable to other Muslims. The one student who did not wear the hijab perceived some people within her own Muslim community as judgmental for her decision; however, she participated in leadership positions within the MSA and in visible activities such as prayer. Responses were closely tied to the participants' reasons for wearing the hijab which all viewed as evolutionary and personal. They perceived their religious growth was dependent upon an active campus MSA program. Engagement socially and individually was layered: the stronger the faith based campus community, the more fulfilling their campus experience.

Research Question 2 focused on campus influences that impact identity perception and concentrated on in and out of classroom experiences. Many students described how other students would ask them questions related to cultural or religious customs which they were happy to answer. With a few exceptions most felt their classroom experiences were positive, however, two who wore the hijab occasionally felt isolated or avoided. Once again, a strong campus Muslim community was perceived as positive religious reinforcement for those who attended CCU, although those at SU who did not have an active MSA found their campus diversity to be helpful in mitigating their "otherness" as Muslim women who wore the hijab.

Research Question 3 explored experiences that might affect the choice to wear the headscarf on campus including its meaning to all participants. As with the interview questions that probed the reasons for wearing or refraining from wearing the hijab, its meaning was sacred and personal for those who chose to wear it. Yasmine described the veil as but one component of her faith, and expressed skepticism for those who wore it

without thinking or as a prerequisite to marriage. Most women viewed their roles as Muslim American women on campus as an opportunity to be an ambassador for their faith and gender. No student claimed to have experienced an event that changed their mind regarding their hijab status.

The interview questions that pertained to Research Question 4 gave the students a chance to suggest improvements or changes to current campus policy with the idea that this would enhance identity development through a better campus climate. Prayer spaces, interfaith education and activities, and administrative support of the MSA were paramount for all students. The importance of the MSA and a strong Muslim community was stressed repeatedly throughout the interviews as essential for a positive campus experience.

This chapter detailed the data collection, organization, and analysis of the experiences of six Muslim American women attending or recently graduated from two Southern California university campuses. The findings were based on personal interviews and email responses regarding their experiences on campus and in the classroom particularly as they related to their identity formation and their choice to wear or abstain from wearing the hijab. In Chapter 5 I will provide an analysis and discussion of how these findings compare to recent peer reviewed literature and support the contextual framework. Based on these findings, recommendation for future campus improvements and the actions required for positive social change are explored.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to identify the experiences of traditional college age Muslim American women who attended two public universities in Southern California and to assess the meaning of these experiences and their impact or influence upon their self-perception. Special attention was paid to identity formation in relationship to the choice to wear or refrain from wearing the Muslim headscarf. An understanding of the complex campus experiences of Muslim American women is necessary to assist policymakers and student affairs personnel in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of campus programs. In this chapter I provide an interpretation of the interview findings, describe its limitations, list recommendations for further research, and discuss practical and theoretical implications for positive social change.

The significant outcomes from interviews conducted with six students from two public Southern California universities highlighted the importance of an active MSA in the areas of identity development, religious or spiritual growth, and campus satisfaction. Five of the six participants chose and continue to wear the hijab and attached this symbol to their identities as Muslim women; however, the hijab and the reasons for wearing it were viewed as evolutionary and intensely personal. The student who chose not to wear the veil also proudly identified as Muslim but related she felt judged by some (particularly men) within her own Muslim campus community. She was not alone in relating that the hijab was seen as a social demonstration of piety or marriageability. Most classroom and campus experiences were positive, although some students

expressed hesitancy on the part of non-Muslim students to engage in more than superficial relationships. The need for the creation and security of campus prayer spaces, faculty and student education regarding Islam, and interfaith opportunities for all students were common themes.

Interpretation of the Findings

The research findings and interpretations are organized according to the significant themes that emerged from the interview data, their relationship to the four dissertation research questions, and the current literature presented in Chapter 2. Student experiences and explanations associated with the choice to wear or refrain from wearing the hijab, religious or spiritual growth, classroom and campus experience, the meaning of the hijab, perceived role, and improvements to campus policy are discussed. The conceptual framework that included individual and collective identity theories are integrated into this interpretation. A description of how these findings confirm, contradict, or extend knowledge regarding traditional age Muslim American women in higher education is presented.

Research Question 1: Identity and Support

The findings and interpretations of the experiences of traditional age Muslim American women's engagement on campus socially and individually involved the choice to wear or abstain from wearing the hijab. Since religion and spirituality have been shown to be important to college students' well-being (Astin et al., 2010; HERI, 2010) the following reflections are relevant beyond the boundaries of the two college campuses discussed here.

Experiences wearing the hijab. The experiences of the students in this study who wore the hijab on campus are similar to many of those previously researched and noted in the literature. Identification as a Muslim signals others of the faith to approach and engage in friendships that are based on commonality that may not occur otherwise. Being new to the Southern California area, Aisha found this to be a positive aspect of wearing the hijab, as it enabled her to meet friends she might not have encountered otherwise. Seggie and Sanford's (2010) case study concerning the perceptions of female Muslim students who veil on campus found that the six students interviewed preferred to socialize within their own religious groups. Shammas (2009) likewise found in her survey that Muslim students from 21 community colleges in Southern California and Southeast Michigan listed three quarters of their friends to be of the same faith. Finally, Rangoonwala et al.'s (2011) research of male and female Muslim college students showed a high level of college adjustment among those who wore traditional Muslim dress.

Sana, who attended the smaller Southern University (SU), perceived that at times her hijab isolated her when others avoided sitting next to her in the library. Aisha found her hijab to be a barrier for some in pursuing relationships that were more than superficial. Whether student interaction or association (or the lack of) was due to a visible symbol of faith or other social circumstances, it did not change the perception for some participants that wearing the hijab may have accounted for special treatment (positive or negative) on campus.

Sana and Sakinah expressed that they were treated differently than other students in the classroom based on their choice to wear the hijab. In both cases, these students believed that their professors noticed, or would notice in the future, their absence from class due to their clothing. Identification as Muslim through the medium of the headscarf produced the perception of being singled out (unintentional or real) for Sana when she missed an Economics class. Boysen et al.'s (2009) study of student and instructor classroom bias perception found that out of a sample of 1,747 undergraduates, 22% perceived themselves as the recipient of overt bias and 34% of subtle bias either from peers or their professor. Not surprisingly, the instructors did not view themselves as the source of this behavior, also indicating that they are often unaware that certain actions are perceived as unfair. Sakinah, however, perceived her recognition by her instructors as humorous ("I can't skip class anymore!"), and felt flattered when she was recognized on campus.

Another common theme evident throughout all interviews was that of harassment. Half of the participants who wore the hijab in this study spoke of incidents on or near campus where they felt singled out for abuse due to their visibility as practicing Muslims. Muedini's (2009) interviews with 20 Muslim college students, and Nadal et al.'s (2012) 10-member Muslim student focus group substantiate this student perception as the vast majority of both groups of students felt less and/or experienced microaggressions on campus since the attacks of September 11th. Although none of the students who experienced harassment claimed that it had ruined their campus experience, they acknowledged that it was frustrating and ongoing.

Experiences not wearing the hijab. The literature has mainly focused on the experiences of those who choose to wear the veil, their reasons for doing so, and their reception on campus by non-Muslim populations (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009; Stubbs & Sallee, 2013). Mir's (2011, 2014) ethnographic study of Muslim American women on two Washington D.C. campuses found the subject of the headscarf was actively avoided in conversation amongst those who wore the hijab and non-hijab wearing students alike. Liberal and conservative fractions within the MSA populations and their tensions over ideology were also common and complicated within and across the two campuses in this study.

The experience of fear and harassment due to Islamophobia has been well documented and is not confined to those who wear the physical representations of Islam such as Yasmine. Zahedi's (2011) interviews with 24 Muslim American women found that 22 had experienced aggression including being chased, tail-gated, spit at, or had their hijabs pulled, similar to Sana's high school experience. Ali's (2013) interviews with 24 Muslim undergraduates from four Southern California universities found that the majority believed that they were treated as a "suspect class" by others on campus (p. 11). In addition, Cole and Ahmadi's (2003) exploration of Muslim women on Midwestern U.S. campuses found that three of the seven women interviewed removed the veil as a result of negative reactions by their peers. While wearing the hijab did not play a specific factor in Yasmine's fear, her identity as a Muslim through her actions on campus (praying in open spaces) and affiliations did.

Reasons for choosing to wear the hijab. Cole and Ahmadi's (2003) interviews with seven Muslim college students found that peer pressure ranked among the top reasons participants began veiling during midadolescence. The assumption that these girls are perceived as good Muslims for wearing the hijab was reinforced through teen interactions; in the current participant pool, reflection on the meaning and reasons for wearing or removing the hijab evolved over time. Botz-Bornstein's (2013) theoretical analysis argued that young women growing up in a Western commercial culture reinvent traditional customs such as wearing the hijab and transform it into "coolness" or a fashion statement that assists them to "negotiate the hijab between niqab (Muslim face covering) and Lady Gaga" (p. 251). Much of the literature that explored Muslim women and their identities on American college campuses was focused on the wearers' current reasons for choosing the headscarf and their subsequent experiences as college students rather than their younger motives for doing so (Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009; Seggie & Sanford, 2010). During the current study, however, the participants volunteered reflections upon their early decisions to wear the veil in relationship to their present motives.

Consistent with the much of the literature, parents of many first generation Muslim American women did not encourage their daughters to wear the hijab; in fact, many discouraged it. Mishra and Shirazi's (2010) interviews with 26 Muslim women in Ohio and Texas found the same family dynamic was reported, noting that several parents believed Islam was misunderstood in the United States and did not want their daughters subjected to negative behavior. Tolaymat and Moradi's (2011) survey of 118 Muslim

women (46% undergraduates) recruited from the Southeastern United States also found that pressure from family members ranked as one of the least common reasons for wearing the hijab.

The findings of this study, as indicated in Chapter 4, suggest participants' reasons for choosing to wear the hijab were intertwined with identity perception. Gurbuz and Gurbuz-Kucuksari's (2009) interviews with 16 first generation Muslim American New England college students also viewed the hijab as an expression of individual and collective distinctiveness that added a positive dimension to their lives similar to the findings in this study. Removing it for some, as in Aisha's case, would disturb this balance and threaten her personal and religious persona. Raiyla's decision to veil in spite of fears regarding negative media portrayals of Blacks and Muslims was supported by Byng (1998, 2010) who found that African American Muslim women experienced increased discrimination; however, in Raiyla's case, this was mitigated by finding support within the campus Muslim community.

Tolaymant and Moradi (2011) found that the majority of their participants believed that Islam mandated wearing the hijab; four of the five women who put on the headscarf in the current study also stated that they believed God wanted them to wear it. Moreover, the five students in this study who wore the hijab discussed a shift or evolution in its meaning and purpose for wearing it. Focus moved from peer pressure to "brushing aside all others," to religious obedience, or viewing the headscarf as an act of worship. Although modesty was important to some respondents, wearing the hijab was only one way to fulfill this religious obligation.

Reasons for choosing not to wear the hijab. Most of the literature concerning the identity of Muslim women in higher education addressed the experiences and responses of those who chose to wear the hijab, rather than the experiences of those who did not. While there was some discussion in the literature regarding the thought processes of those who have worn the hijab then removed it due to negative experiences or reevaluation of its meaning (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003), most researchers were concerned with the identity negotiation of their veiled peers. Similar to her hijab wearing colleagues, Yasmine listed the reasons for her decision as personal and in no way a deterrent from the exercise of her faith.

Mir's (2011) study noted that some women chose not to wear the headscarf in order to avoid the stigma of their religious affiliation, and were, therefore, "invisible" or "safe" from negative behavior from non-Muslim students (p. 553). At no time in the interview did Yasmine claim that her choice to refrain from wearing the hijab was due to a wish to avoid the discovery of her religious identity. In fact, throughout the interview she repeatedly voiced a desire that her fellow Muslim students judge her based on her character, even indicating that she felt respected by others outside of her community more than her own. Yasmine was also clear that the worst behavior she experienced from her Muslim peers originated with male members of the MSA, many of whom were first generation American and struggling with the traditions of their parents' homeland and modern cultural norms. Mir (2009, 2014) noted that some MSAs have "gatekeepers" within their membership who "upheld the banner of 'Muslim gendered behavior' to preserve the sexual and political honor of the community" (p. 172). Yasmine's choice

not to wear the hijab framed her identity for others in two ways: a) as "normal" or American to non-Muslims, and b) for some in her own community, as falling short of her religious obligation (Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009). Further research into phenomenon is necessary to better understand MSA behavior and its influence on women who choose not to veil.

Religion/spirituality and the campus experience. Bowman and Small's (2012) analysis of the HERI (2010) data found that religious engagement among college students was positively related to hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Double religious minorities—students who are both religious minorities on campus and in American society—however, were found to have less positive experiences of well-being than their mainline Christian peers even in secular institutions (Bowman & Small, 2010). With the importance of religion and spirituality being high (80%) among traditional age college students, it is imperative that minority religious groups are given the opportunity to thrive during these formidable years (Astin et al., 2010; HERI, 2010). Raiyla's comments that she actively sought a college campus that would contribute to her spiritual growth confirmed this need.

The interview findings suggested that all participants, whether they wore the hijab or not, viewed their faith as dynamic and conveyed a strong sense of identity and purpose in their lives. The greatest discrepancy was in the well-being of those who perceived their faith to have grown or flourished during their time on campus: those who attended CCU with its large MSA community claimed that they found this a factor in their spiritual growth. Even Yasmine, who felt judged by some of her MSA peers, felt a sense

of community and opportunity for development through involvement in this organization. The two students who attended SU with its small Muslim community and a nonfunctioning MSA did not report such experiences.

Research Question 2: Campus and Classroom Experiences

The findings regarding the influences that impact traditional age Muslim American women in higher education consisted of experiences inside the classroom and on campus. Events that stood out related to wearing the hijab or being Muslim were explored in order to understand how the participants' religious identity affected their interaction ns with faculty, students, and staff.

Classroom experiences. According to at least three participants, faculty and students mistook cultural practices observed in Middle Eastern and South East Asian countries as Islamic religious mandates. Sakinah's community college professor's misguided comments equating culture with Islam (for which the professor was open to correction), Raiyla's experience with a fellow student who assumed that Muslim men were abusive toward women, and Gulzareena's plea that her campus instructors have more training in religious diversity in order to properly understand her are not unique. Seggie and Sanford's (2010) study of six Muslim women who veiled on a secular American campus found that all participants felt that they had been challenged in the classroom and that ignorance of religion and culture were common as a result of media bias and misinformation. Byng's (2010) analysis of 72 articles published in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* between 2004 and 2006 discovered that media representations are frequently taken for granted, and that the media assigned meanings to

the hijab that "extended beyond Islam and the identity of Muslim women to include the social and political interests of Western nations with Muslim minorities" (p. 124). Jackson (2010) observed that controversial minorities are vulnerable to stereotyping with an indirect influence on the student that must be taken into account by educators in a multicultural environment.

Three students in this study mentioned that they believed that they received different treatment than their peers by professors who were influenced by their visibility as Muslims by wearing the hijab. Sana's perception that she was singled out for missing class by receiving an email to this affect by her professor indicates that she believed her visibility played a part in this behavior. It could be argued that any conspicuousness on the part of a student (hair, clothing, loud behavior, etc.) might be noted by the professor regardless of religious affiliation and used to identify an absence. Gulzareena, however, relayed an incident where she perceived her treatment and subsequent grade by a professor as discriminatory in comparison to another Muslim female student who did not wear the hijab. Seggie and Sanford (2010) also found that their participants complained of discriminatory behavior against them through the assignment of poor grades.

Aisha's complaint that some of her professors disregarded or downplayed her classroom responses as being less than objective due to her being Muslim, or as a person of faith, are more troubling. Her remark that "religiosity is seen as a constraint to rigorous and critical engagement" represents a complex and controversial component of the American educational landscape that has roots in past and present political, social, and religious rhetoric (Gross & Simmons, 2009). Conservative religious groups such as

Evangelicals are often perceived by segments of American society, academia in particular, as reluctant to pursue higher education as some aspects may be in conflict with religious (Mayrl & Oeur, 2009; PRC, 2008). This perception may influence students or professors who are unacquainted with the history of Islam or assume the media's portrayal of women and their treatment in conservative Muslim countries applies universally (Ali, 2013; Jackson, 2010). Research has demonstrated that most college and university professors claim a religious faith although their views appear to be "privatized" or kept out of the classroom in most cases so as not to cross the religious boundaries of the student (Bryant et al., 2009; Gross & Simmons, 2009). If, however, religious perspectives are discouraged or disparaged in the classroom a student may feel, as Aisha did, intellectually offended and discontinue active engagement.

Finally, several students expressed their surprise (mostly pleasant) that other students would engage them privately or through classroom discussions asking a wide range of questions concerning Islam, as Gulzareena put it, that were "common, but deep." The participants who reported this phenomenon were happy to inform their well-meaning peers about Islam, clarifying the differences between culture and religion. Zahedi's (2011) research into the challenges faced by Muslim American women post September 11th indicated that faced with a barrage of questions regarding the status of women in Islam; many began to study the Quran and explored different interpretations. Although stereotypes abound regarding Muslim men as abusive and women as demure or oppressed (Ali, 2013; Jackson, 2010), several participants in this study noted that there

was a genuine interest for clarification of these stereotypes from their non-Muslim classmates and peers.

Campus experiences. All participants in this study referenced campus diversity (racial, ethnic, religious, cultural) as a contributory factor in their positive campus experiences. Three students, however, mentioned that although diversity was a part of the campus demographics, they believed that as Muslims they were not treated the same as other minority groups that organized on campus. Sana and Gulzareena, both from SU, felt that their student life administrators had done very little to assist them in maintaining and operating their MSA program, while other racial or ethnic groups received attention and support. Yasmine, who attended CCU, vocalized her frustration with what she perceived as CCU's lack of attention to Islamophobia on campus and that her fears for her safety were not addressed adequately by campus leadership.

The CCU participants who wore the hijab recalled incidents of microaggression from other students; however, none of these women stated that this behavior undermined their academic or social experiences. These findings are similar to Seggie and Sanford's (2010) study of six veiled students who viewed campus diversity as a buffer for their "otherness," while at the same time complained of stares and negative comments from some students on campus as their greatest challenge out of the classroom. Gulzareena stated that when several Muslim students congregated at SU, they received frightened looks from non-Muslims as if "they expected something to happen." Ali's (2013) study of 24 Muslim undergraduates confirmed that some students felt "not simply scrutinized, but rather…expected to do bodily harm to [other] Americans" (p. 11). Rockenbach and

Mayhew's (2014) survey of 1,071 third year college students from two universities, however, found that student experiences with microaggressions were less important to their campus well-being than the perception of fair representation and space for expression.

The students who attended CCU praised their MSA for providing a sense of community and support. Raiyla was appreciative for a place to pray (even if it was out of doors behind a study hall), and other amenities the MSA had to offer including helping her navigate such a large campus. Yasmine was grateful for the security of being able to call members designated to walk her home if she felt uneasy or threatened. Groups who have experienced discrimination, and in particular Muslims since the events of September 11th, turn to one another for support even when a time of crisis has past, making a supportive MSA an important factor in positive campus experiences for some students (Muedini, 2009; Zahedi, 2011).

Research Question 3: Meanings, Perceptions, and Perceived Roles

The students in this study were asked to reflect on any campus experiences that affected their choice to wear or refrain from wearing the hijab, comment on their peers' choices to do the same, and examine their roles as Muslim American women in higher education. The purpose was to explore the meaning of the hijab as a symbol of Muslim identity and the perception of their own role as members of this faith on campus.

Meaning of the hijab. Similar to other research discussed in the literature review, all women in this study, whether they chose to wear the hijab or not, declared that its meaning was complex, intensely personal, and a matter between themselves and God

(Bilge, 2010; Zahedi, 2011). Yasmine, Gulzareena, and Raiyla, mentioned the hijab was a symbol of modesty, although all clarified that this was not the only way it could be conveyed. All three students mentioned that the hijab alone was not enough to establish its wearer's modesty, noting that some peers who wore the headscarf also dressed in inappropriate clothing such as tight jeans that were in contradiction to Islam's mandate (for both men and women) for conservative dress.

Aisha and Raiyla felt that wearing the hijab was an act of love for, and obedience to God, while Gulzareena viewed it as a symbol of inner beauty and of one who possessed a deeper knowledge of Islam. Sana regarded the hijab as a previously missing piece of her outgoing personality, noting that before she wore the headscarf she was the type who would sulk in the back of the classroom. Gurbuz and Gurbuz-Kucuksari's (2009) interviews with 16 Muslim American college students in New England noted a similar finding, with one student claiming the hijab encouraged this aspect of her nature.

Unlike much of the literature and analysis regarding the meaning of the veil, no participant claimed it as a venue for confronting anti-Islamic sentiment through visible identity assertion (Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009; Mir, 2011; Wagner et al., 2012). In addition, no student who wore the hijab claimed that it protected or insulated her from the attentions of the opposite sex (in Raiyla's case it provoked curiosity) or was liberation from pressure to appear physically beautiful, allowing her intellect rather than their appearance the subject of attention (Dunkel et al., 2010; Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009; Read & Bartkowski, 2000). It is possible that with additional lines of questioning such themes may have surfaced; however, there were multiple opportunities for each

participant to elaborate on their motivations and experiences wearing the hijab without responses in this area.

Aisha and Yasmine acknowledged that the hijab symbolized to others, rightly or not, its wearer to be a good Muslim within their community. Aisha admitted that this contributed to her behavior as it forced her to adopt a higher moral code for being "so visibly Muslim." Mir's (2009, 2014) research confirmed the prevalence of this perception among other university students giving the hijab both a personal and social meaning.

Perception of women who wear the hijab. Several of the responses given by the participants in this study regarding those who chose to wear the headscarf involved empathy and solidarity with the struggle of the wearer in a society that was flooded with negative stereotypes via the media. Aisha, who began wearing the veil in the fifth grade shortly after September 11th, used her own difficult experiences as a benchmark to commend those who had made the commitment to wear it in spite of struggles or barriers. Raiyla sympathized with those who removed it due to negative experiences. Mishra and Shirazi's (2010) interviews with 26 Muslim American women (half of whom wore the hijab) detailed the struggles of women who removed the headscarf due to abusive behavior from non-Muslims as well as those who continued to wear the headscarf in spite of negative experiences.

Sakinah refused to make any assumptions regarding the character of those who wore the hijab. She acknowledged the possibility of their spiritual struggle, but noted that there is a supposition (true or not) within the Muslim community that those who do

so are more faithful than those who do not (Gurbuz, Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009; Hu et al., 2009; Mir, 2009, 201). Gulzareena understood each woman to be on a unique spiritual journey and believed that wearing the hijab, taking it off, then making the decision to wear it permanently, was instructive in understanding the two existences.

Among those who veiled there was some skepticism that others did so exclusively to attract a marriage partner. Gulzareena made this observation, but mentioned that a woman's husband may ask her to take it off (or conversely put it on if she did not wear it) once they were married, creating what she believed to be a conundrum. Yasmine, who did not wear the hijab, felt that some women took it for granted or thought wearing it was all that was required to get "into heaven…no matter what their actions were….or they use that as a way to get married." While most Muslim women in this study and in the literature were reluctant to condemn their veiled or unveiled sisters, there were some in other studies who challenged its purpose in relationship to women in the public sphere (Mishra and Shirazi, 2010), or defined them exclusively by their beliefs (Zahedi, 2011) instead linking it to male incapacity to control sexual desires (Read & Bartkowski, 2000). Regardless of hijab choice, all participants in this study claimed that it was a personal decision that required thought and contemplation.

Perception of women who do not wear the hijab. Among the participants in this study who wore the hijab, some made the assumption that the choice to refrain from wearing the hijab (or not take it up at this time) was a result of spiritual struggle. Although no hijab wearing student voiced her disappointment or outright judgment upon those who did not choose to wear it, the amount of faith ascribed to those who did not

was paramount in their approval of this choice. Raiyla, who converted to Islam and did not wear the headscarf until her first day of college, noted that she did not perceive non-hijab wearers as less than those who wore it, however, she believed that faith without action (prayer, modesty, etc.) was hollow. Sana's acceptance was on a case by case basis; using her sister as an example, she voiced assurance that she had a strong faith and would wear it at some time in the future. Gulzareena explained that she had friends that did not wear the headscarf who had "beautiful hearts", although she believed a strong faith would lead them to embrace the hijab. Sakinah firmly expressed that wearing the hijab was between that person and God and that no one had the right to judge another.

The literature concerning the perception of Muslim American women who choose not to wear the hijab by their peers is scant. Read and Bartkowski's (2000) early research into the attitudes of Muslim women in Austin, Texas toward their unveiled peers revealed that most defined what it meant to be a good Muslim broadly enough to include those who did not wear the hijab. Mir (2014) found that most of her participants were unwilling to discuss their feelings on the matter, however, some felt judged by the other—those who wore it as being too conservative, and those who did not for being too liberal. There were no such findings in the current study.

Perceived role. Four of the six participants stated they had the opportunity to set a good example or play a positive role in promoting Muslim American women on campus. Yasmine felt that many of the first generation students on her campus, who were also the first in their families to go to college, aspired to set examples amongst each other and encourage excellence. Sana saw her role as even larger, in that she wanted to

show her university what her religion and culture were all about. As an African American and Hispanic who was raised in a Christian and Muslim home, Raiyla believed she was in a unique position to enlighten her fellow students about Muslims who were usually perceived as Arab or South Asian. In addition, she enjoyed busting the stereotype that Muslim women were boring or restricted by her behavior and sense of humor. Consistent with the literature, (Mir, 2011; Seggie & Sanford, 2010) these students expressed a desire to present themselves in such a way as to change the minds and attitudes of those around them, and in so doing, create an understanding and respect for Islam.

One student, Aisha, pointed out that there was no one single role that could be applied to Muslim American women on campus due to their diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. Mishra and Shirazi (2010) noted there are significant differences among the three major groups of Muslims in the United States—African Americans, Arabs, and South Asians—possibly affecting perception of their college experience (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010). Aisha understood that some of her non-Muslim peers might view her as oppressed, but felt that "I don't want to fall into that, responding to that idea of Islam" by overcompensating.

Research Question 4: Prayer Spaces and Interfaith Education

The final research question led to queries that offered the students an opportunity to suggest improvements in the classroom and on campus that could be implemented through campus policymakers or student affairs personnel. Themes included free and

safe worship spaces, opportunities for interfaith dialogue and education, and support for MSA activities.

Prayer spaces. The most common request for change or improvement among the participants was the creation or addition of prayer spaces on campus. Although CCU had a designated space outside one of the lecture halls, there was a need expressed by at least two students for additional areas or a more private space where worshipers would not be stared at or harassed by others. Stubbs and Sallee (2010) found this to be a common theme in their interviews with university students as well as requests for prayer spaces in the residency halls (Seggie and Sanford, 2010). The two participants who attended SU where no designated prayer space was provided commented that they made due with the library and conference rooms, but suggested that it would bring the Muslim community closer together if they had a place to pray like other universities in the California State University (CSU) system.

Interfaith education and activities. In addition to the requests for a safe space to pray on campus, the suggestion of an interfaith center or ecumenical area designated for worship and religious education was popular with some of the participants. Sakinah suggested that since CCU was a large multifaith campus it would be advantageous if the university provided an orientation for students and an opportunity to learn about other religious groups. Raiyla suggested an ecumenical meditation space with books available on all religions where students could not only worship, but explore other faiths and mingle. Gulzareena recommended bringing in lecturers or scholars from all faiths. Seggie and Sanford (2010) found that some of their college student participants

advocated for multifaith centers that would give Muslims the opportunity to explain their faith in order to help dispel negative perceptions. The need for a mandatory freshman course that explored religious diversity was also expressed by one student in this study. It CCU should be noted that since the completion of these interviews, the academic senate at voted to require undergraduates to take at least one course in a diversity topic.

Finally, the students who attended SU requested that improvements be made to the Student Life Center's management of red tape concerning its beleaguered MSA. Both students complained of difficulty in obtaining support from campus administrative personnel with required paperwork to facilitate gatherings, reserve rooms for events, or receive adequate explanations for the denial of a campus space set aside for the MSA. Whether this was the result of a lack of training, motivation, or structural constraints, Sana and Gulzareena were left with the impression that their university did not value their organization or viewed it as a low priority in relationship to other racial or ethnic groups.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study consisted of two parts: a) established individual, group, and social identity theories and, b) campus climate frameworks designed to increase diversity and create pluralism through historical, organizational, psychological, and behavioral structures (Hurtado et al., 1998). Theories of social categorization (Tajfel, 1969; 1982), self-categorization (Turner, et al., 1994), intergroup contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998, 2008), and religious identity (Peek, 2005), and their application and relevance to this research are discussed here. Campus climate structures are applied later in this chapter and function as guidelines for campus

policymakers and student affairs personnel to improve the experiences of traditional age Muslim American women.

Individual and group theories. The participants in this study developed and negotiated their identities within their communities that, according to Tajfel's (1969; 1982) social categorization theory, are in flux and continuously require revaluation regarding intergroup and group classification. This dynamic may be seen in Yasmine's perception that she received less respect from her own community due to her decision not to wear the hijab caused her to evaluate her position as a member of the campus MSA. Although the disrespect she received by some members did not cause her to leave the group, it did prompt her to hold leadership positions in order to be taken seriously by her peers and viewed as a good Muslim woman.

Self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1994) argues that personal identity stems from individual differences of ingroup members, while social identity refers to a shared social category (e.g., Muslim student). According to bicultural acculturation theory (Tadmor & Tetlock, as cited in Stubbs & Sallee, 2013), choosing identity can be dependent upon peers, living arrangements, campus pressures, etc. with the student possibly selecting her identity based on the dominant influence. While Yasmine and Raiyla discussed the difficulties of being first generation Americans living between tradition and secular culture, all students seemed adjusted and not conflicted about their identity or their behavior as Muslim women. The cohesiveness of the MSA, and its Sisterhood or female community that supported its members and organized campus activities that did not involve alcohol or men, may account for this lack of conflict. In

addition, strong family ties were noted for Gulzareena and Sana (both from SU) who did not have the advantage of a strong Muslim campus community, thus supporting their conservative lifestyle choices and at the same time encouraging them to pursue higher education and future careers.

Intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998, 2008) posits that under certain conditions interaction with outgroups will foster understanding and tolerance of those previously seen as negative or otherwise viewed as potentially unequal or threatening. Participants from both campuses noted that student diversity was a positive influence on their acceptance as a religious minority, however, most voiced the need to have some form of interfaith education available to students in order to increase their understanding of Islam. Within the classroom setting students were exposed to multiple viewpoints, however, instructor education was perceived by Sakinah and Aisha as lacking or even counterproductive to facilitate this interaction by either stereotyping religious perspectives as nonacademic, or confusing cultural behavior with religious doctrine.

Peek's (2005) religious identity theory claims that identity is first ascribed, later chosen, and finally declared by an individual or collective. Developed through social and evolutionary processes, the length of time taken to move through each stage varies depending upon the individual or group and their surrounding circumstances. All participants, irrespective of their choice to wear the hijab, discussed their religious negotiation and the influence of parents, friends, community, and their own self-reflection upon assuming or not assuming the veil as a part of their identity construction.

Five of the six students, with the exception of Raiyla who was raised in a Christian and Muslim household, were assigned a religious status from birth as Muslim. By choosing to wear the hijab, these students, regardless of their motivations (friends were doing it, rebellion, expectation), asserted their religious affiliation. Peek's (2005) final phase of religious identity, declaration, could be seen as achieved in individual cases when students, whether they chose to wear the hijab or not, associated with a MSA (CCU students), or actively campaigned for a MSA (SU students) on campus, or chose visible leadership positions that associated them with Islam.

Limitations

Trustworthiness in phenomenological research requires self-awareness or bracketing of existing expectations or prejudices of the researcher in order to avoid assumptions or expectations of certain participant behavior that might influence research findings. At the same time, examination of the literature and/or personal experience with the subject of investigation is not only necessary, but a realistic component of any legitimate research project. In Chapter 4 it was noted that the trustworthiness of data is tied to credibility (internal validity) including the lens selected to validate the research (other professionals, literature), and in this case, constructivist paradigm assumptions (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Chapter 3 pointed out that reactivity to data and participant experiences as well as researcher bias might threaten the trustworthiness of the findings unless the researcher can understand how she might influence the student at the onset and throughout the research process (Maxwell, 2013).

Credibility was established through prolonged contact (interviews, emails, data summary reviews) and/or face to face communication throughout the research project in order to establish thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation. Transferability was evaluated in light of the literature review and its corroboration with the current study which provided rich data and sample diversity. Dependability was achieved through research and interview question alignment in addition to participant understanding and support of the purpose and use of this study. As with any research project limitations must be put into perspective and analyzed for future research recommendations.

This research project consisted of six participants from two public 4-year universities in Southern California. While effective phenomenological studies have been accomplished with as few as three participants (Giorgi, 2009) a larger sample might have provided a more diverse (or uniform) group of students from which to collect data. In addition, more students from SU may have provided information that enabled a better understanding of the differences between the University of California (UC) and CSU religious organization programs.

Five of the six participants in this study made the choice to wear the hijab as a part of their identities and/or profession of their Muslim faith. Although several non-hijab wearing women were initially among the group from which I sought participation, there was almost no interest demonstrated within this subgroup. While no reason was given by those who did not choose to wear the hijab as to their lack of interest in

participating, a larger sample of those women would have been helpful in understanding the experiences of non-hijab wearing Muslim American women on campus.

Finally, the participants consisted exclusively of MSA members or former members. Although snowball sampling was used throughout this project, all referrals consisted of women who were either past present MSA members, or graduate students who were currently active campus MSA activities. While the MSA has been an effective means of identifying participants for studies regarding Muslim American women and their identity perception in several previous studies (Mir, 2009, 2011, 2014; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Stubbs & Sallee, 2013), they may represent an elite or exclusive group that does not represent all Muslim American women on campus. In addition, CCU is classified as an elite U.S. institution thus further narrowing the participant pool to those with high academic achievements. Identifying, selecting, and recruiting women who are not members of Muslim student organizations remains a challenge for the researcher, particularly if she is not associated with the campus or campuses under investigation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study further research is recommended in three areas concerning the identity formation and campus experience of traditional age Muslim American women: a) the role of campus Muslim student organizations in development and support of these women, b) the unique experiences of first generation Muslim American college students in this category, and c) the community college experience and its effect upon religious identity development (all six students transferred from California community colleges).

The perceived importance of the MSA (or the lack of it) in the lives of all six participants was substantial. The students of CCU reported it provided an opportunity to meet new people, learn more about their faith, and hold leadership positions. There were, however, negative aspects particularly from the perspective of one of its members regarding male members who "tend to speak out when they shouldn't" regarding the choice not to wear the hijab. Although Mir's (2009, 2011, 2014) ethnographic work detailed the benefits and obstacles of the MSAs on two Washington D.C. areas campuses, there has been little research into the impact (positive or negative) of such campus organizations upon student well-being.

Unlike the two SU students who strongly advocated for campus support for their unsuccessful MSA, the students in Stubbs and Sallee's (2013) study voiced only minimal support for campus personnel involvement in MSA activities. Given the level of administrative support indicated by all four CCU students and the conviction by Sana and Gulzareena that their experience at SU would have been better if they had the benefit of a fully functioning MSA, this is surprising. Further research into the perceived importance and effect of MSA participation and support may provide policymakers with data that allows student affairs personnel to assist students in starting, maintaining, or reviving Muslim student organizations more effectively.

During the interview process most of the participants revealed that they were first generation American, born to parents who emigrated from a variety of global locations. Yasmine, Raiyla, and Gulzareena noted the challenges of trying to find a balance between Muslim tradition and American culture. While much of the literature has

concentrated on, or included the experiences of immigrant and/or international Muslim students of both genders in higher education (Ali, 2013; Cole & Ahmadi, 2010; McDermott-Levy, 2011; Ribeiro & Saleem, 2010; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Stubbs & Sallee, 2013), much less has exclusively focused on the unique identity decisions of first generation American Muslim women (Gurbuz & Gurbuz-Kucuksari, 2009). Attitudes toward parents, dating and marriage, academic focus, and career decisions were important to the participants in this study; however, the emphasis on first generation status and its impact on these decisions were not extensively explored.

Given the growing Muslim population in the United States, many of whom are the children of immigrant parents (PRC, 2008), it is important to gain a better understanding of the unique challenges these women face. In addition to personal identity negotiation, being visibly Muslim by wearing the hijab may be perceived by non-Muslims as a declaration of a religious identity at the expense of a national one. Unlike Christian majority students who do not have to assert their nationalism, many Muslim American women find themselves in the position of having to defend or justify their American status or loyalties (Ali, 2013; Mir, 2011; Muedini, 2009; Stubbs & Sallee, 2013). Further research into the dual religious and national identity, and/or struggle of first generation Muslim American women may assist campus policymakers in meeting the needs of this unique student group.

Finally, it was discovered during the interview process that all six participants were transfer students from the California Community Colleges (CCC) system. The CCC is the largest higher education organization in the United States with 2.1 million

students attending 112 colleges throughout the state (CCC Chancellor's Office, 2014b). In addition, the CCC prepares 29% of the UC and 51% of CSU graduates and accounts for 48% of the UC's science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) bachelor's degrees (CCC Chancellor's Office, 2014a). Given this impressive record of not only encouraging students to pursue education beyond a 2-year degree, but preparing them for successful graduation from highly ranked UC schools, it is important to discover how these community college campus climates accommodate religious and spiritual diversity given its importance to student wellbeing at 4-year institutions (Astin et al., 2010; Bowman & Small, 2012; HERI, 2010). While the CCC is academically unique in the national landscape, given the number of students who attend these campuses is greater than the UC and CSU systems themselves, research into campus religious diversity experiences may assist in creating new support for campus classes and programs specifically dedicated to religious pluralism.

Campus Climate Framework Recommendations

The campus climate framework put forward by Hurtado et al. (1998) was originally designed to promote racial and ethnic diversity in higher education. Subsequent modification and expansion of diversity conceptualization has included students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students, women, and veterans groups in order to provide a positive campus climate experience for minority or marginalized individuals (Rockenbach & Mayhew, 2014). With the established importance of religion and spirituality for a majority of students (Astin et al., 2010; HERI, 2010), a further adaption of the established framework is in order to provide

Muslim American women the opportunity to enjoy a campus experience that allows them to grow and flourish during their academic endeavors. The following recommendations are divided into four parts following Hurtado et al.'s (1998) campus climate framework: a) acknowledgment of institutional historical legacy of religious inclusion or exclusion, b) structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of various religious groups, c) psychological climate or the perceptions and attitudes between or among religious or nonreligious groups, and d) behavioral climate that is characterized by intergroup relationships on campus.

Historical legacy. Hurtado et al. (1998) posited that it is important for each institution to acknowledge its history of exclusion or inclusion and convey this heritage to its students. According to Kocet and Stewart's (2011) analysis of the role of student affairs in the promotion of religious and secular pluralism, it is necessary "to recognize the impact that religious privilege has on campus regarding issues such as academic calendar, official campus holidays, programming, and religious/spiritual visibility and strive to challenge the pervasive reach of dominant spiritual, religious, or secular traditions" (p. 5). Data regarding religious groups (unlike racial or ethnic discriminatory) in American public higher education are difficult to obtain or verify due to laws that prohibit the mandatory declaration of religious affiliation. Private institutions, however, have a long history of accommodation and support for Christian privilege, including the establishment of Jewish quotas, most notably at Yale, Harvard, and Columbia universities (Thelin, 2011). Although officially no religion is allowed to dominate or influence campus policy, the establishment of holidays that correspond to Christian and Jewish

holy days, and the predominance of campus sanctioned Christian religious organizations perpetuate the perception that many public universities favor some faiths over others.

Data regarding campus climate satisfaction throughout the UC system (CSU data were not available) were utilized since the participants in the current study were selected from the state of California, and reflect recent historical perceptions with the potential to provide policymakers with guidance regarding campus legacy improvement. Based on surveys administered from November 2012 through May 2013 of 104,208 students, faculty, and staff members (including those that chose to declare religious affiliation) the Campus Climate Study indicated that the majority (79%) were comfortable or very comfortable with the climate throughout the UC system. From this sample 34.2% declared they were Christian, 6.2% Jewish, 2.7% Muslim, and 44.4% no religious affiliation. Findings also indicated that 24% of respondents believed that they had personally experienced exclusionary conduct with 9% indicating that it interfered with their academic abilities (Rankin & Associates, 2014).

In 2008 and 2010 the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey found that among religious groups, Muslim students perceived themselves as the least respected on campus (Jewish students ranked second), with those who were visibly Muslim or Arab, and active in participation or leadership in Muslim groups especially susceptible to "institutional insensitivity and daily harassment" (Turk, Senzaki, Howard, & Rowther, 2012, p. 4). Students surveyed indicated that institutional ignorance of Islam and the inability of administrators, faculty, and staff to relate to them as Muslims due to religious underrepresentation contributed to their feelings of dissatisfaction (Turk et al., 2012).

The findings generated by the surveys prompted the UC President's Advisory Council on Campus Climate, Culture, and Inclusion to visit several campuses to meet with members of the Muslim, Palestinian, and Arab communities in order to discover ways to make student campus experience more welcoming and inclusive. This action is a positive step in acknowledging campus climate dissatisfaction and moves toward addressing and correcting past and present campus policy inadequacies.

Structural diversity. Hurtado et al. (1998) originally defined an institution's structural diversity in terms of its numerical representation of various racial or ethnic groups. In the same way that predominantly White students dominate the majority of college and university campuses in the United States, so too, are the campuses comprised of students from Christian backgrounds who may not recognize their racial and religiously privileged status (Bowman & Small, 2010; Rockenbach & Mayhew, 2014). While public institutions are encouraged to recruit ethnic or racial minorities, the law does not allow this practice for religious groups or individuals.

Caution should be exercised in assuming that campus policy that promotes student diversity is effective in achieving tolerance for all populations. Many students' first exposure to others of diverse backgrounds including religion occurs during their college years, and the encounter alone does not guarantee that there will be meaningful interaction (Gurin et al., 2002). Allport (1954) stipulated that for intergroup contact to be effective in eliminating prejudice that all groups must be perceived as equal in status, all must strive for a common goal, agree to cooperate, and have authority, law, or custom to support the legitimacy of the group. Without effective planning, implementation, and

support, both inside and outside the classroom, simply using unstructured, chance opportunities for interaction without guidance or diversity education may create negative experiences or reinforce current prejudices (Pettigrew, 1998, 2008).

According to the findings of Rockenbach and Mayhew's (2014) religious and spiritual climate survey of 1,071 third-year college students, administrators need to first be proactive in making sure minority religious groups are represented in campus activities and that their organizations are treated equally so as to incorporate "multiple voices with express attention to those that are fewer in number and potentially more difficult to hear" (p. 59). Next, spiritual expression through the creation and maintenance of safe spaces outside of the classroom where students may express their faith, engage in dialogue and education with others was also viewed by the authors based on the data as important for campus climate satisfaction. A symbol of institutional commitment to diversity, a multifaith center would provide a single recognizable local for all students to come together to express, learn, and discuss their experiences with one another (Johnson & Laurence, 2012). All these recommendations echo the sentiments of the six participants in the current study and those of the UC President's Advisory Council (Turk et al., 2012).

Psychological climate. This element of campus climate framework involves intergroup relationships, campus responses to diversity, discernment of bias, discrimination**,** and/or conflict and attitudes toward (religious) groups outside one's own (Hurtado et al., 1998). In addition, studies have shown that individual perception of fairness or equality is not uniform among students, faculty, and administrators across

racial, ethnic, or even religious categories (Bowman & Small, 2010; Mayhew, Bowman, & Rockenbach, 2014; Rankin & Associates, 2014; Turk et al., 2012). Structural recommendations for student satisfaction and growth such as designated reflection spaces or even an interfaith center, although designed with the hope of bringing students together in dialogue and education, may not be perceived as positive or sufficient based on student worldview (Mayhew et al., 2014). The need for a strategic vision that exceeds historical and structural dimensions must originate and then emanate from the "institution's mission statement, vision statement, core values, strategic plan, space allocations, curriculum, cocurricular programs and services" (Mayhew et al., 2014, p. 241).

One way universities may encourage the perception of acceptance and understanding is through partnerships with community constituents that represent multifaith and multicultural leaders. Campus leadership in the highest levels of authority must actively serve as advocates for pluralism; this may be achieved through the establishment of offices for spiritual life composed of faculty, staff, and students (Steward, Kocet, & Lobdell, 2011). Amenities such as *halal* (permitted) foods and available dormitory or other living accommodations that respect male/female segregation (this extends to Jewish and some Christian denominations) may assist students in the belief that their campus understands their unique religious needs.

The UC President's Advisory Council's recommendations included consistency and evenhandedness when working with student organizations. Findings revealed that Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian students perceived administrators as operating with double

standards when compared to other university sanctioned groups, even expressing criticism of their activities (this was confirmed by the administrators themselves) on campus (Turk et al., 2013). These sentiments were expressed by Sana and Gulzareena when they perceived the office of student life as assisting other groups with paperwork or event planning rather than their struggling MSA. Campus leadership should take steps to publish and enforce clear standards of administrative behavior that prohibits favoritism, while also educating student organizational leadership regarding regulations and rights under campus protocol.

Finally, campus incident reporting systems either online or by phone such as the one the UC system put in place in 2010, must be actively publicized to students so that they feel supported by their administration and have mechanisms for grievance when incidents of bias or harassment occur (Turk et al., 2012).

Behavioral climate. The behavioral dimension of the campus climate framework includes student social interaction between and among individuals of different religious, racial, ethnic, sexual, or other minority backgrounds, and the type and quality of intergroup relations on campus (Hurtado et al., 1998). Once mechanisms have been put in place to encourage psychological support for religious pluralism the student may feel more at ease expressing her identity to individuals and groups outside her own Muslim community. It is the classroom, however, where students can effectively come into contact with diversity in an immediate and controlled environment that has the potential to improve or damage their campus climate experience.

Research has shown that positive classroom experiences stem from faculty awareness and promotion of diversity, course content and curriculum, and student engagement through active pedagogy (Milem et al., 2005). Due to the importance of the classroom as a space where students are not only validated but challenged in their thoughts and actions, it is paramount that campus policymakers recognize that tools to promote inclusion and understanding do not stop at the classroom door. While the burden of responsibility lies with the faculty or instructor, support and direction from campus leadership (including faculty leadership) is necessary to develop, guide, and sustain meaningful diversity education.

Two of the participants in this study noted that faculty members were either uninformed as to the difference between cultural and religious tradition, or were dismissive of their comments or opinions, assigning them to a religious perspective that was not considered academic. While most of the classroom experiences of the six women interviewed were positive, the UC President's Advisory Council found that several UC students had experienced harassment in the classroom from faculty members who made "insensitive, inappropriate, and offensive comments about the Muslim faith or stereotyping Arabs as 'terrorists' in the classroom" (Turk et al., 2012, p. 5). As a result, the Council recommended cultural competency training or a revision of current mandatory faculty training requirements that focused on respectful treatment of religious minorities, or expanding sexual harassment training to include other forms of this behavior.

Public institutions are forbidden by law to base their hiring decisions upon religious or nonreligious status. The UC President's Advisory Council found that many students within the UC system lacked Muslim mentors or role models in faculty positions. As a result, the Council recommended increased representation of qualified faculty with backgrounds in Islamic studies or other academic religious disciplines to add further depth to the faculty pool. Expansion of existing Religious Studies or Comparative Religion departments might also increase the number of faculty with expertise in multiculturalism.

Faculty views regarding campus diversity have largely concentrated on matters of race and the importance of faculty of color to the success and well-being of minority students (Hurtado et al., 1998; Milem et al., 2005). Park and Denson's (2009) analysis of 38,580 faculty surveys from 414 colleges discovered that the strongest predictor of advocacy for student diversity was civic values; those who claimed to be spiritual, employed at 4-year public universities and female were also more likely to champion this cause. University leadership in the promotion of civic values among faculty in addition to academic vision may assist in increasing instructor support for diversity in the student populations and in curriculum.

As previously noted, CCU implemented a diversity course requirement for all undergraduates beginning in 2015 recognizing that diversity education plays a role in tolerance in a multicultural and globalized society. The students will choose from a list of options that include racial, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, and religious pluralism. Historically, undergraduate core courses focused on religious

diversity are rare (Stoltzfus & Reffel, 2009), however, with the growth of Islam and the fact that the majority of Americans base their knowledge of this faith upon media outlets that routinely stereotype or misrepresent its doctrine demonstrates the need for educators to counter these perceptions with solid academic curriculum (PRC, 2008, 2010)

According to Milem et al. (2005), the lack of diverse perspectives in the curriculum juxtaposed with a diverse student population may cause minority students to experience exclusion from social and cultural narratives. In order for students to feel comfortable participating in classroom activities, discussions, dialogue, or other interactions, it is crucial that the instructor convey a sense of neutrality, safety, respect, and appreciation for all students regardless of background or opinion. Since religion is frequently tied to personal identity and worldview, some students may feel threatened even by objective academic exploration (Bryant et al., 2009; Stoltzfus & Reffel, 2009). Faculty training, well-designed curriculum, and active pedagogy that promote respectful interaction with students from other faith or nonfaith backgrounds may minimize these risks and accomplish intergroup cooperation and understanding that benefits all students.

Implications

This study examined the classroom and campus experiences of traditional age Muslim American women on two public university campuses in Southern California and increased understanding of how these experiences were affected by their religious identity. Insight into the choice to wear or refrain from wearing the hijab, its association with identity, and its impact on campus satisfaction indicated that religious symbols in conjunction with personal faith (or personal faith alone) contributed to their self-

perception. Although the participants were affected by some negative campus experiences, these did not diminish their desire to assert themselves as Muslim women. Support from MSA programs where available, were integral in assisting in this process.

Positive Social Change

The practical implications for positive social change that have emerged from this study demonstrate a university or university wide system (as in the UC or CSU campuses) investigation and response to findings that religious minorities such as Muslims, and particularly those who are visibly Muslim, are at risk for physical, emotional, and academic harm. Many of the women in this study detailed their fears walking to campus, incidences of verbal harassment, and academic marginalization. As the UC President's Advisory Council discovered, such risk is an ongoing system-wide concern and must be investigated regularly and steps such as those recommended by the Council and discussed previously implemented for the good of all students. Social change must begin at the highest levels of leadership on campus, at the president or chancellor's office, not only to eliminate the perception of institutional insensitivity, but to provide all students with the right to live and learn safely and respectfully within the campus environment.

The second practical implication for positive social change involves university leaders and policymakers' interaction with student organizational governance and partners within the local Muslim community. Listening to, and when necessary acting upon, the concerns of both students and outside groups that support the communities where students worship and live validate their importance as members of the university

consortium. In addition, student life or affairs offices must treat Muslim organizations on campus equally and fairly in relationship to all other religious and nonreligious groups. Strategies for assisting MSA leadership with organization of events, and/or guidance with processes and paperwork for group establishment at smaller campuses such as SU would serve in improving university and student relations.

The third practical implication for positive social change takes into account the multiple recommendations in the literature and those of the students in this research group to add safe and private prayer spaces. Participating in worship without harassment or intrusive stares and comments from the curious bystanders is important for student wellbeing and security. Whether this is performed in specially designated areas on campus or in interfaith centers, providing a place for reflection and prayer has been repeatedly listed as contributing to positive student spiritual campus experiences.

Similarly, the creation of a multifaith center on campus for worship and education may enhance and expand all student education and understanding. While the assessment of funding and space requirements are beyond the scope of this research, studies have shown that successful intergroup contact should move beyond random campus encounters or classroom exposure (Allport, 1954; Bryant et al., 2009; Gurin et al., 2002; Mayhew, 2011; Pettigrew, 1998, 2008). The women in this study expressed interest in socializing with those of other faiths in order to stimulate dialogue and create tolerance among students. In lieu of a designated physical structure, regular well-communicated interfaith student opportunities such as a multifaith lecture series, open forums, and

community sponsored presentations can provide individual and group interaction in a controlled environment.

A final practical implication for social change lies in leadership, faculty, and staff education regarding religious and spiritual diversity. The students in this study, the literature, and the UC President's Advisory Council cited ignorance of Islam and stereotyping based on media portrayal as a contributory factor in student and faculty perception, and its harmful result to the student (Ali, 2013; Kalkan et al., 2009; Penning, 2009; PRC, 2011; Turk et al., 2012). Since these individuals are in positions of authority, especially in the classroom, behavior that marginalizes, demeans, or threatens a student (by faculty or other students) may not only affect her academic success, but her assertion of identity as well (Mir, 2011, 2014; Muedini, 2009; Rangoonwala et al., 2011). University leadership should, therefore, seek to identify and eliminate this behavior through appropriate faculty and staff training, and treating religious harassment on the same footing with sexual and racial/ethnic abuse.

Theoretical and Methodological Implications

The theoretical and methodological implications for scholars and practitioners involve recognizing the strength of religious identity in traditional age Muslim American women, many of whom are first generation citizens and college students. Regardless of the choice to wear a visible symbol of faith, all six participants in this study were proud of their religious identities even though they faced obstacles such as harassment or stereotyping from colleagues or instructors. Social categorization (Tajfel, 1969, 1982) and self-categorization (Turner et al., 1994) theories may explain fluctuation or

reevaluation of identity based on intergroup classification or ingroup differences in relationship to a shared social category, however, these assume outside influences have the greatest impact on determining identity itself. These theories were secondary in this study to the deeply personal reflection and spiritual fulfillment that being a Muslim provided for these women. Positive or negative outside forces were important in supporting or challenging these students, however, future research that does not address the reflective journey toward Muslim identity development ignores the internal spiritual, intellectual, and psychological achievements of this group of women who live as minorities in both American and campus society.

The HERI (2010) longitudinal study provided quantitative data regarding the importance of religion and spirituality to college students of all faiths. Future methodology should continue to provide information regarding this trend in order for campus policymakers to develop programs that promote growth through moderated intergroup contact and curriculum. Qualitative research into the spiritual commitment to Islam by American undergraduate women has been neglected although experiences that effect identity development have been explored. The findings of this research affirm that while campus experiences certainly impact identity negotiation, these women have spent years prior to attending college sorting out their faith and its importance to their lives. In this way, Peek's (2005) religious identity theory that claims that religion is first ascribed, later chosen, and then declared appears to apply more directly than self or social categorization decisions. Further research into the spiritual processes of young Muslim

American women may provide valuable insight into how this may be allowed to flourish within a campus environment.

Conclusion

This study explored the classroom and campus experiences of traditional college age Muslim American women and their relationships with identity development and negotiation. The literature review demonstrated the multiple and complex identities of this growing religious group and the challenges that they face as a result of misinformation or stereotyping in popular media (PRC, 2010). The literature also reflected the importance of religion and spirituality for the majority of college students, and the need for interfaith dialogue and multifaith contact in and out of the classroom (Astin et al., 2010). The findings of this study confirmed that the choice to wear the hijab on campus created unique experiences and opportunities for these women; however, the choice to refrain did not diminish religious self-perception for the participant who did not wear the veil. Ignorance of Islam was stressed by the students as a cause for stereotyping or confusion with culture by other students, faculty, and staff.

The results of this study indicate that campus leadership at its highest level must recognize that Muslim students in the United States, more than any other religious group, are less satisfied with their treatment on campus (Turk et al., 2012). Steps to remedy this perception include outreach to Muslim student groups and community leaders, training in religious sensitivity for faculty, staff, and administrators, equal treatment by student affairs personnel, and curriculum that informs and encourages religious tolerance. Prayer spaces and opportunities for Muslim students and those of other faiths or nonfaith to

associate, engage in meaningful dialogue, and learn about Islam can benefit all students and promote campus cohesion.

The Muslim American women in this study exhibited pride in their religious heritage and serious contemplation regarding their decision to convert to Islam or maintain the faith of their birth. All students demonstrated qualities of leadership through positions in the MSA, academic accomplishments, or future career ambitions. Tolerance toward those who made choices to wear or refrain from wearing the hijab was universal among the six students. The implications for future practice must look beyond a single female Muslim identity and recognize that many students are first generation citizens from numerous cultural backgrounds who will write their own futures as they grow and learn. To achieve positive social change universities must strive to provide a campus climate that is safe, diverse, and spiritually enriching for all students who will in turn have the capacity to impact other individuals, society, and the global community.

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Appendix A: Introductory Email/Letter

Greetings:

You are invited to take part in a research study of traditional college age (18-24) Muslim American women in higher education who both choose to or decline to wear the hijab on campus. This message has been forwarded to you by the campus Muslim Student Association (MSA) to protect your privacy. The purpose of this study is to better understand how your campus experiences may or may not impact your identity as a Muslim American woman so that campus policymakers and student affairs personnel can improve your college experience. This study is being conducted by a researcher named Carol Koller, a doctoral candidate at Walden University. Any student who meets all of the following criteria is invited to participate in this study:

- Current full-time female student pursuing a bachelor's degree at *[confidential university]* **or** a graduate student/recent alumni
- Must have completed one full-time academic year of study on campus
- Be between the ages of 18-24 (if an undergraduate)
- Be an American citizen
- Identify yourself as a Muslim

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Meet with the researcher for three sessions of 60 to 90 minutes each that include two individual interviews and one focus group or interview (participant may choose) with other participants during which your responses will be audio recorded
- Meet with the researcher to confirm that the data collected in the interview process accurately conveys your experiences and the meanings you assign to them.

This study is voluntary. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during or after the study. You may stop at any time. There will be no payment for participation in this study.

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. The researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. You will be provided with an approved consent form for your signature before any information will be requested.

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher.

Best regards,

Carol Koller

Appendix B: Consent to Participate in Research Form

Traditional College Age Muslim American Women Identity Development in Higher Education

Carol Koller, Ph.D. in Education candidate at Walden University is conducting a research study.
You were selected as a possible participant in this study because:

- You are a current full-time female student pursuing a bachelor's degree at this university **or** you are a graduate student/recent alumni
- You are between the ages of 18-24 (if a current undergraduate)
- You have completed one full-time academic year of study on campus
- You are an American citizen
- You profess to being a Muslim

Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?
The purpose of this study is to better understand how your campus experiences may or may not impact your identity as a Muslim American woman and how campus policymakers and student affairs personnel can improve your college experience.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?
If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Meet with the researcher for three sessions of 60 to 90 minutes each that include two individual interviews and one focus group or interview (participant may choose) with other participants during which your responses will be audio recorded.
- Meet with the researcher to confirm that the data collected in the interview process accurately conveys your experiences and the meanings you assign to them.
- No private, identifiable information will be required. You will select a pseudonym that will identify your responses throughout the research process
- As a participant, you will interact with the researcher and other members of the participant group. If you select to forego the focus group interview for a personal one-on-one interview with the researcher.
- All interviews will be conducted on the campus (of confidential university unless otherwise agreed upon.

How long will I be in the research study?
Participation will take a total of about 1-3 weeks during 2014.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

- Discussion of personal identity formation, religious or spiritual beliefs, and/or negative experience recollection and reflection.
- Students may voluntarily or inadvertently reveal personal information regarding private family, sexual, or other information pertaining to personal life not specified in interview questions.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?
You will not directly benefit from your participation in this research.

The results of the research may potentially impact future Muslim women and their well-being in higher education by providing information that may improve their campus experience.

Will I be paid for participating?
You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential.

- Confidentiality will be maintained by means of personal and institutional pseudonyms and all data will be kept locked and secure in the researcher's personal office and computer password protected.
- Only dissertation committee members will have access to this information.
- Coding (categorizing) of material will be thematic and not reveal personal data.

All students participating in a focus group will be asked to keep what is said during the group discussion between the participants only; however, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, please contact Carol Koller or the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at *Confidential University*. A Walden University IRB representative may be reached at: 612-312-1210 if you have questions regarding your rights as a participant. University's approval number for this study is **07-17-14-0356858** and it expires on **July 16, 2015.**

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

Name of Participant	
Signature of Participant	Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

Name of Person Obtaining Consent	Contact Number
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Set One Questions—Context

Interview Question #1: Please state your age and your year of study (sophomore, junior, senior) for demographic information.

Interview Question #2: Describe your personal experience as a Muslim woman who has chosen to wear the hijab on campus.

> **Probing Question:** What effect, if any, has this had on your academic, social, or personal life?

Interview Question #2a: Describe your personal experience as a Muslim woman who has not chosen to wear the hijab on campus?

> **Probing Question:** What effect, if any, has this had on your academic, social, or personal life?

Interview Question #3: What are your reasons for choosing to wear the hijab? When did you make this decision?

Interview Question #3a: What are your reasons for not choosing to wear the hijab? When did you make this decision?

Interview Question #4: How, if any, has your experience at XYZ University had any effect on your religious/spiritual life?

Set Two Questions—Description and Recollection

(Questions Related to Inside Classroom Experience)

Question #1: What stands out for you about your experience with faculty and other students inside the classroom related to your religion or wearing the hijab?

Question #2: What has surprised you about your experience inside the classroom related to your religion or wearing the hijab?

Question #3: What has puzzled you about your experience inside the classroom related to your religion or wearing the hijab?

Question #4: What have you done, considered doing, will not do, or wish you could do about any of these experiences?

(Questions Related to Outside Classroom Experiences)

Question #5: What stands out for you about your experience with faculty, staff, and other students on campus (outside the classroom) that you believe are related to your religion or wearing the hijab?

Question #6: What has surprised you about your experience on campus (outside the classroom) that is related to your religion or wearing the hijab?

Question #7: What has puzzled you about your experience on campus (outside the classroom) that is related to your religion or wearing the hijab?

Question #8: What have you done, considered doing, will not do, or wish you could do about any of these experiences?

Set Three Questions—Reflection on Meaning of Experience

Question #1: What is the meaning of the hijab for you, whether you choose to wear it or not?

Question #2: How do you feel about Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab?

Question #3: How do you feel about Muslim women who choose not to wear the hijab?

Question #4: How do you perceive your role as a Muslim American woman in light of your experiences on campus and in the classroom?

Question #5: What suggestions or improvements would you make on campus if you had the opportunity?

Question #6: What advice would you give to female freshman Muslim American students?

Question #7: Is there anything you would like to share, add, or discuss that we have not covered in this interview?

Appendix D: Research and Interview Question Alignment

Research Questions	Interview Questions
RQ1: How do traditional age Muslim American women seeking bachelor's degrees at a Southern California public university perceive their engagement with the campus socially and individually?	**Set One Questions:** **Question 2:** Describe your personal experience as a Muslim woman who *has chosen* to wear the hijab on campus? **Probing Question 2/2a:** What effect, if any, has this had on your academic, social, or personal life? **Question 2a:** Describe your personal experience as a Muslim woman who has *not chosen* to wear the hijab on campus? **Q3:** What are your reasons for choosing *to wear* the hijab? When did you make this decision? **Q3a:** What are your reasons for choosing *not to wear* the hijab? When did you make this decision? **Q4:** How, if any, has your experience with this or any other university campus had any effect on your religious/spiritual life?
RQ2: What campus influences impact traditional age Muslim American college women identity perceptions?	**Set Two Questions:** **Q1:** What stands out for you about your experience with faculty and other students *inside the classroom* related to your religion or wearing the hijab? **Q2:** What has surprised you about your experience *inside the classroom* related to your religion or wearing the hijab? **Q3:** What has puzzled you about your experience *inside the classroom* related to your religion or wearing the hijab? **Q4:** What have you done, considered doing, will not do, or wish you could do about any of these experiences? **Q5:** What stands out for you about your experience with faculty, staff, and other students on campus *outside the classroom* that you believe are related to your religion or wearing the hijab? **Q6:** What has surprised you about your experience on campus *outside the classroom* that is related to your religion or wearing the hijab? **Q7:** What has puzzled you about your experience on campus *outside the classroom* that is related to your religion or wearing the hijab? **Q8:** What have you done, considered doing, will not do, or wish you could do about any of these experiences?
RQ3: How do traditional age Muslim American college women describe experiences that affect whether they wear or do not wear the hijab on campus?	**Set Three Questions:** **Q1:** What is the meaning of the hijab for you whether you choose to wear it or not? **Q2:** How do you feel about Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab? **Q3:** How do you feel about Muslim women who choose not to wear the hijab?

	Q4: How do you perceive your role as a Muslim American woman in light of your experiences on campus and in the classroom?
RQ4: In what ways would traditional age Muslim American college women want student services and/or academic affairs to support a positive campus climate that allows their engagement and identity development?	**Set Three Questions:** **Q5:** What suggestions or improvements would you make on campus if you had the opportunity? **Q6:** What advice would you give to female freshman Muslim American students? **Q7:** Is there anything you would like to share, add, or discuss that we have not covered?

Appendix E: Themes, Significant Statements, Codes, and Subcodes

Focus of Research Question	Emergent Themes and Meaning	Participant Examples/Significant Statements	Codes	Subcodes
EXPERIENCE: Wearing the Hijab Experiences of those who choose **to wear** the hijab on campus.	Professors and students (both Muslim and non-Muslim) recognize them because they wear the hijab and welcome them in class and on campus.	Two students noted they cannot miss class since they wear the hijab and are easily recognizable. One student found this humorous: "I can't skip class anymore."—*Sakinah*	ID: Identification	IDP: Identification (positive)
		"People (Muslims) who aren't wearing the hijab they'll give me the greeting … *salaam alaikum*…so for me it's a positive."—*Raiyla.*	SOC: Social	SOCP: Social (positive)
		When asked if she felt respected by others on campus for wearing the hijab she replied, "A lot. Yes. Like my professor [*sic*], they more like, trust me you know, and they show a lot of respect."- *Gulzareena*	ID: Identification RE: Respect	IDP: Identification (positive)
	The hijab as a symbol of Islam or "otherness," may make it difficult to make social connections with non-Muslim students on a superficial or meaningful level.	This same student also felt that her hijab made others unwilling to associate or come near her. "Like say you're in the library and then…we have a huge table…and I'm sitting here like there's ten other chairs open but someone will go and sit at the far one. So it's like that and even in class too…the last resort would be to sit next to me."—*Sana*	ID: Identification SOC: Social	IDN: Identification (negative) SOCN: Social (negative)
		"Within a college environment where there's such a large group of students you obviously try to find similarities off of which to make your social connections and groupings…and so I've found that…because I wore the hijab, it would sometimes make it difficult for people who were maybe not Muslim to interact with me at a more intimate level than to go 'hi, you know we're in the same class.'"—*Aisha*		
		"On campus it's kind of weird because I think I've only seen two or three other Muslim *hijabis* …and we don't know each other so we wouldn't go up to each other and kind of talk."—*Sana*		
		"People sometimes can base their interactions with me on their notions of what the hijab means to them which is not necessarily what it might mean to me...they have this idea of women who wear the hijab…and you might have to go say 'this is what your perception is but that's not necessarily accurate.'"—*Aisha*	PER: Perception	
		One student perceived that she was singled out on one occasion by a professor when she missed class and he	ID: Identification	

	Perception of being singled out because of the hijab as an outward display of Islam, and therefore, treated differently than others, or even maliciously by others on or near campus.	emailed her about her absence. She indicated that the professor didn't take attendance and she doubted he would have recognized other students who did not stand out by wearing religious clothing.—*Sana* "There's a lot of staring…whether I'm walking to campus or walking around there's always staring….I've been wearing it for a very long time and it's one thing I haven't still gotten used to….I remember one time I was walking to campus and this one guy was walking in front of me and he…just turned around and gave me just this mean stare."—*Sakinah.* "I was walking, I remember I had just parked my car …and I was coming toward school…then I suddenly see this one guy and he…just turn [*sic*] around and he just look at me and say 'oh, terrorist is here.'"--*Gulzareena*	HR: Harassment HR: Harassment VA: Verbal Abuse ST: Stereotyping	
EXPERIENCE: Not Wearing the Hijab Experiences of those who choose **not to wear** the hijab on campus.	Perceived judgment within the Muslim community for not wearing the hijab, and therefore, not being considered a good Muslim woman or their faith taken seriously. Conflict between immigrant cultural identity that views the hijab, and modern American emerging adults. Judgment by male Muslims of women who do not wear the hijab as being morally poor and/or not religious enough. Concerns that Muslim males (and their families) will not	**Note: All examples and statements are from Yasmine, a student at Southern California University.** "I think on campus I will say I have been respected by others I think a lot more outside of my community more than sometimes my own community unfortunately….We judge each other and I think that is really unfortunate because Islam is such a…it's the fastest growing religion in the world and we have so many people from so many different ethnicities and different cultures…people from certain areas, especially from the middle East and South Asian cultures who judge very quickly." "Being first generation Muslim citizens in this country is definitely difficult because we're trying to find the balance of tradition and being modern. For a lot of men…they're kind of raised in a sense where if you don't wear the hijab like my mom, you're not really religious." "We have a lot of men in our MSA and the men tend to speak out when they shouldn't….fortunately raised by a mother who is Latina, I was always taught at a very young age to speak out….I've had guys come up to me saying, 'you're supposed to wear the hijab and if you don't wear the hijab then you should burn.'" She remarks that not wearing the hijab makes her at first glance, "less than marriage material" since so many	RE: Respect JMT: Muslim Community Judgment FG: First Generation MT: Mother JMT: Muslim Community Judgment MSA: Muslim Student Association MT: Mother VA: Verbal Abuse HR: Harassment MA: Marriage	JMTM: Muslim Community Judgment (male)

	consider them good enough to marry because they do not wear the hijab. The hijab means that she is pure while not wearing the hijab suggests otherwise.	assume wearing the hijab makes one a good person and those who don't are "messing around… or …doing bad things." It is not "until people meet me and realize who I am and they're like, 'you're such a good person.' That's when they say 'ok, you are a good Muslim woman.'" "One of my friends actually liked a guy…and she said, 'I am not worthy because all of the women in his family wore the hijab so he probably wouldn't even look at me… because I don't wear it.' And that's just some of the stuff we have to go through sometimes as women who don't wear the hijab."		MAH: Hijab Required for Marriage
	Muslim men had prefabricated ideas of the Muslim women they wanted to marry, however, once they allowed themselves to get to know Muslim women who did not wear the hijab, their opinions changed.	Speaking of a male Muslim friend, Yasmine related that, "He said originally he wants to marry somebody who was wearing the hijab…but after meeting me and after meeting a few of our other friends he says that it really doesn't play a factor anymore…because…so many women like me and other girls who don't wear the hijab, 'are good girls, you're independent, and motivating girls.'"	JMT: Muslim Community Judgment ID: Identification MA: Marriage	JMTM: Muslim Community Judgment (male) ID: Identification (positive)
	Not wearing the hijab motivates her to compensate for the perception that she is not a good Muslim; therefore, she takes on leadership roles, and observes other tenants of her faith.	"For me, now I know the hijab will not play a factor in who I marry because for me, I'm at that point in my life, if someone doesn't love me for me…if the hijab plays a huge factor, then I don't want to be with that person because I do everything else right, and I'm still learning, and I'm still trying to perfect it." "I think it's unfortunate for a lot of us women who don't wear it because we're kind of looked down upon…. We're having to kind of make up for it by being in leadership positions and showing others that we can be taken seriously."	CP: Compensation	
	Although not visibly Muslim, participation or association with other Muslims makes her feel at risk for menacing behavior from other students on campus.	Even though she is not as visible as a Muslim by not wearing the hijab, she still prays in a designated space on campus with other students. She notes that, "sometimes I'm afraid of who's watching me when I'm praying because I pray outside…who's watching me? Is anybody looking at me in a certain way? I don't feel safe on the campus that I chose to attend." "There are times when I do feel scared being a Muslim woman. I feel that in that sense not wearing the hijab I feel that I am a little bit luckier because I am not pinpointed right away when I am in a group of people as being	FR: Fear WP: Watching Prayer FR: Fear	

		Muslim. It's only when people come up to me that they realize that I am Muslim."		
	Takes comfort in the large MSA community on campus, even though she may have received negative treatment by some.	"I feel fortunately, that our community is very strong…we're (MSA) one of the largest in the country so we have each other's back."	COM: Community MSA: Muslim Student Association	
REASONS: Choosing **to wear** the hijab.	Several students noted that they wore the hijab initially because their friends were doing it. Upon growing older, further reflection, or personal experience the reasons for wearing the hijab became more personal and spiritual.	"My sophomore year (high school) I met a group of girls that wore hijab at our local mosque, and I was like man, if these girls can do it….I didn't have the right meaning, the right goal to wear it…so I just wore it just cause they wore it in the beginning….The first day I didn't know how to wear the scarf so I had hair showing …I wanted to take it off…I sat down with YouTube and I learned it…and then I think two or three weeks later…this guy…was walking past me and he just pulled it off….At that moment I was just like man, should I really do this? I wore it for the wrong reason in the beginning, but if I change it my meaning to wear it; if I change it because Allah wants us to wear it and that I should do it for myself…it would make me stronger …and even if he did pull it over that doesn't change me in general. My life isn't that great anyway, so if I add a little faith into it, a little prayer and the hijab into it, maybe it'll change and it did." –*Sana*	FR: Friends GR: God (Allah) Requires	
		"When I was in the fifth grade it seemed like the inevitable, logical thing to do because most of my friends did it…my mother wore it…you're going to eventually wear the hijab, so I thought, why not?....As I grew older…I wear it because…I believe that it's something that God would like me to do and so it is out of respect and love and sort of, I guess you could say obedience….the second aspect…once you start doing something and you've been doing it for so long, it sort of becomes a part of who you are."--*Aisha*	FR: Friends LV: Love RE: Respect OB: Obedience	
		One student noted that at first it was because of her friends, and then she began to read what the Quran said about it, "So then I decided…I just want to wear it. So it was my own choice and it was a part of the religion, we have to….there's not yes or no…but Islam doesn't say you have to force someone." —*Gulzareena*	FR: Friends GR: God (Allah) Requires	
	No students commented that their Muslim parents had "forced" or pressured them into wearing the	"So I went home and I talked to my parents and they were like it's your choice, 'cause my parents didn't force me at all…in the beginning they were like 'no, don't wear it.' My parents are	PT: Parents	

	hijab. More than one preferred that they not wear it.	like, 'if you want to wear it, but we're not going to force you.' That kind of just gave me another reason…when they told me that."—*Sana* You have to guide someone; you choose yes or no….My dad, he loved it but he never force us."—*Gulzareena* "There have been many reasons and they've changed. The first time I put it on…I can't remember exactly, but it shortly after 9/11….My parents did *not* want me to wear it….They said 'well you should not wear a scarf because the scarf attracts attention and the person is supposed to wear hijab to avoid attention….so I'm wearing it to rebel against the family….The most recent reason I've been wearing it is actually like pulling away, and brushing aside all others…wearing it for God."—*Sakinah* One student who converted to Islam when she was 12 years old (her mother converted years before but waited a substantial time before wearing the hijab) noted that her Catholic father's family was uncomfortable with her choice, but they have adjusted. "Once I became Muslim and started wearing the hijab…my mom had already been wearing it, it wasn't really too many issues or questions…because they had already seen my mom doing it."—*Raiyla*	FT: Father RB: Rebellion PT: Parents MT: Mother	
	After wearing the hijab for a period of time, it has now become a part of the student's identity.	It's become a part of my identity…removing it would be like removing a part of myself….The third thing is that there's that social expectation that you are going to continue to wear it, so if you don't there will be this sort of…'what's going on?' from the community or from your social circle."--*Aisha*	ID: Identification JMT: Muslim Community Judgment	
	Multiple identity considerations. Racial, ethnic, and religious minorities that are stereotyped in the media present the student with a challenge in asserting their double minority identities for fear of negative responses.	"I identify as Black and Hispanic…. but when I thought about how the media portrayed Black people…it was like, oh my gosh I can't do this…I felt like at some point when I was probably like 17,18 I just thought to myself I had to choose what would be more important to me….I'm not losing anything and life is so short I felt like I was gaining something. It's my choice and I feel like it's an additional act of worship."—*Raiyla*	ID: Identification MD: Media	
REASONS: Choosing **not to wear** the hijab.	Religion is between the individual and God. Judgment of who she is should wait until one knows her as	"Everything you do is between you and God….I do see myself wearing it in the future, I don't know exactly when….For me…it's almost no longer a question….I would rather be a good	IV: Internal Value	

	a person.	person in that sense first and then decide to wear it….I want people to learn about me and judge me as a person when they meet me rather than point a finger and saying she's automatically a good person…I want people to know me by my intelligence …my views on issues before anything else."	JMT: Muslim Community Judgment	
		"We had a 'hijab day' at our university and I went around wearing the hijab…and I was treated totally differently….Nobody looked me in the eye when I was walking around…people were clearing the path for me." --*Yasmine*		
	One should be judged and valued for their actions not because of what they wear on their head.	"I want to be more of an individual who people will, by my actions…they saw that she is a religious person, or she is a Muslim woman and by her actions rather than what I wear on my head."	AT: Actions	
	Being Muslim is prioritized with the duties outlined in the Five Pillars of Islam (which does not mention the hijab) having a greater significance. Wearing it is an extra act of worship.	"Growing up the hijab was always something that—even up until a year ago I was actually interested in wearing, but decided not to….For me…there is so much more to our religion than wearing the hijab….I told myself I would rather pray 5 times a day, I would rather want to pay charity and fast….And if I choose to wear it in the future I hope that I could be still praying 5 times a day, and fasting, and doing everything I'm supposed to do, and that would just be an extra factor."	RP: Religious Priorities	
RELIGIOUS/ SPIRITUAL LIFE: Effect of hijab or religion on campus experience.	College provides a sense of religious community and the opportunity to meet not only students who are similar, but those who do not necessarily fit the stereotype other Muslims have that one has to be "perfect."	"I started becoming a lot more religious when I started community college….college is where you become an adult, and I want to be an adult. I want to take responsibility for my actions. I think that being at my university fortunately, has given me a sense of community that I never really had too much of growing up….So I feel a sense that that has helped me in my religion because I'm able to meet other people who are not perfect….because when you think of our religion and think you have to be perfect, then [you] meet other people…and everyone is different in their own way."—*Yasmine*	COM: Community DV: Diversity JMT: Muslim Community Judgment	
		"Compared to when I started in 2009 until I graduate (there) were… big changes—because once we got more diversity, we got more Muslim students, I should say Middle Eastern students…Muslim students from India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi, Egypt, Turkey, Yemen…I have to meet with everyone"—*Gulzareena*	DV: Diversity	
	The MSA has provided support and a sense of community	"The MSA provided a lot of support for the Muslim community for them to practice, whether it's allowing them to	COM: Community	

	for Muslim students on California City University's (CCU) campus.	pray on campus, providing them with carpets, or other classes related to our religion, so it's definitely had an impact, a very strong impact….And it's the reason why I started to have an interest in learning about my faith."—*Sakinah* "The community's so big and there's always a lot of Muslim girls and we pray on campus….We have a whole lot of activities going on...it's a blessing and…I'm hoping and I pray that…my faith will just increase. And that's what I prayed for when I applied to colleges; like once I clicked that 'submit' button the computer…I asked God to put me in a place that would increase my faith…help me to not go down, to only go up."—*Raiyla*		
	The lack of a prayer room at Southern University's (SU) was viewed as partially responsible for a lack of spiritual growth as well as exposing students to harassment during prayers while on campus.	When a student from Southern University (SU) was asked if being on campus had improved her spiritual/religious life she responded: "It probably hasn't. The one thing is most schools have a prayer room or some kind of congregation type of thing where people can come together and like pray, I guess. On this campus we're still fighting for that."—*Sana* "Most of them have their own place to pray. We don't have that…. Whenever we ask for this it's like we cannot do this because if we do this then other religions will ask for their own spot….I have to personally pray different places you know, I have to go hide….I remember I was praying one day…and (I) see a guy…he was standing and he was just watching and he starts saying something like, 'Oh, my Jesus'….So it would be better to have a place, and it doesn't have to be Muslim"--*Gulzareena*	PR: Prayer Room LCS: Lack of Campus Support WP: Watching Prayer HR: Harassment	
	One student remarked that the university's academic opportunities allowed her to learn more about her religion, and therefore, grow in her faith.	"Academically, I was introduced to things about my own religion that I didn't know …and I was just like wow, I'm really ignorant about my own faith….I felt that it was important to be you know, sufficiently somewhat knowledgeable about my religion…like history…theological history, political history, economic, social…history of the entire region…the Islamic part of the world….More from an academic interest then personally."—*Aisha*	AC: Academic	ACP: Academic (positive)
CLASSROOM: What stands out **inside the classroom** that is related to the hijab or being Muslim.	Faculty and/or students may have assumptions regarding Islam that are not separated from cultural practice. Lack of understanding and	Referring to an experience at a community college one student noted: "I was taking a class and there was a professor talking about something related …she said something was like a Muslim thing when it was actually	CF: Confusion of Culture and Religion	

	education regarding religion by faculty and students.	more of an ethnic….My friend who was Muslim …actually approached the professor later on and corrected her… [it] makes me feel awkward in something that's related to our religion that shouldn't be associated with it."—*Sakinah*		
		"I think with faculty…because I was Muslim, the professor sort of disregarded some of my comments or reflections…it's like, 'you're not being an objective student, you're bringing in your religious belief…I see now it's because obviously I wore the hijab....Being an identifiable Muslim also makes people question…(my) intellectual abilities because generally speaking, religiosity is seen as a constraint to rigorous and critical engagement."—*Aisha*	ID: Identification PER: Perception	ID: Identification (negative)
	Students are asked (particularly those who wear the hijab) questions about their faith based on stereotypes learned from media portrayals of Muslims; however, most students are respectful and friendly both in and outside of the class.	One student who wears the hijab spoke of having male students ask if she had to marry a Muslim man. When she responded that she wanted to marry a Muslim man, the student's response was: "Are they abusive?" When the student pointed out that he was stereotyping, he replied, "I've been to the Middle East." She responded with "Men abuse women you know; it's not a Muslim man thing, or a Christian man thing, or an Asian man thing, or a Buddhist man thing, or an African man thing, or a White man thing. It's a male…it's a problem with some males, not all of them…so I was just saying, 'you know maybe you saw things where you went'…and also some things are cultural and people mix them with the religion."—*Raiyla*	QS: Questions ST: Stereotypes MD: Media	
		"They will ask silly questions like how come you guys (Muslim women on campus) don't have a boyfriend...how come you don't date….They were just asking the question, but I think it's better they know more about Islam…because a lot of people they judge Muslims based on media."—*Gulzareena*	QS: Questions MD: Media	
		"The most that anybody ever asks about is my hair; they're not like, 'oh, what's your butt look like?' or like 'what's your bra size?'....Everybody's seen my hair for 18 years…there's people who are more beautiful than me that wear it….The few guys that have come up to me, they're not just like 'hey girl, take your clothes off, you look real good.'…I mentioned that guy who talked like he knew me for what—5 or 10 minutes and he brought up	QS: Questions	

		marriage….He's like 'do you have to marry this kind of guy?' Or guys will be like, 'so if I marry you I can you're your hair?'"--*Raiyla*		
	Some students who wore the hijab voiced concern that other students might avoid them in the classroom because of their "otherness."	One student who wore the hijab did a PowerPoint presentation in a class about Islam and the media and noted, "That was the day I see everybody was shocked; they keep asking questions you know, they would just want to know about Islam, they want to know about hijab, they want to know about the Middle East!"--*Gulzareena*		
		"Something that has surprised me as a student so far…was how I thought that people would approach me less, but I was very surprised that they were very friendly and they just treated me like any other classmate."--*Sakinah*	SOC: Social	SOC: Social (positive)
		Again, referring to a community college experience, one student explained: "I'll be in some classes where I feel that…if I'm sitting in a row then people will sort of not necessarily come and sit right next to myself, but that's becoming less frequent and I think …because our campus is quite diverse in terms that we have a bunch of international students…so people are accustomed to seeing people who are not exactly like them."—*Aisha*	SOC: Social AC: Academic DV: Diversity	SOCN: Social (negative)
		"In the classroom, you know, when you do group projects…I wonder who's going to accept me in their group…you don't know who's going to be willing to put you in their group."—*Sana*	AC: Academic	AC: Academic (negative)
CAMPUS: What stands out on campus **outside of the classroom** that is related to the hijab or being Muslim.	Strong MSA campus community	"I think just the fact that we have so much support on campus. We (MSA) have our own office…we have a Muslim magazine…immediately made me feel comfortable. and I know where all those places were before the first day of school so that was awesome too" –*Raiyla*	MSA: Muslim Student Association	
		"Even by all these remarks towards each other about the hijab, we have a really strong community to the point where it's like if I am walking home alone and I felt that someone's following me…I can easily call one of the Brothers or Sisters to come pick me up."—*Yasmine*	COM: Community	
		"That people are curious and genuinely curious in a nice way…I've had people complement or know that it's called a hijab."--*Raiyla*		
	Frustration with campus response to	"I remember one day we were sitting in front of the library; we had a meeting	FR: Fear	

	Muslim student needs for student protection.	so it's all the sisters…and we are wearing hijab and some not, but there were a few guys and we were sitting at this round table…and I told my friend I think we have to go somewhere else. Everybody's looking, maybe they're scared or what? They expected something to happen?--*Gulzareena* One student expressed her anger and frustration with student government and campus administration regarding personal safety. "Our campus has been very divided and MSA has been…targeted but our community has finally decided to speak out….And if the people we elect within our student government are not protecting all the students on campus including our community then they need to be called out on that because as a representative of the entire university they need to represent the whole university….And it's so scary because we're…our university is supposed to be one of the most diverse …in the entire country…and I think that is what affects us academically….It affects you not just academically, but socially and it affects you mentally."—*Yasmine* "We have more diversity, but we're not accepted… (we have) the same rights as the other students have."—*Sana* "It's like the university doesn't show any effort and then we don't show any effort."—*Sana*	LCS: Lack of Campus Support FR: Fear AC: Academic SOC: Social LCS: Lack of Campus Support	ACN: Academic (negative) SOCN: Social (negative)
MEANING OF THE HIJAB	The meaning of the hijab is individual and personal—between God and herself. Identifies her as a good Muslim woman and holds her accountable for her actions. Personal modesty and conservation of inner beauty as well as	"I don't think there is any inherent meaning in the cloth itself…. I respect it I guess and value it in that it sort of urges me to you know, adopt a higher moral code I guess by being visibly Muslim...because I know that people will, however, unfortunate this is, people do generalize….But in terms of the meaning itself for me, I just think it's like a very sort of personal thing that I do out of love and obedience to God; so that's I think the meaning I attach to it."--*Aisha* *Sakinah* also indicated that wearing the hijab was personal—between herself and God. *Yasmine*, who does not wear the hijab, recounted a conversation with a peer who wore the hijab and then removed it and felt judged by her community. "I said, 'No, you need to do what you need to do for yourself too; like this is between you and God.'" "Beauty of woman. You can see everyone, they dress up the way they	IV: Internal Value ST: Stereotypes LV: Love OB: Obedience IV: Internal Value JMT: Muslim Community Judgment BE: Beauty	

	outward. Wants to be judged for what is inside of her rather than on external appearance.	want …to show their beauty and I think, just like you think of diamond, right? They just put it right in the box, you don't like people touch it, you just want to keep it shiny. I think woman beauty it's not…based off your body…it's just based off how you look to others…who you are in reality."—*Gulzareena* Referring to wearing the hijab, "I want people to learn about me and judge me as a person when they meet me rather than point a finger and saying, 'she's automatically a good person.'" (because she wears the hijab)--*Yasmine*	IV: Internal Value PER: Perception	
	Modesty is more than wearing the hijab.	"It's not like what you cover your head. Like I see a lot of people they just cover their head but they wear tight jeans. So it's not just covering your hair; it's bigger than that."--*Gulzareena*	MD: Modesty	
	An additional act of worship and service to God.	"I decided to wear it out of love for my Creator because I believe that Allah has commanded for women to observe a certain type of dress and although I can say…I don't feel like I'm always 100% to the way that I'm supposed to be, I'm striving and I'm trying…..It represents another way I can serve God….And I still strive in other areas, but I feel like if there's an act of worship that you can do just take advantage and do it; that's how I feel about hijab."--*Raiyla*	LV: Love GR: God (Allah) Requires RS: Religious Struggle	
	Liberating or confidence building. A sense of identity	"For me it means security and personality. Like without it I really wouldn't know who I am. Before I wore it I really was like this person that would just sit in the corner and not do anything….After I wore the hijab, in my group of friends…I'm the one that you go to if you want to laugh….I feel like the hijab gave me that sense, that sense of courage."—*Sana*	ID: Identification	IDP: Identification (positive)
a). Perception of women who choose to **wear** the hijab.	Wearing the hijab at times is not easy and those who do are to be admired for their courage.	"I use my own experience to think that it's great if they do wear it because it's not easy and definitely a struggle, so if they do wear it I'm like claps to you for overcoming whatever barriers you had to overcome, continue to overcome on a daily basis to have the commitment to wear it."—*Aisha*	RS: Religious Struggle	
		"I can't imagine people who go through really tough times as to why they take it off. I feel bad when I think about negative experiences that other people have had, and I hope that I don't have to go through them as well."—*Raiyla*	JMT: Muslim Community Judgment	
	Those who wear the hijab need to be modest in other clothing choices. It is more than covering	We should never judge anyone because everybody have a different journey through life…but I think stop, and starting back (wearing the hijab) is good because it give you the	NJ: No Judgment	

	one's hair.	difference…. Honestly, I wear it and it's a part of our nature…you know you want everybody do the same way, but…. Hijab is for Allah and it's your own beauty. I share my knowledge with them [other Muslim women], not just tell them wear hijab. They're not only focused on hijab, they focus on their dress, on how they want to dress up, they don't want to tight jeans, they don't want to like shirts, you know? So it's not like what you cover your head. Like I see a lot of people they just cover their head but they wear tight jeans….So it's not just covering your hair…. it's bigger than that.—*Gulzareena*	IV: Internal Value BE: Beauty MD: Modesty	
	Aware of stereotype that women who wear the hijab are supposed to be "good Muslims."	*Sakinah* noted that she does not make any assumptions about how "all together" women who wear the hijab are. Some are struggling spiritually, but there is a supposition in the Muslim community that those who veil are very religious.	ST: Stereotypes	
	One student who wore the hijab and one who did not agreed that some women wear it for the purpose of attracting a husband and do not value its larger meaning.	"From my experience, lots of women wore the hijab and a lot of them …I felt like a lot of them take it for granted and a lot of them thought that wearing the hijab would pretty much be like that's all that they needed to do, and doing that would get them into heaven or make them a good person…no matter what their actions were."--*Yasmine* "A lot of Muslim guys they say, or like some people they say that some girls wearing hijab just to get married….There's only a few people that just wear it for the religious purposes and they stick with it."—*Gulzareena* "I meet some who do wear the hijab and they're not as motivated, or they use that as a way to get married."—*Yasmine*	AT: Actions MA: Marriage	MAH: Hijab Required for Marriage
b). Perception of women who choose **not to wear** the hijab.	There is an assumption that those who do not wear the hijab are struggling with the decision. Faith is equated with the hijab.	"I think because obviously I didn't always wear the hijab and so I know what it's like when you're in between thinking about it….But I don't think any less of Muslims who don't wear hijab because I believe the religion is in your heart. With that said, I believe it's…like there's also this idea of faith without reaction is pointless….You need to take action and do some of the practices…the most important practice is prayer."—*Raiyla* "I feel like it depends on the person. For my sister, I know that her faith is strong and she's just taking longer to realize…not to realize, but to do the step, so I think it's you're just like me,	RS: Religious Struggle AT: Actions FA: Faith	

		you just don't wear the scarf but your faith is as strong as mine. We just show it two different ways."—*Sana*		
		"It's their rights. I have friends whose [*sic*] [are] Muslim; they're not wearing hijab [and] they have beautiful heart…you have to have a strong faith, the rest will come."--*Gulzareena*	FA: Faith	
	Religion is personal and internal; between a person and God. Faith is important.	"I understand that there's a lot of things that are happening and considerations they have to go through and it's not an easy thing to just say 'I'm going to wear the hijab now,' so I don't look up or down on either. Each individual has their individual relationship with God that no one else really has the right to any anything about….It doesn't affect my interactions with them on a personal level."--*Aisha*	RS: Religious Struggle	
	No judgment	*Sakinah* noted that wearing the hijab is between that person and God and no one has the right to judge another. "I get excited when I find out that they are Muslim too!"	NJ: No Judgment	
PERCEIVED ROLE: As a Muslim American woman on campus.	Setting a good example for themselves and others.	"I feel like we have so much potential and we all were raised in different ways but all of us are pretty much first generation citizens…and we're so ambitious….I think we're all trying to set examples amongst each other and help each other…. Most of us are the first people in our families to go to college so we have to find some sort of community."—*Yasmine*	FG: First Generation	
		"I look at it as an opportunity not an obligation to show character; to go out of my way to help people." –*Sakinah* She believes this to be especially important when public perception of Muslims is so poor.	PER: Perception	
	The burden of being the face of Islam may be too difficult, and therefore, rejected.	"I don't think there's one particular role of the Muslim American woman…we're so diverse in our backgrounds….I wear the hijab who [sic] should maybe be academically amazing and involved in all these other activities…yes we can do everything …to sort of compensate for…I get that people may (perceive)…Muslim woman…may be oppressed or whatever, but I feel like because I don't want to fall into that, responding to that idea of Islam….I don't want to respond to that by…overcompensating….I'm not going to try and take that up as a burden"—*Aisha*	DV: Diversity PER: Perception	
	Opportunity to demonstrate what Islam is to the university.	"I feel like I should be able to get out there and show the university…what Muslim students are about, what our religion is all about, what our culture is		

		all about, you know and bring it to them and show it to them….I feel like I should be able to take a stand and do things for my university to show an Islamic point of view. That's what I should bring to the university."—*Sana*		
	Opportunity to refute stereotypes of Muslim women.	"I think for me, because of my diverse background…I mean I was raised both Muslim and Christian, I'm Black and Hispanic, and I'm first generation American….I feel like I fulfill a role of being a different kind of Muslim because a lot of people tend to think that all Muslims are Arab…and say, South Asian….I think it surprises people and it enlightens people….I think sometimes people are surprised because they think that Muslim women are supposed to be like very boring or very quiet or they're not supposed to do anything, that they're restricted."—*Raiyla*	DV: Diversity ID: Identification ST: Stereotypes	
IMPROVEMENTS/ ADVICE: Student would make on campus if had the opportunity.	More designated prayer spaces.	"A greater number of prayer spaces around campus and more *halal* dining options."—*Aisha* "The only problem we have on campus [SU], I don't know if it's the only one…most of them have their own place to pray…we don't have that and we don't get approved."—*Gulzareena* "I usually pray in the library and most guys…I know they pray on the lawn over there on the grass and then most girls pray in the upstairs in the conference rooms so we're all kind of scattered, but I feel if there was a room for us we'd be more together."--*Sana*	PR: Prayer Room	
		"Praying outdoors is not a problem, but it's kind of awkward when you're all by yourself, like praying in the library or behind some building. When we pray with a group of 20…people it feels better."—*Raiyla*	WP: Watching Prayer	
	Interfaith education and meditation spaces.	*Sakinah* suggested that since CCU is a very diverse campus with several faiths, it would be a good idea to have an orientation as an opportunity to learn about other faith groups or an interfaith center. "I think there should be…a 'meditation space' or something like that, an open space where there will be books from all the religions and …all faiths can utilize that room."--*Raiyla*	IF: Interfaith Education PR: Prayer Room	
	Education for all faiths; an opportunity for all faiths to learn about one another.	"We should have a study that will educate others not only about Islam. Muslims should know about Christianity, Catholic [sic], Hinduism, and others should know about Islam. Maybe they can bring like once and a	DV: Diversity	

		while (a)lecture [sic]…a scholar from different…it's not like we're converting each other, we [sic] just educating and… sharing knowledge."-- *Gulzareena*		
	Cultural programs on campus that help others learn more about Islam.	More diversity in the school….We have the African American groups and we have the Hispanic's groups but it's like when it comes to the Muslims… we have our Ramadan…we have …hijab day. I wished our university pushed for more culturally, like that kind of stuff."—*Sana*		
	Frustration with university for not providing them assistance or equal treatment as other clubs on campus.	One student describes her frustration with the Student Life Center with helping her campus MSA get off the ground and get the appropriate approval for space: "We don't have enough support (for MSA)….From the school, from faculty."—*Gulzareena*	LCS: Lack of Campus Support	