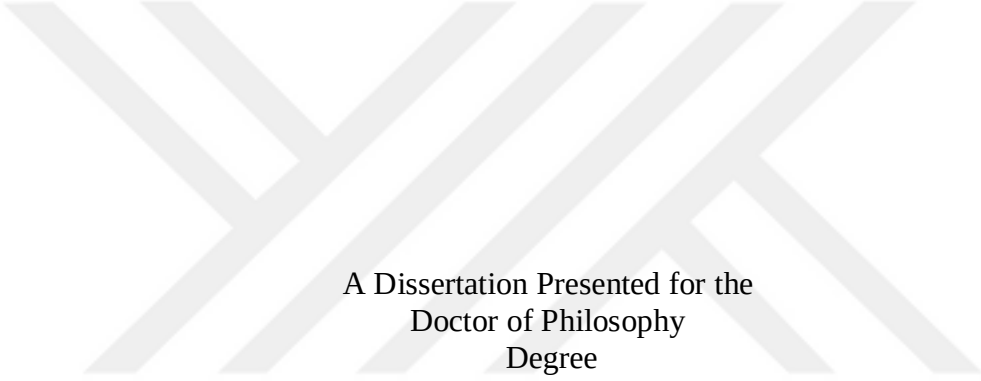
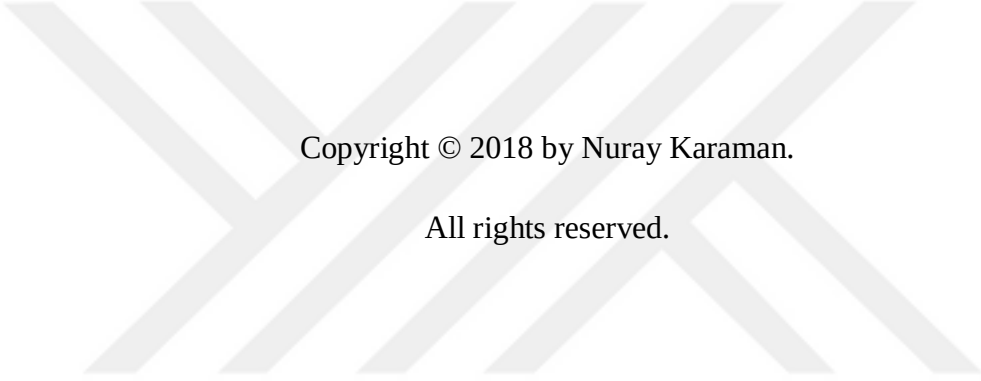


Experiences of Muslim Female Students in Knoxville: At the Intersection of Race, Gender, and Religion



A Dissertation Presented for the
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Degree
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Abstract

In the current climate, there is a need to give particular attention to the racialization of Muslim women in order to understand their experiences. In the U.S., there are current discriminatory policies towards Muslims, such as Trump's travel ban, increased incidents of hate against Muslims, and the spread of negative stereotypes about Muslims and Islam. In this study, I interview thirty-four Muslim female students to show the experiences of Muslim women at the intersection of multiple identities. These multiple identities: religion, gender, race, culture, citizenship status, clothing and various levels of religiosity such as wearing a headscarf, and national background shape these women's perception of the hijab, their racial identification, and their coping strategies. The following three research questions are explored: 1) How do Muslim female students experience practices of racialization, regarding the outside and inside campus environment on the University of Tennessee campus where the majority of its enrollment is self-identified as Christian? (2) How does the intersection of religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, and gender effect the identity formation of Muslim female university students in U.S.? (3) What are Muslim female students' opinions, reactions, and coping strategies towards negative stereotypes about Muslim women and Islam in U.S.? The results demonstrate the diversity among Muslim female students in how they think and identify. Important intersecting markers such as being hijabi/non-hijabi; being a white/person of color; being an American citizen/non-American; speaking English as a native language/second language; coming from a secular country/religious country showcase differences in terms of how all women experienced racialization but in different ways. They also defined differently the meaning of the hijab and their racial identities and they selected different coping strategies to challenge the negative stereotypes of Muslims and Islam that have been on the rise in Trump's era. The findings of this

study broaden the existing literature and help future studies that do not only analyze Muslim population but also other minority groups in Western or Middle Eastern countries.



Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
My Story	1
Background	6
My Study.....	11
Method	13
Case Study	13
Selection of Participants	14
Interviewing: Data Gathering Technique.....	16
Data Analysis	18
Chapter II: Literature Review	21
Introduction.....	21
Racialization of Muslims and Islam	21
Citizenship	31
Intersectionality.....	34
Conclusion	39
Chapter III: Muslim Female Students' Practices and Experiences of Racialization	43
Introduction.....	43
Feeling Different.....	44
American Muslim Female Students.....	45
International Muslim Female Students	49
Feeling Exclusion.....	51
American Muslim Female Students.....	51
International Muslim Female Students	55
Verbal Hatred.....	58
American Muslim Female Students.....	58
International Muslim Female Students	60
Stereotypes	61
Muslim Women as Oppressed and Forced to Be Veiled	62
Islam is a Religion of Terror and Muslims are Terrorist or Terrorist Sympathizer	66
Muslim Women as Having Heterogeneous Lives and Identities	70
Microaggression.....	73
American Muslim Female Students.....	73
International Muslim Female Students	76
Conclusion	78
Chapter IV: Meanings of Hijab.....	80
Introduction.....	80
Symbol of Identity (Who I am).....	81
American Muslim Female Students.....	81
International Muslim Female Students	83
As a Feminist Strategy	84
American Muslim Female Students.....	84
International Muslim Female Students	85
Hijab is a Religious Requirement	86
American Muslim Female Students.....	86

International Muslim Female Students	88
Hijab is an Unnecessary Tool to Be a Good Muslim.....	89
American Muslim Female Students.....	89
International Muslim Female Students	91
Conclusion	92
Chapter V: How Muslim Women Define Their Racial Category and Self-Identification	
Differently	94
Introduction.....	94
Racial Ambiguity among Muslim Women	95
American Muslim Female Students.....	95
International Muslim Female Students	99
Identity Construction of Muslim Women in U.S.	102
Intersections of Identity Construction.....	102
Being Muslim is an Identity.....	105
Identified Myself as Myself	108
Conclusion	110
Chapter VI: Being a Muslim Female Students in the Trump Era and Coping Strategy of Muslim	
Female Students in America	112
Introduction.....	112
Being Muslim Female Students in the Trump Era.....	113
American Muslim Female Students.....	113
International Muslim Female Students	118
Coping Strategies of Muslim Female Students in America	121
Take off Headscarf or Changing Clothing Style.....	122
Being Silent/ Being Afraid to Complain.....	126
Educating Other People about Stereotypes, Misconception, and Biases	128
Double Pressure to Be Extra Nice, Kind, Hardworking... ..	131
Being a Member of MSA or Another Religious Group and Their Support.....	134
Conclusion	139
Chapter VII: Discussion and Conclusion.....	
Limitations of the Study and Future Research.....	148
References	150
Appendix	162
Vita.....	165

Chapter I

Introduction

My Story

As a married Turkish woman and a sociologist, I always ask how individuals' membership in society influences their opinions, values, and assumptions in ways that most people are completely unaware. Individuals subconsciously are carriers of social, cultural, and political ideas in a manner that tells us something about society and the world around us. Notably, sociologists study the relationship between the structure of society and the structure of self. My sociological imagination is particularly interested in how individuals are situated in two different societal contexts and how individuals experience living in two cultures, and what this means for their perspectives on others and on themselves. This led me to want to study how Muslim college women in the United States understand themselves and the world around them vis-à-vis their multiple overlapping identities and in a historical moment where a Muslim identity is inferiorly racialized.

Thus, through the lens of a researcher I start my dissertation by explaining my own experiences as a Muslim Turkish woman. Living in another country is one of the most challenging things a person can do. It has changed the central part of who I thought I was and who I am now. I grew up as a white, middle class, secular, Muslim and Turkish woman and was unaware of the existence of racial/ethnic privilege and inequalities. In many ways, I am aware of the ways that my privilege has helped me. I now see how my advantage comes in a countless of forms, including race, wealth, class, education, access to health care, and familial support. I am also aware that my gender and femininity create disadvantages for me due to some Islamic and cultural roles. I was born in Istanbul the economic, cultural, and historic center of Turkey. In

Istanbul, it is always possible to see people who come from different racial, ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds. It's a city of contradictions: Very rich versus very poor live side by side. I believe that living in Istanbul as a sociologist was a chance for me to see binary situations such as East/West, science/religion, heterosexual/homosexual, theism/atheism, rich/poor, etc. I was raised in a middle-class family. My mother is religious but my father is a non-practicing Muslim, but I am sure that both are traditional. Like many families in Turkey, my family is a patriarchal family, the husband and wife have different tasks; those include men being the bread-winners and women maintaining the house. Men must work outside the home to meet the need of their families. Women who work at home must care for their children and husbands. This situation is similar for my family too. Although some people are not religious or practicing Muslim, culturally determined roles crucially affect their lives. I think, religious and cultural roles are not always separate.

Turkey was established in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. One of his principle aim is to reach western standards of political and economic administration, thus he attempted to make Turkey a modern and democratic Western country (Gökay 2014). So, the best way to capture western standards was described itself as part of the “White/ Western” society. As Shome (1999) expressed that “whiteness has historically enacted a global dominance of itself, that dominance impacts and effects identities and spaces in different ways in different locations as it takes on different meaning in different sites” (Shome 1999: 108-109). In Turkey, being a white is equal to be “a pure Turk” and speaking correct Turkish language. Since the establishment of Republic of Turkey, every Turkish child has still grown up memorizing Atatürk’s 1927 address to the youth, which says “the noble Turkish blood in your veins” and “how happy the one who says he is a Turk” (Gökay and Aybak 2016: 109). Thus, nationality, “a pure Turkish blood”, is the code for

whiteness in Turkey. My whiteness and privilege come from my pure Turkish blood and speaking correct Turkish language.

Although in Turkey, 30% of the population are an ethnic minority, all citizens were considered to be Turks. There are some non-Turkish ethnic minorities such as Armenians, Greeks, Kurds, Jews and Zazas. In the last few years, the number of Syrian people has increased in Turkey. Many of these people escaped from war in their country and are refugees in Turkey and mostly live in poor conditions. Racism in Turkey appears in a form of cultural racism, as there is always a perception that these groups are dangerous, and are culturally inferior.

Like many other non-Western people, I believed that the U.S. was a utopia. The Western world seemed to be a brighter, happier, desegregated country in all aspects for us. The most important reason of this consideration was found in the movies and advertisements that we used to see. Based on what I had seen in movies and the news, I thought that Black people were discriminated against just at the time of slavery and that there was no longer discrimination in modern America and if there was still racism in U.S., it was a black-white binary racial logic. Now that I am here, I realize that I was encouraged to think like this but it was an illusion. I also realize that racism is not just an issue for African Americans, but it is also a problem for other racial and religious minority groups. While the media helped to depict a brighter, happier, desegregated country, Islam, in contrast, is characterized in Orientalist views and the media produces and disseminates unfriendly pictures of Islam. This has notably increased since 9/11 and other terrorist attacks that have contributed to the social construction of Muslims as enemies and terrorists resulting in Muslim people being racialized as a threat in Western countries (Cainkar 2009; Rana 2011).

Moving from any country to another is hard because you are not just learning and adjusting to a new culture, but you are also learning to fight external stereotypes about yourself and internal ones that you already have embedded in your mind about your racial identity. It has changed the core who I thought I was and who I think I am now. While I was growing up in Turkey, I went to school with people from the same culture, religion, and nationality. Back home in Turkey, I was a Muslim Turkish girl. After I moved to America, I am identified as a Muslim Turkish woman. On the surface, these two sentences look the same, but they are not. In Turkey, being a Muslim Turkish woman is normal. However, in the U.S, being a Muslim Turkish woman means to be different or an outsider. There is the difference between who I was and who I am today. The most important difference is that I have faced many labels and stereotypes I never had to think of before. For example, I am Turkish, and Turkey is not an Arab country, but many Americans think that I am an Arab Muslim. Although Turkey is also a Muslim majority nation with a secular system, many Americans think that it is governed by Sharia law and all women have to wear headscarves and they are oppressed by their family, husband, and religion. There are also many other examples of stereotypes I have experienced about my gender, nationality, culture, religion, language and accent. It is important to highlight that in America, Muslim women come from diverse racial and national groups. Thus, "Muslim woman" is not a universal category because "Muslim woman" refers to the diversity of women who recognize herself as Muslim. However, many Muslim women face similar stereotypes and misconceptions as dependent, "powerless, oppressed, or in the post-9/11 era sympathetic to terrorism" (Aziz 2012: 262).

When I started my education in U.S., I have added to my new identities. Now I am a Turkish, Muslim, international female student instead of just a woman. Since, in the U.S., my

whiteness was questioned due to my nationality, native language, skin color, and religion that give me privilege in my home country. Being a Muslim woman has hindered communication because I spend a lot of time explaining to Americans that the picture you have of a Muslim woman is not a true picture. Although I did not wear a hijab that is the most visible of Muslim identity, my long black hair, skin color, my nationality, and my accent always uncovered that I am not from America and I am somewhere from Middle Eastern. I started to spend much time thinking critically about my religious, racial, and national identities and trying to understand how they have influenced and shaped my life in the United States. I wanted to know how my experience as a Turkish, Muslim, international female student varied from the lived experiences of other Muslim female students.

And of course, being religious or a moderate Muslim is hard. I have heard many negative stories from my religious friends about their experiences in America who wear a headscarf and practice regularly. They believed that they are racialized and discriminated against due to their visible Muslim identity. As a moderate Muslim woman who does not wear a headscarf, does not practice regularly, and drinks alcohol, I was judged too. How? The visibility of Muslim women is increasingly based on their external appearance. I felt pressure to appear in a certain style of clothing or do a certain type of behavior. For example, not wearing something that was hypersexualized or drinking alcohol. Thus, the pictures of Muslim women are narrow and are manipulated by a dominant media and commercial narrative. Why do you not wear a headscarf? This is one of the questions that I've been asked many times because there is an assumption that Muslim women should be covered. Do Muslim women who are visible in public always have to be in hijabs? Why? The other question I heard a lot was why do you drink? And do you eat pork? And If I say "no", they ask why don't you eat pork? So, regardless if you are a Muslim woman

who is moderate or religious; international or American; from a secular country or religious country, we always have to answer why we're doing certain things and why we're not doing certain things. These things are dangerous and counterproductive. Thus, after I came to America, I realized I was racialized as a Muslim woman and all that that entails. My experiences and experiences of participants in this study show that all Muslim women are considered a homogenous group – a form of racialization that is broad and impacts all Muslim women – but Muslim women who have different racial and cultural identities, language, skin tones, clothing and various levels of religiosity such as wearing a headscarf, praying five times a day and fasting during Ramadan are not all racialized the same way or experience and understand this racialization process and their identities the same. This study explores the many ways a diverse group of Muslim college student women are racialized and how they negotiate and understand ascribed and personal identities.

Background

Muslims are not new to America and started to come to the New World in the early 15th century. “It was estimated that about 14 to 20 percent of enslaved West Africans were Muslims (U.S. State Department 2010). On the other hand, Muslims’ voluntary migration to the United State began between late 19th to early 20th century” (Alibeli and Yaghi 2012: 21). The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act changed the previous laws that restricted immigration from non-Western countries such as Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (Selod and Embrick 2013). This act encouraged people “with desired occupational skills to immigrate to the United States from across the world” and these immigrants have formed a new racial, ethnic, and religious group (Thomas 2015: 24). “In total, from 1960 to 1990, the number of immigrants from predominantly Muslim regions rose from roughly 135,000 to about 870,000 – an increase of

more than 600 percent” (Thomas 2015: 25). Additionally, from 1971 to 2000, the number of international students attending American colleges and universities has increased dramatically from approximately 6,500 to 315,000 (Thomas 2015: 25). Muslims have been a significant part of the increasing international student population in the United States (Thomas 2015). “By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the United States was host to nearly 40,000 students from the Middle East and North Africa; about 13,000 from the predominantly Muslim Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Indonesia, and more than 112,000 from the South Asian countries of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh” (Thomas 2015: 25). The new immigrant populations were more representative of the ethnic, racial, national, and religious diversity of the Muslim world. According to a Pew Research Center survey (2007), “38 percent of Muslim Americans described themselves as white, 26 percent black, 20 percent Asian, and 16 percent reported others or mixed racial background” (Alibeli and Yaghi 2012: 22).

Muslims in America have come from very diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds comprising as many as sixty-five countries (Elver 2012). However, the majority of research focuses on the religious identity of Muslim women instead of their racial and cultural background, gender, language, and religiosity level such as wearing a headscarf, praying five times a day and fasting during Ramadan. While before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Arabs and Muslims were discriminated based primarily on their “otherness,” non-whiteness, and foreignness, 9/11 led to a change in Muslim American identity to a more pronounced racial categorization. “Muslim looking people” have started to suffer from hate crimes and social discrimination due to the racialization of Islam in America. Especially, Muslim women, who wear one of the most identifiable symbols of Islam, the headscarf, face discrimination by the public. After 9/11, hijabi Muslim women were not only stereotyped as powerless and sexually,

physically, and socially oppressed, but also as “anti-American terrorist” or “terrorist-sympathizer” (Aziz 2012; Beydoun 2013; Galonnier 2015).

In America, diversity among Muslim women in terms of their religious, racial and national backgrounds affect their experiences. In order to understand diversity among Muslim women in the U.S, recent Western scholarship has been asking how to conceptualize Islam itself. “Asad argues that by thinking of Islam as a discursive tradition, an unfolding of arguments over shared foundational texts across space and over time, anthropologists could discern Islamic practices and styles of reasoning. In other words, in lieu of Muslim subjects who “behave” or “act” out their roles, Asad urges anthropologists to examine the arguments, logics, and styles of reasoning and interpretation of Muslim subjects who think” (Grewal 2013:37). Asad’s explanation of Islam as a discursive tradition is crucial to understand the religious discussions about authority and Islamic informative practices not only in Middle Eastern but also in the US (Grewal 2013:37). For instance, the many Muslim countries are governed by Sharia law that organize marriages, maintenance, divorces, custody of children, inheritance rights, and other social, political, and economic issues (Offenhauer 2005: 34). However, Sunnis and Shiites differ in rituals and interpretation of Islamic law. The most important reasons of these differences are interpretation of Quran and Hadiths. Moreover, power relations, patriarchal, and traditional ideologies have impact on interpretations of the ayah in the Quran and hadiths (Gurpinar 2006). Thus, "Muslim woman" is not a universal category because “Muslim woman” refers to the diversity of women who recognize herself as Muslim. However, many Muslim women face similar stereotypes and misconceptions as dependent, “powerless, oppressed, or in the post-9/11 era sympathetic to terrorism” (Aziz 2012: 262). The concept of intersectionality helps us understand the experiences of Muslim women and how they negotiate multiple identities in the United States.

Like the events of 9/11 and the resulting war in Iraq, ISIS has also negatively affected public opinion about Muslims and Islam. Stereotypes in the media have negatively influenced American perceptions of Muslim Americans. For example, in 2010 in the middle-Tennessee town of Murfreesboro, the Muslim community attempted to build an Islamic community center, but they faced anti-Islam protests from some residents who did not want a mosque built in the region (Kauffman 2010). One of protestors of this group, Cody Waddey, advocated that “This Islam religion crap is a growing threat here in the United States, and if you cannot stand up and say that, you know, then you obviously don't love this country” (Kauffman 2010: 3). The protestors believed that Muslims are the biggest threat for the future of America due to their religious identity and the belief that Islam promotes violence (Kauffman 2010).

Additionally, the current socio-political situation of Muslims in Western countries, and especially in America, represents an array of changes and challenges that will continue to loom large in the foreseeable future, and threatens the future of Muslims in America. Especially, the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump has cultivated a culture of anti-Muslim prejudice. During the election campaign Trump expressed anti-Muslim sentiments. After Trump became president, one of his first actions was barring entry from seven Muslim majority countries, and he temporally stopped the admission of all refugees to the United States in order to protect the nation from perceived Muslim terrorists. Because of these political actions, Muslims have faced discrimination and suspicion on account of their religious belief.

In addition, in Tennessee the legislation cut state funding for the University of Tennessee's diversity office. Early legislative proposals to cut state funding for the university began in Fall 2015, but the final version of the bill passed in April 21, 2016 (Gervin 2016). Governor Bill Haslam allowed the bill cutting funding for the University of Tennessee's Office

for Diversity and Inclusion without signing (Gervin 2016). He also did not sign the anti-refugee resolutions that emerged in the legislature. Due to the terrorist attacks in San Bernardino, Paris, the Sinai, Beirut, and Ankara Islamic refugees are considered a threat to the security of American citizens. Governor Haslam stated “rather, I believe the best way to protect Tennesseans from terrorism is to take the steps outlined in my administration’s Public Safety Action Plan, which enhances our ability to analyze information for links to terrorist activity, creates a Cyber Security Advisory Council, restructures our office of Homeland Security, establishes school safety teams, and provides training for active shooter incidents and explosive device attacks” (Gervin 2016: 2). In American and Tennessee Muslims are considered a security threat.

At the same time, Muslim women have become more visible on U.S colleges in recent years as prejudice against Muslims has been on the rise (Cole and Ahmadi 2003; Peek 2003). Therefore, experiences of Muslim women need special attention. There is also limited literature on the experiences of veiled Muslim college students (Cole and Ahmadi 2003; Peek 2003; Nasir and Al-Amin 2006; Neusner 2009; Seggie and Sanford 2010; Beydoun 2013; Beydoun 2015). This study will not only focus on experiences of Muslim women who wear the headscarf, but it will also examine experiences of Muslim women who do not wear the headscarf. The headscarf as one of the most identifiable symbols of Islam has played an important role in the marginalization and discrimination of Muslim women. However, it is not possible to say that Muslim women who do not wear headscarf do not face discrimination or marginalization due to their religion, race, and ethnicity.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the overall experiences of Muslim female students at a large, Southeastern, research university, and how the intersection of religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, and gender effect identity formation of these women, and

Muslim female students' perceptions of, reactions to, and coping strategies towards negative stereotypes about Muslim women and Islam in U.S., and how the campus climate effects and interrelates with the construction of their identities.

I also demonstrate how Muslim female students consent or not to the normalized ideas associated with their lives and identities, which typically show Muslim women as oppressed by Islam and patriarchal norms. I attempt to examine Muslim female students' ideas about the headscarf and if wearing the headscarf makes a difference on Muslim female students' experiences. Additionally, I show whether or not Muslim female students who have different national, cultural, and social backgrounds have different or similar idea about the headscarf and the prevailing stereotypes about Muslim women in U.S.

My Study

In this study, I use Selod and Embrick's application of the concept, racialization as not only the process which produce new racial groups but also as a way to understand how race and racisms have changed depending on the social and historical circumstance and through the intersection of gender, race, skin tone, language, and national background. By using their application of the concept, I attempt to clarify how the racialization of Muslims in the United States changes depending on the social and historical circumstance and how these changes affect Muslim female students' experiences in the United States. I add to their analysis by overlaying an intersectional perspective to the racialization process. Previous studies fail to show religion is not the only reason in Muslims' racialization, but also skin tone, gender, language, clothing, culture, and national background play a role in one's racialization and the majority of these studies homogenize Muslims as a single racial, national group. In the United States, Muslim women who have different racial and cultural identity, language, skin tones, clothing and various

levels of religiosity such as wearing a headscarf, praying five times a day and fasting during Ramadan should not be studied as a homogenous group. In this study, I show the experiences of Muslim women at the intersection of religion, gender, race, culture, citizenship status, and national background, and its effect on the practice of identity formation of Muslim female students. Moreover, through conducting research with a diverse group of American and non-American Muslim female students, in this study, I have investigated Muslim female students' opinions, reactions, and coping strategies to the misconceptions, negative stereotypes they experience in the United States. I do so by exploring the following research questions: 1) How do Muslim female students experience practices of racialization, regarding the outside and inside campus environment on the University of Tennessee campus where the majority of its enrollment is self-identified as Christian? (2) How does the intersection of religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, and gender effect the identity formation of Muslim female university students in U.S.? (3) What are Muslim female students' opinions and answers towards negative stereotypes about Muslim women and Islam in U.S.?

The main results of the study showed that the diversity among Muslim female students such as being hijabi/non-hijabi; being a white/person of color; being an American citizen/non-American; speaking English as a native language/second language; coming from a secular country/religious country have played an important role on: how all Muslim female students experienced racialization but in different ways, how they defined differently the meaning of the hijab and their racial identities, and how they selected different coping strategies to challenge the negative stereotypes of Muslims and Islam that have been on the rise in Trump's era.

Method

This study uses qualitative research as the methodology. Qualitative research is one of the two key approaches to research methodology in the Social Sciences. As Dabbs stated, “Qualitative and quantitative are not distinct” (1982:32). Still, quantitative approaches are often viewed as being more scientific which usually results in higher levels of respect. Quantitative practices are, of course, related to numbers and thus imply precision and validity. Thus, while qualitative research examines the “why and how”, quantitative studies focus on the more measurable questions such as “what, where and when” (Khosrojerdi 2015). Increasingly, however, social scientists are beginning to appreciate the methodological rigor of qualitative studies, and the value and validity of their findings. My research fits with qualitative research that “involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 3). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative methodology is the best way for researchers who want to get depth, rich, and detailed understanding of a topic with less generalizability.

Case Study

My dissertation is a case-study of Muslim female students in Knoxville, Tennessee. According to Yin (2009), a case study is a supportive method for this purpose. According to Yin (2009), “the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 4). I examine the experiences of Muslim female students in Knoxville, specifically women who wear headscarves and do not, which is a real-life context. “As of 2003, it was estimated that more than 97.5% were born in the US while only .02% of the total Knoxville population were foreign-born (American Community Survey [ACS] 2003)” (quoted in Winslow 2010). According to American Community Survey (2003), it was estimated that in Knoxville 2,985 people were Arab in 2003, but these people identified themselves as

“white” or “other” on survey forms (Winslow 2010). Additionally, in 2000, only .7% of people who lived in Knoxville described themselves as other than white (Winslow 2010). According to religion statistic of Knox county, the Muslim population has decreased from 3,609 (9.4%) in 2000 to 924 (2.1%) individuals in 2010 (City of Knoxville 2010).

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville population is almost 27,000 students that come from 50 states and 112 countries. Most of the students identify as Christian, and the Muslim Student Association at University of Tennessee, Knoxville estimate that there are between 100 and 200 Muslim students on campus. These Muslim students also come from diverse racial and national groups.

Selection of Participants

Participants for this study are 34 Muslim female students. The sample size for this study is 34 informants for in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Qualitative investigators usually use purposive samples because purposive samples are adequate to “provide maximum insight and understanding of what they are studying” (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorensen 2006: 472). I purposively select my main participants because they fit all the criteria for participation in this study – Muslim female students who wear headscarves or do not at University of Tennessee; are USA citizen or are not; are white or are not- to enable my efforts to answer the research questions. Additionally, my participants are from different cultural, national, racial background and immigrant status in order to capture diverse sample and a unique form of racialization of Muslim women. Table 1 below shows participants’ age, educational level, hijab, years being a Muslim, marital status, race, primary language, citizenship, the origin of the country, year in the current location to provide a brief description of each participant.

Table 1. Participants' demographic information.

Name *	Age	Educational Level	Headscarf	Race **	Primary Language	Citizenship	Origin of Country	Years in Current Location
Gulshan	33	Graduate	Non-hijabi	White	Persian	Iran	Iran	4
Asali	21	Undergraduate	Non-hijabi	Pakistani	Urdu	USA	Pakistan	3
Tanuja	22	Undergraduate	Non-hijabi	Asian	English	USA	TN, USA	22
Bahiriya	21	Undergraduate	Non-hijabi	Pakistani	English/Urdu	USA	CA, USA	12
Enaas	20	Undergraduate	Hijabi	Palestinian /Middle Eastern	Arabic	USA	FL, USA	17
Najlaa	19	Undergraduate	Non-hijabi	Arab/White	English	USA	TN, USA	19
Banan	27	Graduate	Hijabi	Middle East/White	Arabic	Palestine	Palestine	3
Zohreye	20	Undergraduate	Hijabi	Middle Eastern/White	English	USA	TN, USA	15
Roshni	38	Graduate	Non-hijabi	White	Persian	Iran	Iran	4
Crystal***	25	Graduate	Hijabi	Black	English	USA	TN, USA	6
Evana	20	Undergraduate	Hijabi	Syrian / USA	English	USA	TN, USA	20
Jamila	20	Undergraduate	Hijabi	Egyptian	Arabic	Egypt	Egypt	2
Bushra	20	Undergraduate	Hijabi	Asian	English	USA	Bangladesh	7
Sadiki	18	Undergraduate	Hijabi	Middle Eastern	Arabic	Egypt	Egypt	1
Rabia	21	Undergraduate	Hijabi	White	English	USA	FL, USA	18
Zerlinda	20	Undergraduate	Non-hijabi	Pakistani	English	USA	GA, USA	3
Tabia	20	Undergraduate	Hijabi	Arab	Arabic	Egypt	Egypt	2
Basimah	21	Undergraduate	Hijabi	White/Middle Eastern	English	USA	Southern, USA	7
Tale	34	Graduate	Hijabi	Middle Eastern	Arabic	Egypt	Egypt	5
Laleh	31	Graduate	Non-hijabi	White/Middle Eastern	Farsi/Persian	Iran	Iran	5
Nermin	24	Graduate	Non-hijabi	Turkish	Turkish	Turkey	Turkey	3
Tanzila	18	Undergraduate	Non-hijabi	Asian/White	English	USA	IL, USA	4
Serena	23	Undergraduate	Non-Hijabi	White	Arabic	Syria	Syria	2
Tuana	18	Undergraduate	Hijabi	Middle Eastern/Syrian	English	USA	USA	18
Urvi	18	Undergraduate	Hijabi	Bangladeshi	English	USA Perm. Resident	Bangladesh	6
Oldooz	28	Graduate	Hijabi	White	Farsi	Iran	Iran	2
Najat	22	Undergraduate	Hijabi	Muslim	English	USA & Morocco	Morocco	15
Maysa	17	Undergraduate	Hijabi	White	English	USA	TN, USA	17
Priya	20	Undergraduate	Hijabi	White	Arabic	USA & Morocco	Morocco	15
Yaran	20	Undergraduate	Hijabi	White	English/Kurdish	USA	TN, USA	2
Naima	24	Undergraduate	Hijabi	Middle Eastern	Arabic	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	3
Nida	19	Undergraduate	Non-hijabi	Indian/Asian	English	USA	TN, USA	19
Nisa	20	Undergraduate	Hijabi	White	Arabic	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	2 m
Tahira	18	Undergraduate	Non-hijabi	White	Arabic	USA	Iraq	8

* Nicknames

** Participants' own descriptions of their racial identity.

*** Crystal is an only Muslim female student who converted to Islam three years ago. Other participants have been a Muslim whole their lives.

Participants recruited by using an advertisement and I asked Muslim female students to participate in my study. I advertised in University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in Muslim Student Association (MSA), and in some Facebook pages of Knoxville Muslim Communities (Such as Muslim Community Knoxville (MCK), Muslim Youth Knoxville (MYK), and Muslim Student Association, Knoxville (MSA). Beside using advertisements, I called upon previously established relationships and familiarity with the area Muslim community in order to reach Muslim female students.

Interviewing: Data Gathering Technique

Gay, Miller, and Airasian (2006) discuss that “the strength of qualitative research lies in collecting information in many ways, rather than relying solely on one, and often two or more methods can be used in such a way that the weakness of one is compensate by the strength of another” (p. 405). In this research, I use in depth, semi-structured interviews to answers my research questions (Patton 1987; Bogdan and Biklen 1998; Berg 2009) along with participant observations. Interviews are usually described as “a conversation with a purpose” (Berg 2009: 101). This purpose, of course, is to collect information about the culture-sharing group being studied. Although there is a large and diverse literature on the interviewing process, the major interview structures contain “the standardized (formal or structured) interview, the unstandardized (informal or nondirective) interview, and the semi-standardized (guided-semi-structured or focused) interview” (Berg, 2009:104). In this research, I conducted semi-structured interviews. Even though semi-structured interviews are flexible, they require difficult preparation. After I was in the field for six months, I used the data I collected from the participant observations to make a semi-structured interview plan in order to decide which questions were most appropriate for the respondent or if I should prepare new ones. My

observations also helped me to develop an understanding of what is worth asking and exploring through semi-structured interviews. So, in this study, Interview questions are designed to gather information about the experiences of Muslim female students, their opinions and responses towards the prevailing stereotypes about Muslim women in U.S and how the intersection of religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, and gender effect the identity formation of Muslim female university students.

I purposively selected my main participants because they fit all the criteria for participation in this research. Importantly, I recruited participants who represented a diversity of identities as it pertained to Muslim women. In addition to semi-structured interviews, the time I spent interacting in the daily routines of Muslim women help me understand their unique personalities, dispositions, and sensibilities. My participation in the Muslim Student Association's sponsored activities; my relationship with members of the Muslim Student Association, and the Muslim community of Knoxville strengthened my ability to facilitate a useful semi-structured interview. Thanks to my communication with these Muslim communities, and other Muslim students, I interact with in everyday life, I was able to interview 34 Muslim female students, a relatively large number for such a small demographic population on campus.

After the University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board approved the study, I started recruiting participants and the interviewing process for my stud began. I interviewed participants between Augusts and December 2017. Participants were provided with a letter of consent and asked to sign two copies—one for them to keep and one for my files. The implementation procedures of each interview lasted about between 45-90 minutes and took place in agreed on time and locations that were suitable for the participants, and most asked to meet in the library. All interviews were done face-to-face. I recorded all interviews with a portable

digital audio recorder, and they were transcribed verbatim. All interview records and transcribes were filed and stored in my password locked personal laptop.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2017) has introduced several basic processes to explain the whole process of qualitative data analysis. These processes are: 1) “organizing and preparing the data for analysis”, 2) “reading or looking at all the data”, 3) “start coding all of the data”, 4) “use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis”, 5) “advance how the description and themes will be presented in the qualitative narrative”, and 6) “make an interpretation in qualitative research of the findings or results” (p. 190).

After a non-continuous twelve months’ period, my fieldwork was completed. This stage of the qualitative study was made simpler by carefully organizing data throughout my fieldwork. The raw data comprises of digital audio files and notebooks filled with field notes. The volume of this data is enormous; therefore, the question arises: What do I do with all of this data? My filed notes from the participant observations was already in form, but my semi-structured interviews needed to be transcribed. I, of course, edited, corrected, and eventually entered my field notes. Likewise, I corrected and edited my interview transcriptions and entered them into textual analysis software as well.

First, through my written transcriptions, and observation data, I attempted to familiarize myself with my data, make notes and develop initial impressions. From each transcript, I identified significant statements related to experiences of Muslim female students who come from diverse ethnic, racial, national, and cultural backgrounds. Second, I analyzed the data from my observations and interviews to identify common themes across and within my participants.

During the initial stage of my analysis, various themes emerged from the group. I provided an overall interpretation of the ways Muslim women's experiences and stories inside and outside of UTK campus. Finally, in qualitative research, the fieldworker is the research instrument, and he or she refines, broadens, and strengthens his or her conceptual relations through participation in the daily routines of ordinary people. By adopting a nonjudgmental orientation, the ethnographer appreciates the idiosyncratic views of the culture-sharing group, and he or she offers both a description of their worldview and a scientific critique of the research topic.

For analysis, I started with reading the interviews and my field notes to get a general sense about the participants, and to show similarities and differences between their views and experiences. This process of reading through the data and interpreting them continued, over and over again, to understand more background of every individual case and how it might be related to other topics. When I read transcripts, I underlined significant segments of each interview in different colors, to categorize and improve diverse themes and sub-themes.

Chapter 1 explained the study in detail and argued the central issue which motivated me to study this research. Chapter 2 explores American and international literature are related with the topic of Muslim women. For the goal of this study, I divide the existing literature into the three different parts: Racialization of Muslim and their exclusion from whiteness and how Muslim women's citizenship status affect their racialization process and their experiences. The third part of the literature focused on the diversity among Muslim women and its impact on their experiences and construction of their identities by drawing theory of intersectionality.

Chapter 3, 4, 5, and 6 analyzed findings. Chapter 3 discussed how racialization experienced by all Muslim female students, but in different ways in the U.S. before and after Trump's presidency. I started to interview with the participants approximately 9 months after the

last presidential election, so the participants could compare their experiences in the U.S before and after Trump's presidency. Chapter 4 underscores how Muslim female students define differently the meaning of the hijab more from a focus on religion that intersects with their other identities such as a coming from different country where is governed by sharia law or democracy, being American citizens, the branch of Islam, race, gender, and culture. Chapter 5 focused on how Muslim female students define their racial identities and themselves as a Muslim woman in the U.S. Chapter 6 examined being a Muslim Women in the Trump Era and coping strategies to challenge the negative stereotypes of Muslims and Islam that have been on the rise. Finally, Chapter 7 summarized research results and discussed their meaning and effects for the future of Muslim women in the United States. I also provided suggestions for future research in this chapter.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review aims to provide a review of existing literature and research regarding identity construction and experiences of Muslim female students in Knoxville, TN. First, I give a short map the evolution of race and Islam and an overview on racialization of Muslims and Islam. Next, I show the relationship between race, religion, and citizenship and how religion and race play an important role to exclude individuals from citizenship or not feel a sense of belonging in America. Finally, I show how Muslim women are homogenized as a single non-distinct category and then discuss the term of intersectionality to truly explain experiences of Muslim women coming from different nations, ethnicities, races, and cultures.

Racialization of Muslims and Islam

In the United States, the concepts of race and ethnicity are complicated and difficult to describe and frame. These terms have been the sets of a continuing challenging terrain (Omi & Winant 1994). Different researchers have proposed a different set of racial and ethnic categories because there is no consistent definition of their meaning due to the complex social and historical process of racial categories (Chavez and Guido-DiBrito1999; Omi & Winant 1994). Although race's origins are in religious idioms of the medieval period (Frederickson, 2002), the idea of race really began to develop in the modern period and is associated with the onset of European expansion, the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism and the development of capitalism. In *Racism: A Short History*, George M., Frederickson explicitly attempts to show connections between religion and race in fifteenth-and-sixteenth century Spain by showing the conflict between Catholic Spain and Jews and Muslims (Rana 2007:152). Frederickson (2002) also

explained how proto-racism was based on religious beliefs rather than the color of one's skin. According to Fredrickson, discrimination in medieval era was mostly based on religion and not on naturalistic or scientific concepts. It could only be through God that some individuals could be assigned the status of slavery. The color code was an invention that occurred in the modern period. For example, in the medieval era, Jews were seen as "less human" because of their religious beliefs. Jews were considered to be in league with the devil because they denounced Christ. Like Jews, Muslims were considered inferior to Christians (Grosfoguel and Mielants 2006; Rana 2011).

In the modern period, theories of race were about black- white binary in America. As African-American sociologists, such as W.E.B. DuBois (1903) and Frazier (1968), started to theorize about race, these scholars also disagreed with majority of race theories that rationalize racial inequalities. W.E.B. DuBois specifically attempts to demonstrate how racial idea, is one of the main theoretical creations of modernity, has re-emerged and re-shaped as an important and functional ideology throughout modernity. He explains his experiences about cultural factors and "scientific race dogma" such as evolution theory, brain weight, and measuring intelligence (Du Bois 2007: 49). Modernity gave new prominent and influence on the idea of race and at the same time making it thinkable to question whether its usage as a basis for social ranking and privilege was rational.

In mid-20th century, assimilation theories became popular due to assimilationist concern of Americans, and especially Robert Park (1950) made one of the most important contributions on assimilation theories by proposing the cycle of race relations: "contact, conflict, accommodation, and *assimilation*". Using the concept, "Race Relation Cycle", he challenged biological determinism and provided the first social conception of race in mainstream sociology.

1965 the Immigration and Nationality Act changed the previous laws that restricted “immigration from non-European countries such as those from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East” and as a result these immigrants have formed different racial, ethnic, and religious groups (Selod and Embrick 2013: 644). As a result, current race studies have started to investigate the new racial paradigms in order to understand the experiences of these different immigrant groups in the United States through social construction theories of race (Selod and Embrick 2013). Due to changing the Immigration and Nationality Act, immigrants from eastern Europe, the Middle East, and eastern Asia (such as China) started to flow easily. Especially in terms of religion, removing these restrictions have caused to increase individuals who has different religious backgrounds such as Jews, Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and others (Clark 2017). Thus, scholars on ethnicity and race need to include these immigrant groups into the broad ethnic framework (Steinberg 2007). Park and others found it necessary to assign identity and status to these groups and bring them into an American melting pot (Steinberg 2007).

Religion and race provide diverse and complex picture of American racial structure. They both shift and develop over time in response to changing historical and cultural contexts. Religion is an important point to explain the construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of racial identities and boundaries (Clark 2017). Religion has also played an important role to distinguish “groups of people based on biological differences, relying on the notion that you could have Christian or non-Christian blood” (Selod and Embrick 2013: 648). It is important to understand how some cultural features, like religious identity, are a key point to explain people’s experience with discrimination and people’s racial identification themselves (Balibar 1991; Naber 2008; Love 2009; Meer and Modood 2009; Modood 2005; Selod and Embrick 2013; Husain 2017). There is a bunch of terms to refer to negative feelings and attitudes towards Islam

and Muslims (Considine 2017). Islamophobia has become the most commonly known and used term (Considine 2017). According to Said (2003), orientalism supports colonization and the imperial ideology. Edward Said was the first to use “Islamophobia” in English. In Said’s studies, “Orientalism” (1978) and “Covering Islam” (1997), he argued how orientalist and imperialists have constructed racial and religious differences between groups of people to rationalize the imbalance of power between the East and the West, the genocide and colonization. Edward Said (2003) contends that orientalism is “a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (p. 3). Western dominance upon power and knowledge, the Western Orientalists stigmatize the Oriental as weak, backwards, barbarism, and ignorant (p. 4). According to Said (2003), Islam is characterized in Orientalist views and the media helped to show unfriendly pictures of Islam. In addition, orientalist and imperial conceptions have caused the stigmatization of Muslims as a potential terrorist, backward, and underdeveloped in contrast to a progressive and modern West (Cainkar 2009; Rana 2011; Said 2003).

Racialization of Muslim began long before Islamophobia. According to Clark (2017), “just as Muslims are not new to America, neither are negative views of Islam” (p.36). Due to the Barbary Wars of the 19th century’s first decade (such as Muslim leaders, soldiers, pirates, and North Africans) strengthened traditional Christian fears and hatred of Islam (Clark 2017). Until late 20th century, Islam just described as marginalized and exoticized in American social discourse because of Hollywood producers who viewed Muslims as harem-holding, turbaned sheikhs, or belly dancers. However, late-20th-century many Middle East wars have caused anti-Islamic and racial prejudice. So, Islam started to become a part of America’s religious and social discourse. Especially 9/11 was the turning point in public opinion about Muslims and Islam. Like

the event of 9/11, the resulting war in Iraq, and ISIS has increased the narrative of a racialized discourses of Muslims as ‘other’ because they are seen a threat to Western values and security (Carr 2016). Thus, social discourses of cultural incompatibility of Muslim has turned to discourses of security, radicalization and the fear of home-grow terrorism over time in response to changing historical and cultural contexts (Carr 2016:3). The social construction of the “Muslim as the “other” is a racial project” (Selod and Embrick 2013:647). In today’s Western context, Orientalism and Islamophobia have caused the racialization of Muslims and the social construction of Muslims as enemies and terrorists resulting in Muslim people being racialized as a threat to Western culture and religion (Cainkar 2009; Meer and Modood 2010; Rana 201; Considine 2017). Without abandoning Orientalist ideology and Islamophobia, the concept of racialization makes contribution to understanding prejudicial attitudes towards Muslims, Islam, and Islamic social practices (Considine 2017:6).

Racialization has many meanings across disciplines. The majority of definitions of racialization generally focus on racial meanings, and most of these definitions explain racialization as a matter of process (Husain 2017: 4). According to Omi and Winant (1994), racialization is “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group” (p.64). Racialization focuses on “how the phenomic, the corporeal dimension of human bodies, acquires meaning in social life” (Omi and Winant 2014:109). However, Selod and Garner (2015), and Selod and Embrick (2013) explain that Omi and Winant’s description constrains the use of racialization because this definition means that racialization is practical for group of people that have previously been uncategorized (Selod and Garner 2015: 13). Selod and Embrick (2013) argue that racialization is not only connected to an actual race, but it also refers to the attachment of racial meanings to groups of people, ideological

and cultural, and social practices such as language, beliefs, and clothing. Racialization represents “the changing meanings of race within different political, social, and economic contexts producing a more expansive and complex discussion of race” (Selod and Embrick 2013: 648). Despite the persistence of racialization, racial categories are not inherent nor are racial identities static. Racial identity is persistently disputed and reinterpreted. By using Selod and Embrick’s application of the concept, racialization is not only a process, which produce new racial groups, but also helps to understand how race and racism change depending on the social and historical circumstance and allows the intersection of gender, race, skin tone, language, citizenship status, and national background.

Husain (2017) explains that there are many researches on race and religion (Alcoff 2009; Balibar 1991; Kibria 2002; Love 2009; Meer and Modood 2009; Naber 2008; Rana 2011; Selod and Embrick 2013; Garner and Selod 2014) in the sociology of race literature that refer to Omi and Winant's racial formation theory; and like Omi and Winant, they define racialization similarly as a matter of racial meaning (Husain 2017:4; Selod and Garner 2015). These studies show that religion does not only affect the specific arrangements, government, and performances of bodies in social contexts, but it is also a key point in order to understand race and ethnicity in contemporary societies (Geertz and Banton 1966; Rana 2007; Selod and Embrick 2013; Carr 2015; Moosavi 2015). According to Husain (2017), this definition of racialization help “a race-focused analysis of groups that are not official racial groups according to the state but for whom racial meaning appears to be at work, such as Muslims and Jews” (p.4). This definition also improves the racial framework that only considers phenotypical features like color of the skin and eye and hair texture alone. However, Husain (2017) criticizes that Muslim racialization literature (such as Love, 2009; Rana, 2011; Selod & Embrick, 2013) ignores the black–white

binary paradigm of race, while studies on the racial structure ignores the role of religion in creating of racial structure (p.3). Moreover, Husain (2017) said that religion was racialized at the beginning of race theory, our studies should analyze “how and [to] what end religion continues to be racialized today rather than analyzing if it is racialized today” (Husain 2017: 4). Prior to imperialist classifications of race, religious identities played a crucial role to categorize people into social, economic, and political orders (Selod and Embrick 2013). In Europe, Christianity was dominant religion and religious discrimination toward non- Christians was common because they were also considered as inferior to Christians (Selod and Embrick 2013). In order to protect their privileges, Christian populations rationalized “imperialism, and in many instances genocide” (Selod and Embrick 2013: 646).

Muslim experiences with racism show how religious differences have played an important role on determining who is “deserving and undeserving of certain rights and privileges” in U.S as well as in a global society (Selod and Embrick 2013: 650-651). When cultural characters such as religion, language, and nationality are racialized, this allows us to clarify how Muslim experiences with discrimination are racial (Selod and Embrick 2013). Especially, after 9/11, Muslims have been stigmatized as “terrorist” and this stereotype has changed people’s understanding of Islam in U.S and other Western countries. Like the event of 9/11 and the resulting war in Iraq, ISIS has also negatively affected public opinion about Muslims and Islam. They increase the narrative of a racialized discourses of Muslim, both immigrants and those born here as ‘other’ because they are considered a threat to Western values and safety (Gotanda 2011; Carr 2016). According to Carr (2016), “In addition to these discourses of cultural incompatibility, Muslim communities are also in the crosshairs of international discourses of security, radicalization and the fear of home-grow terrorism, heightened again in

the era of ISIS” (p.3). Therefore, individuals in America have started to believe the racial stereotype of the Muslim terrorist instead of Islam as faith and “imperialism is once again being sold to the American public under the guise of the ‘war on terror’” (Selod and Embrick 2013: 647; Gotanda 2011). Due to the racial stereotype of the Muslim such as terrorist, foreign, non-whiteness, aggressive, and violent, Muslim people are considered incapable of upholding democratic ideals, values, and national security. As a result, Muslims are racially categorized in the United States. Moreover, in the western perception of Islam, the ethnic, racial, and cultural differences among Muslims have largely been ignored and Muslim populations are considered and examined as a homogenous group. Even though Muslims have suffered from discrimination and intolerance due to their religious identity for a long time and racialization of Muslim homogenizes as inferior whole groups of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and identities, these important points have been largely ignored within studies (Selod and Embrick 2013).

The inclusion of Muslims as a part of American racial formations is certainly complex (Rana 2007). But using the concept of racialization, some scholars have attempted to clarify the complex racial framework of Muslim Americans¹. By using a racialization frame, we are able to study a more complicated analysis of how some perceivably “white” ethnic groups have to negotiate their own perceived racial identities with how they are racialized (Selod and Embrick 2013: 648). Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, many scholars focus on ‘racialization’ to explain

¹ While Arab Americans are formally categorized as white, they are informally classified as nonwhite. Until 1944, Arabs were not considered as white by the court. Arab and immigrants who are from Middle Eastern fought to be legally and officially nominated as White and they were classified as white by the Census in 1970. However, Arab Americans have lobbied for reclassification as a separate racial or ethnic group since the 1980s (Beydoun 2015). While Arabs and Middle Eastern people were considered as white by law since 1944, The Census Bureau has proposed that a new Middle Eastern or North African (“MENA”) racial category to add in 2020 census reform (Beydoun 2015).

the experiences of Arab people who are currently racially categorized as “white” by the US Census but do not experience many of the benefits of whiteness (Selod 2015: 79). Although Arabs are racially classified as white legally, Arabs are considered to be visible minorities because of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (Selod 2015: 79). Racialization can also be used to explain the racial experiences of different racial and ethnic groups in U.S. and it also helps to explain how these different racial and ethnic groups are placed in the US racial framework is built off of the historically constructed color line between blackness and whiteness (Selod and Embrick 2013; Husain 2017).

The majority of studies on Muslim racialization discusses that Muslims are defined as foreign or others and what does it mean to be American (Bayoumi 2006; Love 2009; Geertz and Banton 1966; Gotanda 2011; Elver 2012; Beydoun 2013; Selod and Embrick 2013; Garner and Selod 2014; Moosavi 2015; Rana 2007; Selod 2015). These studies show that religion has played an important role in racial classification today (Husain 2017). There is also a connection between being Muslim and being non-white, or “brown”, thus specifically, Muslims are viewed through the stereotypic lens of being non-white or brown (Husain 2017). In the article, *Moving beyond (and back to) the black–white binary: a study of black and white Muslims’ racial positioning in the United States*, Husain’s findings (2017) indicate how blackness and whiteness is considered as Christianity/secularism while Muslimness is defined as brownness. The concept of racialization clarifies another important point that black and white Muslim Americans are also “racialized as foreign and brown in the moments when they are perceived as Muslim” (p.14). Husain’s study only analyzes racial identities of American Muslims and she did not focus on how international Muslims in U.S. construct their racial identities. Without changing the main idea of a color spectrum, racialization of Muslim extends the black-white paradigm (Chen

2010:417). Furthermore, “Middle Easterners are classified by the government as white, even though they do not enjoy the privileges associated with being white” due to the stereotypic lens of being non-white or brown (Chen 2010:417).

The studies about racialization and racialization of Muslim (Bayoumi 2006; Love 2009; Geertz and Banton 1966; Gotanda 2011; Elver 2012; Beydoun 2013; Selod and Embrick 2013; Garner and Selod 2014; Moosavi 2015; Rana 2007; Selod 2014; Zopf 2017) help to investigate how Western’s view, attitudes and actions toward Muslims effect how Muslims view themselves and describe their racial identity. Using Du Bois’s concept of double consciousness (1903), we can clearly understand how “minority groups learn to read themselves through the eyes and mindsets of the majority population, and regulate their behaviour accordingly in specific contexts, is also more widely applicable” (Garner and Selod 2014: 9). For example, although in the article, *A Different Kind of Brown: Arabs and Middle Easterners as Anti-American Muslims*, Zopf (2017) did not specifically focus on self-identification of Egyptians, he explained that many Egyptians self-identified themselves as white, but they think that non-Muslim people do not consider or treat them as white. Like Zopf’s study (2017), Cainkar (2008) also uncovered that Arabs and Middle Easterners repeatedly identify themselves as white but in interviews they said that they feel themselves as other due to their experiences in the society.

Another important study is Shryock and Lin’s article, *Arab American identities in question. In: Detroit Arab American Studies Team*, to show the connection between religious identity and racial classification. According to data from the Detroit Arab American Study, although Arab Muslims are racially classified as white by the USA census, they are more likely to describe their race as ‘other’, while Arab Christians were more likely to describe their identity as ‘white’ (Shryock and Lin 2009). This study shows how religious identity plays a role on self-

classification. Unlike Arab Christians, Arab Muslims believe that their whiteness is questioned and they are not part of white community because of their belonging to the Muslim faith (Garner and Selod 2014).

During the last presidential election and Trump's presidency, islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments have increased in U.S. Since Muslims and Islam were described as a threat to national security. After Trump becomes president, he enacted the travel ban to protect the nation from Muslim terrorist entry into the United States. According to Pew Research center (2017) the number of assaults against Muslims in the United States rose significantly. It is even higher from the 2001, the year of 9/11 terrorist attacks. Muslim people are discriminated and racialized as a non-American, a non-White, and a threat for national security in the U.S. because of their religious identity.

Today, there are many scholars discuss on the 2020 census. Considering the chance that a Middle Eastern and North African category is entered in the 2020 census, race scholars need to fill some the gaps in literature related to the experiences and racial identifications of Muslims.

Citizenship

There is a strong relationship between race and citizenship. The change in the perception of racial profiling is obviously based on "the fact that those individuals who are being profiled are not considered to be part of us" (Volpp 2002: 434). For much of the U.S. history, race, gender, class, ethnic differences and religious identity have been cause to exclude individuals from citizenship and not feel a sense of belonging in America (Selod 2015: 81). Although nationality legally refers to the place where the person was born and/or holds *citizenship*, not all people enjoy the full privileges of citizenship (Selod 2015). Thus race, religion, gender and

sexual orientation have played a role on people in terms of defining them as ideal citizens or others (Selod 2015).

Many scholars explain the relationship not just in terms of rights but also in terms of gaining a sense of belonging (Khan 2002; Volpp 2002; Selod 2015; Khabeer 2016). Volpp (2002) explain that citizenship should not be only considered as a form of inclusion, but also as a process of interpellation. Using the term “interpellation”, she clarifies how the society denies certain individuals or groups’ transcendence, and sees them as object of exclusion (Volpp 2002). This process of interpellation has impacts on formal American Muslims who have different nationality backgrounds and “have been thrust outside of the protective ambit of citizenship as identity” (Volpp 2002: 440). Dominant white cultural norms and values such as language use, accent, custom of dress, beauty, and religion create conceptions of who are considered real citizens and who can enjoy the privileges of full citizenship (Khabeer 2016). For example, in the article, *Citizenship Denied: The Racialization of Muslim American Men and Women post-9/11*, Selod (2015) shows how a Muslim identity has become racialized through a positioning of non-Americanness. Based on interviews with Muslim Americans, she explains how racialization processes of Muslims interact with Islamophobic discourses and actions such as “de-Americanization, cultural exclusion and a denial of a national identity” (Selod 2015: 78). Muslims face rejection from social citizenship or membership in society according to negative stereotypes and preconception about a Muslim identity. After 9/11, while Islam is seen as a ‘threat’ and Muslims are considered anti-modern and anti-Western, Muslim women are not only stereotyped as powerless and sexually, physically, and socially oppressed, but also as an “anti-American terrorist” or “terrorist-sympathizer” (Aziz 2012; Beydoun 2013; Galonnier 2015).

It is worth noting here that in this context, people who are different from dominant

cultural norms and values face exclusion all around world (Khabeer 2016: 104). For example, in the article, *the racialization of Muslim converts in Britain and their experiences of Islamophobia*, Moosavi (2015) explains, “Muslims are racialized quite differently. For example, in Malaysia, Muslims are racialized as Malay (Brown 2010; Szajkowski et al. 1996: 27–8); in Nigeria, Muslims are racialized as Hausa (Anthony 2000; Uchendu 2010); in the USA, Muslims are racialized as Arab (Salaita, 2006); in Germany, Muslims are racialized as Turkish (Allen 2005: 63; Nielsen, 1995: ix); and in France, Muslims are racialized as Maghrebian (Allen 2005: 63; Nielsen 1995: ix).” (p. 25). What is clear is that Muslims are racialized and face exclusion from social citizenship or membership in different ways depending on the country context and its relation to Islam and forms of racialization (Moosavi 2015: 25).

Moreover, in America, Muslim communities “organized around notions of original and authentic community group identity preserved and lived” (Khan 2002:16). Although majority of these communities defined themselves based on their national identity, “external forces tend to homogenize these communities into the single Arab-Muslim community” (Khan 2002: 16). Khan (2002) explains “this conflation along with the notion of ‘Arab as terrorist’ may reinforce mainstream fear of Muslims, the third largest religious group in North America” (pp.15-16). Thus, because of the racialization of Islam and Muslims as terrorist, foreign, aggressive, and violent in America, ‘Muslim looking people’ become the victims of hate crimes and social discrimination. However, while Muslims have different national and cultural background, many researchers examine Muslim Americans in North America as universal and undifferentiated sociological category (Khan 2002; Aziz 2012). Moreover, unfortunately, there is no substantial sociological debate about international Muslim students and their experiences in U.S and majority of studies that work on experiences of Muslim Americans or Arab Muslim by ignoring

diverse ethnic, cultural, national and racial characteristics of Muslims.

Intersectionality

Racialization as a comprehensive concept allows analyzing how some groups are excluded from whiteness and how race and racisms have changed in the context of changing social and historical environment (Sleod and Embrick 2013). There are several studies analyze how Muslim are rejected from whiteness and how they are racialized by focusing only their religious identity rather than applying the intersectional approach (Rana 2011; Selod and Embrick 2013; Husain 2017). For example, Rana (2011) just focuses on how religion plays a role on racialization of Muslims without examining the intersection of religion with skin tone, gender, language, citizenship status, and nationality in further racializing people. To utilize racialization as a broad concept, it should be analyzed with the intersection of other factors such as skin tone, gender, language, nationality, cultural background, wearing headscarf, praying five times a day, and fasting during Ramadan. Muslims do not form a homogenous group but a heterogeneous group. So, this study examines experiences of Muslim women in terms of their diverse backgrounds, cultures, and identities.

It is worth to note that Muslim women coming from different nations, ethnicities, races, and cultures are each placed within the dominant and intersecting practices of race, class and gender in very different ways (Mirza 2013). As an analytic framework intersectionality is crucial to understand racialization of Muslim women and everyday lives experiences of Muslim women “who are simultaneously positioned in multiple structures of dominance and power as gendered, raced, classed, colonized, and sexualized others” (Mirza 2013:7). Intersectionality, a term developed by Crenshaw (1989, 1991), but whose ideas harken back to nineteenth century mid 20th century black feminists, is concerned with understanding the structural and dynamic

outcomes of the interactions between the different practices of discrimination (Crenshaw 1989; Salem 2013). Intersectionality, as a sociological theory, attempts to examine how varying social and cultural categories of discrimination, which are constructed, interrelate on numerous levels; and how this contributes to social inequality in different historical times and geographic (Brah and Phoenix 2013; Mirza 2013). As Brah and Phoenix state, “we regard the concept of intersectionality as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts” (Brah and Phoenix 2004:76). Thus, the theory postulates that the multiple levels of discrimination (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, culture, class, etc.) do not act independent of one another; but instead interrelate and create an oppression that reproduces the “intersection” of multiple forms of discrimination (Hill Collins 2000; McCall 2005; Prins 2006; Walby 2009; Choo and Ferree 2010; Brah and Phoenix 2013; Salem 2013). Additionally, how the “intersection” of multiple forms of discrimination cause social, economic, and political inequality in women's lived experiences.

Feminisms developed and rearticulated by ‘women of color’ stress “the intersections of multiple identities within asymmetrical social power relations” (Ali and Sonn 2017: 1170). Black American feminists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Combahee River Collective, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde and Patricia Hill Collins criticize how mainstream feminists analyze women’s experiences and activities as universal by looking only at gender as the most important variable. According to Black American feminists, scholars should explore the connecting system of oppression such as gender, class, and race in order to analyze women’s experiences. For example, in the article, *I Was Aggressive for the Streets, Pretty for the Pictures’: Gender,*

Difference, and the Inner City Girl, Nikki Jones (2009) focuses on how young women of color in the inner-city experience difficulties in different situations due to their race, gender, and class. Black American feminists advocate that their race, class, and gender have played an important role on their realities. That became “the holy trinity” of feminist studies: race-gender-class (Salem 2013). The intersectionality approach has started to add other identities such as religion, sexuality, physical and mental disability, and so on. Due to these different social, economic, racial, sexual, cultural, and religious factors, it is problematic to talk about a “universal feminism” or a “universal woman” (Salem 2013: 6).

As Aziz (2012) write, there is similarity between the situation of Muslim women post-9/11 and Black women's experiences in antiracist politics (p.223). The intersectionality of race, gender, religion, culture and nation play an important role on the analysis of Muslim women's experiences after the post-9/11 era (Aziz 2012). Since, the goal of intersectionality is “to listen to the voices of women and men on their own terms, in order to piece together narratives and unpack experiences that can help in understanding social life” (Salem 2013:5). Intersectionality not only provides a way to methodologically analyze the complexities of race, gender, religion, culture, sexuality, and nationality, but also interrogates how “gendered and raced Islamophobic discourses as lived in and through Muslim women's embodied subjectivities” (Aziz 2012; Mirza 2013:7). Although the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, gender, and religion have an important impact on Muslim women’s experiences, most feminist researchers neglect to analyze how religion intersects with race, ethnicity, gender, language and religiosity level such as wearing a headscarf, praying five times a day and fasting during Ramadan in their research (Moghadam 1994; Cole and Ahmadi 2003; Peek 2003; Nasir and Al-Amin 2006; Neusner 2009; Seggie and Sanford 2010; Beydoun 2013). Thus, to understand Muslim women identity and experiences in

the context of the dominant political, racist, and sexist discourses, such as Islamophobia and patriarchal Islamic supremacy, scholars should examine how gender, racial, ethnic, national, and religious identities are acted, experienced and expressed by Muslim women.

In contrast to their male counterparts, Muslim women experience a unique form of racialization due to their gender and different ethnic and racial backgrounds. Since, some Muslim women wear the hijab that is one of the most identifiable symbols of Islam, the headscarf, they are easily detectible as a Muslim and have faced discrimination and hatred by the public (Selod and Embrick 2013). The headscarf refers to “wearing modest clothes in general that are in line with conservative Islamic beliefs” (Ghumman and Ryan 2013: 674). While some Muslims advocate the headscarf as a cultural phenomenon rather than an Islamic obligation, others think that the headscarf is a symbol of oppression that shows the disadvantageous situation of Muslim women in the western context (Ghumman and Ryan 2013: 674). On the other hand, some Muslims describe the headscarf (hijab) as a central part of Muslim women’s dress code that is required by the Qur’an. Furthermore, some Muslim women argue that despite wearing headscarf is one of the most important religious obligation, they prefer “to wear the headscarf to publicly affirm their American Islamic identity in what they perceive to be an anti-Islamic environment or to reject the Western view of beauty and to gain more respect by resisting sexual objectification of oneself” (Ghumman and Ryan 2013: 674).

The headscarf is a symbol that evokes orientalist and colonialist descriptions of Muslim cultures and that is historically and culturally different from Western style feminine dress. In the book *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (2008) has defined the process of othering in the context of racialization. Fanon explains “the way in which the anti-black racism of white culture constitutes the ‘black’ as other to the ‘white’ self through a mechanism of abjection” (quoted in

Al-Saji 2010: 885). The veiled woman is othered in western perception that has produced generalized pictures of Muslim women as sexually, physically, and socially oppressed. Thus, the emancipation of Muslim women from the traditional backward religion is a focus of western perception. According to Aziz (2012), “an intersectional analysis, therefore, interrogates the behavior that conforms to stereotypes specific to headscarved Muslim women,” such as sexually, physically, and socially oppressed woman (p. 223). Before 9/11 terrorist attacks, Arabs and Muslims were discriminated based primarily on their otherness, non-whiteness, and foreignness (Galonnier 2015). Western, white, European, and Judeo-Christian values have privileges and these values are dominant in American society. The society has categorized people using some values and norms, and then people have started to identify each other with this categorization (Johnson 2010). In the U.S, the majority of people believe that such values (being white, European, or Christian) are superior and everybody, specifically immigrants and foreigners, should adhere to them if they want to integrate themselves into American society and culture.

The aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks has caused an increase in studies related to increased negative attitudes and discrimination towards Muslims and Islam in the Western countries, as well as the racialization of Arab Muslims (Zimmerman 2013: 43). Especially, Muslim women who wear headscarves deal with other stereotypes such as “anti-American terrorist” or “terrorist-sympathizer” (Aziz 2012). Eric Love, critical race studies scholar, states that “Islamophobia both results from and contributes to the racial ideology of the United States, an ideology based on socially constructed categories of phenotypical characteristics, on how individuals physically appear. In other words, wearing a headscarf or a turban, having certain skin tones or speaking with certain accents are all physical markers that are enough to create a vulnerability to Islamophobia in the United States” (p.401-402). In this sense, all these

stereotypes show why intersectionality is mainly connected to Muslim women (Aziz 2012; Zimmerman 2014).

Additionally, the current situation of Muslims in Western countries, and especially in America, is representing an array of changes and challenges that will continue to loom large in the foreseeable future, or are already underway, and threaten Muslims in America. Especially, after the last election of Donald Trump, islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments have increased in U.S. During the election campaign, Trump and his supporters expressed the anti-Muslim sentiments. After Trump became president, one of his first actions was barring entry from seven Muslim majority countries, and he also temporally stopped the admission of all refugees to the United States in order to protect the nation from Muslim terrorist entry into the United States. Because of these latest political actions, Muslims have faced discrimination and suspicion because of their religious belief again. Moreover, Muslims have felt concerned and worried about their place in American society and their future. Although Muslim populations have different ethnics, linguistic, cultural, and national backgrounds, they were generally considered as one homogenized group through stereotyping is one of the important signs of the racialization process. As a result, in America, many Muslim looking people, whether they are Muslim or not, have faced Islamophobic practices due to such stereotyping (Elver 2012: 151).

Conclusion

This chapter explores American and international literature are related with the topic of Muslim women. For the goal of this study, I divide the existing literature into the three different parts. The first part of the literature analyzed racialization of Muslim and their exclusion from whiteness, while the second focused on how Muslim women's citizenship status affect their racialization process and their experiences. The third body of the literature does not only

encompass racialization of Muslim and citizenship but also add the intersection of other factors such as skin tone, gender, language, nation of origin, cultural background, wearing headscarf, praying five times a day, and fasting during Ramadan and their effect on Muslim women's experiences and formation of their identities. While some studies just focus on Islam and its' effects on Muslim women's experiences in America, some studies focus on experiences of women who is identifying as Muslim and all raised in the United States (Aziz 2012; Zimmermen 2013; Ghumman and Ryan 2013; Howel 2014; Koller 2015). In addition, both types of studies are limited within part of the literature on Muslim female students and most of the studies have analyzed only Muslim American students or Muslim American students who wear headscarf. For example, while in the book, *Muslim American Women on Campus: Undergrad Social Life and Identity*, Mir (2014) analyzes experiences of Muslim American women on campus by focusing on their diverse ethnical background, she ignores non-American Muslim women. Additionally, some studies (Javed 2011; Zimmerman 2013) explore experience and the identity negotiation of Muslim women who are part of certain cultural or national groups in the United States. I believe that there is still a need for more study in this area, specifically in the particular context of higher education in America. As in the table 2 below, I apply a racialization framework based in a historical context, which informs racial meanings of the Muslim identities, the Muslim experience, Islamophobia, and legislations about Muslims and Islam in the United States. All components in the column of racial meanings have potential to be racial meanings that have been applied to Muslim women in the U.S. The importance of the study is that all Muslim women experience practice of racialization, but intersectional identities shape how they experience racialization in different way. Even though this graph does not reflect the intersectional outcomes, in this study, the role of intersecting identities is the key pattern of diverse forms of

racialization because different forms of all these processes in different combinations produce different intersectional experiences for the participants. Thus, all Muslim are not only racialized based on their religion, but also depending on their dress, modestly lifestyle, citizenship status, skin color, language, ethnic, and national backgrounds.

In the next sections, I analyzed the data for emerging themes. The overarching research question that guided this study was: How do Muslim female students who wear headscarves and do not wear it; who are citizens or are not experience practices of racialization, regarding the outside and inside campus environment on the University of Tennessee campus where the majority of its enrollment is self-identified as Christian? with the purpose to understand racialization of Muslim homogenizes as inferior whole groups of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and identities.

After analysis of the data and reviewing the codes of each transcriptions, several themes and sub-themes emerged, based on the theories of racialization and intersectionality as well as the available literature in this area. The themes contain: 1) Muslim female students' practices and experiences of racialization 2) Meanings of Hijab for Muslim female students 3) Racial identity of Muslim women; 4) Being a Muslim Women in the Trump Era and Coping Strategies of Muslim female students in America. The next chapter examines the themes and the subcategories. The examination is based on the theories engaged for this study, and the related literature in the field.

Table 2. Racialization of Muslims

Historical	Geography	Bodies	Religion	Policies
Before the 9/11	Countries - Libya - Palestine - Iran Culture - Language - Citizenship - Food	- Skin tone - Hair - Dress - Facial and body features	- Secular - Muslim - Branch of Islam - Religiosity - Hijab	- Acceptance of Arab some Muslim immigrant - Post 1965 immigration high skill workers
Post 9/11	Countries - All Middle East Countries - Afghanistan - Iraq - Palestine Culture - Language - Citizenship - Food	- Skin tone - Hair - Dress - Facial and body features	- Secular - Muslim - Branch of Islam - Religiosity - Hijab	- Invade Iraq and Afghanistan - Create Department of Homeland Security - FBI target Muslims - Anti-mosque building activism
Trump era, 2016-present	Countries - Syria - Iran - Yemen Culture - Language - Citizenship - Food	- Skin tone - Hair - Dress - Facial and Body features	- Secular - Muslim - Branch of Islam - Religiosity - Hijab	- Travel Ban - Stop refugee placement

Chapter III

Muslim Female Students' Practices and Experiences of Racialization

Introduction

Intersectionality focuses on the significance of understanding the multidimensionality of intersecting identities in relation to one another and how they shape lived experiences. More specifically, intersectionality allows for an analysis of the intersections of race and racism, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, gender, religion, and language. These intersecting forces shape women Muslim student experiences who articulate their experiences via storytelling. In this chapter, I discuss how racialization occurs for Muslim female students who have different cultural, national, racial, ethnic backgrounds inside and outside campus in Knoxville. Even though Muslim populations have diverse backgrounds, Islam and Muslims are commonly constructed as a homogenous group in Western societies (Cainkar & Selod 2018; Garner & Selod 2014; Selod 2015; Zopf 2017). However, it is important to capture the diverse features of Muslim identities in order to uncover how it shapes practices and understandings of racialization.

This chapter shows that intersections between race, gender, citizenship, and religion produced a range of racialized experiences, such as feeling different, exclusion and isolation, verbal hatred, stereotypes, and micro-aggressions among my participants. More specifically, nationality, citizenship, language, culture, and religiosity levels such as wearing hijab or dressing modestly and not drinking alcohol or not eating pork shaped how participants identified and understood these experiences. I propose two main arguments. First, the recreation of government policies and media discourses in day-to-day interactions at school, on the bus, or on the streets were more dangerous for Muslim women who wore a headscarf (religiosity), were not American citizens (citizenship), and spoke English as a second language (language) than American Muslim

women, especially who are non-hijab. The former group were “visible Muslims” while the latter group had the protection of an “invisible Muslim identity.” Second, the invisible Muslim identity group more benefited from social, cultural, economic, political advantages that allowed them to distance themselves from the racialized stereotypes of “potential terrorists” and “oppressed women” that than impacted how they experienced “feeling different” and forms of “verbal hatred” and “exclusion and isolation,” compared to international Muslim female students who are hijabi or non-hijabi. International Muslim female students who came from Muslim-majority nations and who speak English as a second language were seen to be in closer proximity to notions of the “oppressed women,” “potential terrorists” than American Muslim female students.

This chapter particularly shows the importance of religiosity, i.e., wearing headscarf or living modestly life: not eating pork, not drinking alcohol, or wearing long sleeves etc., has played a crucial role on Muslim female students’ experiences. In this sense, the hijab acts as a “boundary marker” between both American hijabi Muslim women and American non-hijabi Muslim women and/or between hijabi Muslim women and non-hijabi Muslim women.

Below, I explore the five major themes related to racialization and intersecting identities which emerged from the data: 1) Feeling different; 2) Exclusion and isolation; 3) Verbal hatred; 4) Stereotypes; 5) Micro-aggressions. For each theme, I provide an understanding of the differences and similarities in the experiences and practices of American and international Muslim female students by focusing on intersections between race, gender, nationality, citizenship, culture, language, and religion.

Feeling Different

In this section I analyze the feeling many Muslim female students carry that they are different. First, I focused on American Muslim female students and then International Muslim

female students and look at their cultural, national, racial differences on how they feel. Practices of producing difference are a form of racialization for all Muslim female students but the intersection of religion, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, culture of origin, language has caused some differences on their experiences.

American Muslim Female Students

I found that that both hijabi American Muslim women of color who wear a headscarf and those who don't "feel different" along with white hijabi American Muslim women. Two Indian American non-hijabi Muslim students said that they "feel different" not only due to Muslim identity but also their racial identity because they defined their racial identity as "brown." On the other hand, none of the white, non-hijabi American Muslim female students in this study claimed that they "felt different."

American Muslim female participants in this study face the intersectionality of racialization with gender and religion because of wearing the hijab. The hijab is hidden into the intersectionality of racialization with gender and religion because their hijab is the most important symbol to make visible Muslim identity. This does not happen to non-hijabi American Muslim women because their religious identity can be masked. In this study, all hijabi American Muslim female students believe that "being Muslim and especially being hijabi is not something normal here". Therefore, they always feel that they are different. Most hijabi Muslim women were raised in private Islamic schools and they never faced any rough experiences and never felt different until high school. These women also argued that they feel more different outside campus than inside campus. For example, Basimah who is a white, Syrian-American, hijabi Muslim female student said:

People stare a little bit more outside campus just because like I did say that it isn't diverse. So, I will say that like I do notice like maybe more stares or funny looks when I

got into areas in Knoxville that are a lot [more] homogenous than the university campuses would like. (August 29, 2017)

She also said that Knoxville overall including the campus is not as knowledgeable about Islam but campus is better than Knoxville in general. She came from Nashville where is more diverse city and has a large Muslim community than Knoxville. So, she believed that here she has started to get a lot more stares.

Additionally, several hijabi American Muslim women who visit regularly their home country in summer argued that they feel different in their interactions not only with the majority white non-Muslim individuals in America, but also with Muslim people in Middle Eastern countries. Since, these women believed that they are out of the circle both in America and in Middle Eastern or other Muslim countries. For example, Evana, who is a white Syrian-American said:

I know that I am different so some of my American friends treat me a little bit different. because the culture was different for the both of us and a little bit I wasn't familiar with their way even though we both grew up in America. Even though I'm more Americanized than like Syrian people back home, I'm still not as Americanized as like white people in America. (August 21, 2017)

Another Tuana who is a white Syrian American also feels different both in American and Syria due to her clothing choices. She said that:

The only thing I don't like is back in Syria they wear like the black abaya like the traditional clothes like long black dress and some of them cover their faces too. So, like when I went there I felt more different than I was here because like if you don't wear the long black dress then people just like stared at you just like what are you doing. Like what do you look like that so there is typical. Just like there are difficulties here because when we in Syria, you are forced to wear it because of the government. But when you're here, you're not forced to do anything and here it's like you can do whatever you want. So, but like then again over there like when you're with family and you're walking with a group of girls that are all wearing it. However, here I walk with a group of girls but I'm the only one doing it. So, it's a little more difficult here I would say. But in Syria, everyone looks the same as you. It's just so don't want to say no one stops you to ask questions like do you sleep in that? Were you born in that? Are you always covered? That's weird and crazy. (September 15, 2017)

Tuana believed that her religiosity level such as wearing hijab, the way of practice in Islam to be followed and being American citizenship and being Syrian have played an important role on how she feels that she is out of circle in both countries. While in Syria, she felt more Americanized than Syrian people, she did not feel as Americanized as like white people in America due to a picture of a good Muslim in Syria, and racialized discourses in the western countries. So being a Muslim woman has been both hindering in the process of communicating in a proper way because she spent a lot of time saying that the picture people have from a Muslim woman is not a true picture. Thus, American Muslim women who wear hijabs even those who are white feel different in America due to racialized discourse about Muslim and Islam such as Muslims. It is also worth to note that not only immigrant Muslims, but also those born here as other because they are considered a threat to Western values and safety.

American Muslim women of color participants in this study face the intersectionality of racialization with race and religion due to their skin color and hijab. As much as they talk about a mutual identity shared by all their Muslim friends in Knoxville, they emphasize their own racial identity. In the study, I interviewed two hjabi American Muslim female students of color. One of them is Black American and other is Bangladeshi American. Crystal who is hijabi Black-American converted to Islam when she was a college student. She said that, "I am sure that people first see that I am Muslim due to my hijab." (August 19, 2017) She has been a Muslim for two years. Although she has been African American all her life and a Muslim for two years, people first see her as a Muslim. Moreover, she said that "being a Muslim is a little bit more different and hard." Before she converted to Islam, people see her first as a Black American and people never questioned her citizenship. However, after she converted to Islam and especially she started to wear a hijab, non-Muslim Americans see her first as a Muslim and non-American.

Since, Muslims are racialized a threat to Western values and safety and thus, her citizenship was questioned by non-Muslim Americans questioned.

Non-hijabi American women of color also said that they feel different in the society more to their racial identity. For example, Asali, one of these women who are a non-hijabi Pakistani American, stated that “you look at me you cannot understand my religion because I am not wearing headscarf and I do not have accent. Only you can guess my ethnic identity by my external appearance.” (August 1, 2017) Moreover, she believed that people cannot understand her religion at the first look because she is non-hijabi. However, she is a brown and thus race plays a bigger role for her. Due to her skin color, people generally ask her where are you from, she said Pakistani and people generally guess that she is a Muslim. According to Asali, external appearance acts an important role on racialized discourses that people face. Not only wearing hijab has caused to question citizenship of American white hijabi Muslim woman, but also being colored has led to categorized as other.

None of white non-hijabi women talk about feeling different due to their religion or race because they are American, white, and non-hijabi. Additionally, these women do not have accents and speak perfect English. Therefore, people do not assume that they are Muslim or that they belong to any minority ethnic groups. For example, Najlaa who is a white non-hijabi Palestinian American woman said that “I never face a question something like that where are you from? Because I am a white, non-hijabi and English is my native language. I think that people cannot guess that I am a Muslim or not” (August 10, 2017). Due to her invisible Muslim identity, she felt that she is a part of the society.

“Feeling different” as a form of racialization that shapes white and colored hijabi American Muslim women because of the role of hijab as a racialized boundary maker. Moreover,

while non-hijabi colored Muslim women is racialized as different through their perceived foreignness and race and less about their religion, non-hijabi white American Muslim women do not feel different or are seen as other because their religious and minority position are invisible to others. Visible religious identity or racial identity have caused to lose their privilege that their American status gives them.

International Muslim Female Students

Like American Muslim female students, International Muslim female students also argued that wearing hijab and practicing religion make their racialized religious identity visible to others, so they feel different in the society where most people are non-Muslim. Moreover, even though non-hijabi international Muslim women do not wear hijab that is the most visible and racialized symbol of Islam, they feel different as form of racialization due to their low English skills, accent, skin color, and modesty life styles such as modestly clothing, not drinking alcohol and not eating pork, or praying five times in a day, etc. International hijabi and non-hijabi Muslim women discussed their experiences at the intersection of religion, ethnicity, language, and culture of origin. As much as they refer to mutual experiences shared by American Muslim women in Knoxville, it is obvious to see how their national and cultural background has differently influenced their experiences than American Muslim women. All international Muslim women came to the United States at different times and were from countries which are governed by Sharia or Secular law and the majority people are Muslim. All these differences have led to differences on their experiences and feeling as a form of racialization in the United States.

All hijabi international students claimed that they feel different in the United States as a result of their hijabs and their different lived experiences in their home countries. For example, Sadiki who is a hijabi Egyptian woman said that:

I grew up in a country where everyone in hijab, everyone prays, fast. So being a Muslim is easy in there because most people are Muslim. In U.S we are minority and I do not see any Muslim in everyday life except MSA club, masjid. Even Muslims here, a lot of them do not wear hijab and I cannot recognize them when I see them. So, I don't see a lot of Muslim. So, it's kind of it feels like a little weird because it's like really different because I am used to be with all Muslims. And, things are getting harder practices. I have a lot of meeting and group studies with friend. I do pray I say so in every way two or three hours I excuse me my friend, I want to take a break for pray. And also, fasting days not everyone knows about Ramadan. So, they don't know. I mean they really don't know that we don't eat and drink we just pray that the other day. It sounds weird for people So I feel like a stranger. (August 25, 2017)

Serena who is a non-hijabi Syrian woman gave an example to show how she feels different as a form of racialization in the United States because of her nationality and modestly life style even though she does not wear a hijab. She stated that:

I think that two weeks ago, I was working there. So, there was a guy and he came and said oh where are you from. I said I am from Syria. He said that do people feel nervous around you? I said, no I don't think so. I do not think people feel nervous around me due to my nationality or religion. But I know that they look me weird after I tell my nationality or religion. I always feel that I am different and do not belong to this country. I feel bad about it. (September 5, 2017)

Both hijabi and non-hijabi Muslim women argued that they felt different as a form of racialization in different ways. While the hijab has played a role as a boundary marker between international hijabi and non-hijabi Muslim women. However, coming from secular or religious country, having good English skills or not, having different racial, national or cultural background also acted a role as a boundary marker among international Muslim female students and their experiences of racialization.

Especially, hijabi international Muslim female students compared their experiences in the United States with the experiences in their home country. They believed that in their home country, they were a part of community, but here they feel different due to their national and religious identities. Specifically, the hijab has played a crucial role to explain why hijabi

international Muslim women feel different instead of as a part of the society. Another Egyptian hijabi woman, Jamila, argued:

So, it's much harder definitely here because the people look at you as being different and people labels you are different. And that makes it really hard. In Egypt that most women are wearing scarves. And so that's normal. But for me here especially that I'm wearing a scarf. I'm labeled as Muslim because I look different than what other people do. It is harder of course. (August 23, 2017)

Thus, all international Muslim female students argued that they feel different as a form of racialization, but in different ways because of their racialized national, cultural, racial identities and religiosity level such as wearing a hijab, clothing modestly, praying a five times a day, not drinking alcohol or not eating pork.

Feeling Exclusion

American Muslim Female Students

Muslim people in the United States are potentially in a dangerous position in terms of cultural exclusion and isolation (Ali and Bagheri 2009; Nasir and Al-Amin 2006). In this study, many participants stated their experiences of exclusion and isolation in their communications with non-Muslim Americans inside and outside campus environment. Being hijabi or non-hijabi has an important impact in constructing the experiences of exclusion and isolation among American Muslim women. In other words, the feelings of exclusion and isolation were stated mostly by hijabi Muslim women who are white and non-white. Especially, a colored American woman believed that she felt as a part of community before she converted to Islam and started to wear a hijab. After she has become a hijabi, she has started to face exclusion as a form of racialization that shapes her experiences because of the role of the hijab as a racialized boundary maker.

Tuana who is a white hijabi American Muslim student was sad during her interview as she relayed about experiences that she has continuously faced because of her headscarf and religious identity. She particularly talked about her experience of being excluded by her classmates and professor. According to Tuana, students made a group discussion about some issues related to the class. They would talk to every person who was sitting in the room but they never addressed her in the class. She said:

So, I'm not going to lie. Wearing a headscarf is very hard for me nowadays... I am not sure that I really want to keep my hijab on or not because I have had a hard time everywhere due to my hijab. For example, in one of my classes, students made a group discussions, but they would skip over me. I am like, I do have an opinion like I can give you my opinion if you ask me. But, you could ask me. I am sitting in front of you but am I not alive or invisible or something. Because I wear the scarf like it limits me to certain things that I actually get offended by sometimes. I'm just like if it's going to limit me this much I'd rather not wear it because that's not the point of it. Like aim of wearing the scarf is to protect yourself rather than to limit Muslim women. (September 15, 2017)

In addition, she also talked about being excluded outside campus environment. She explained her feelings of exclusion outside of campus:

I know sometimes when I would get on the bus like there would be no one left beside me and literally the guy would rather stand than sit beside me and I just said that you can sit. It is funny because that still happens because of my hijab. Like back in the black history like blacks were not allowed on a bus because they were black. But like now people literally don't sit beside me because I'm sitting there even though there's no other seat left. But I'm not going to do anything to you. So yeah racism is still there. (September 15, 2017)

Tuana's experiences showed important ways of how racialization occurs on and off campus by practices of exclusion. Due to racialization of Muslim, Islam, and Islamic symbols, hijabi women are more suffered from racialization because the hijab make their Muslim identity visible to others. Additionally, she talked about the similarities between Muslims' experiences today and black people's experiences in the era when blacks were not allowed to mix with whites. Crystal who is a black hijabi American Muslim woman believed that racism is still a problem for blacks

but being a hijabi Muslim woman is bigger problem in the United States. For example, Crystal who is a black hijabi American woman converted to Islam two years ago. She has been a hijabi for two years. She believed that people have started to treat her differently after she started to wear the headscarf. She said:

After I converted, everyone had to make small talk with me. When I was at a grocery store or when I am at a clothing store, I was buying things, cashiers asking how's your day, how is the weather, things like that. So that has happened a lot less now and I don't know if it's because maybe they think I don't speak well language or I'm not sure what it is but often now people don't talk to me as much when I'm shopping, which is really interesting because I remember before people were much chattier. (August 19, 2017)

She emphasizes differences between being a hijabi and a non-hijabi black woman in terms of perceived exclusion or isolation as a form of racialization. She claimed that being a Muslim woman has risen above to shape a racialized experience for her that puts her experiences similarly with the white woman hijabi due to the racialized discourses of Islam. There are many stereotypes about Muslims and Islam such as Muslims are terrorist, Muslim women are terrorist sympathizer, and Islam promotes violence which resulted in biased, discrimination, and exclusion. Before she converted to Islam, she felt more a part of the society even though black racism was an issue in this region. After she converted to Islam and started to wear a hijab, she does not feel as a part of society because non-Muslim American people see her as a foreign or non-American and dangerous due to racialization of hijab and Muslims.

Evana who has been a hijabi for a long time also emphasized the importance of being hijabi and non-hijabi in terms of how people treat them. She said that one day when she was going out, she was wearing a hoodie instead of hijab and the lady in front of the cashier was like talking to her. She was surprised because she believes that a lot of people did not want to make eye contact with her due to her religious identity. She also believes that people are nicer and talk to her more when she does not wear a headscarf because they do not understand she is Muslim.

Like Evana, many hijabi American women students in this study said that non-Muslim Americans generally are not happy or uncomfortable interacting or being in the same environment with hijabi women. For American Muslim women, being hijabi is the most important reason to perceive exclusion and isolation due to the role of hijab as a racialized boundary maker.

Compared to the hijabi American Muslim women in this study, the experiences of exclusion amongst non-hijabi American Muslim women were scarce. Thus, participants with a visible Muslim identity are more vulnerable to exclusion or isolation. Not only Muslim women who wear headscarf but Muslim women who also do not drink alcohol, eat pork, or clothe modestly face exclusion or isolation due to a visible Muslim identity. Only two out of eight non-hijabi American women talked about feelings of exclusion. Both are Indian Americans, but they said they feel exclusion due to their religious identity rather than their racial identity. Despite both do not wear headscarf, they have modest lifestyle such as not drinking alcohol, wearing modest clothing, etc. For example, Tanuja said:

So, let's say they hold parties and stuff. You know sometimes I like going to those I'm pretty much very introverted recently. But before that I was a lot more social and extroverted and I would sometimes go to the parties and I think people generally they keep to themselves if you dress a little more modestly or if you don't drink, they are more reserved. They're not inclined to talk to you as much. They think you're maybe more judge mental. Even though in my case definitely not true like I don't judge anyone. I have friends they drink and they come from different sexual orientations. (August 1, 2017)

She believed that people always ask her where she is from due to her skin color. When she says, she is an Indian, people try to guess which religion she belongs to. Thus, her racial identity implicitly make visible her Muslim identity. Another thing that makes visible her religious identity is her modestly life style such as clothing modestly, not drinking alcohol and not eating pork. She said that when she goes to the party, everybody get a drink except her. People always

wonder why she is not drinking alcohol or not eating pork, so she feels that she needs to explain her religion and why drinking alcohol and eating pork were forbidden by her religion. She believed when people realize her religious identity, they do not want to communicate with her. As a result, not only hijab, but race and religiosity level has caused to face exclusion or isolation as a form of racialization.

International Muslim Female Students

International Muslim women experiences show that their experiences of exclusion and isolation are at the intersection of religion, citizenship, nationality, and language more than American Muslim women but the role of wear the hijab was the most critical. Compared to the hijabi international Muslim women in this study, the experiences of exclusion amongst non-hijabi international Muslim women were light and unusual. Nisa who is a hijabi Saudi Muslim women identified herself as a white Saudi Muslim woman. She said that being an international Muslim female student is hard and she faces racism everywhere such as in the classroom, on campus, in shopping malls, etc. She believed that due to her hijab, her classmates and some professors do not want to communicate with her. She stated that:

In classroom, students sit down everywhere but the place, the line that I'm sitting and no one next to me. No one!!! I was the only one sitting at that row with the 14 chairs with no one next to me. Every time this happened like this since I begin. It is happening in every class and when I sit somewhere in class, no one next to me. (October 12, 2017)

She believed that not only in campus, but also everywhere in Knoxville, she suffered from racism. This situation affects her classes, education, self-esteem, social life and family life. She said that especially the first month in Knoxville was the most difficult time of her life. She stated:

When I came here, I was looking for some place to stay on in like an apartment or home or anything like just one safe place to stay. I have been living at hotel for one month because no one wants to give me an apartment because I am a Muslim. At the beginning,

they said that we will accept you and can just do that application and we'll give you the lease assignment and that's it. It's that easy. I said OK I did the application and I paid for it. And then they said no you must have a grantor. I said OK. I brought a grantor. They said actually there are two ways that you can pay that deposit to rent an apartment or you have to get a co-signer. At that time, I didn't have enough money to pay for deposits. I decided with grantor. I told them OK I have a guarantor. They said OK fine. Actually, I went home at the beginning with my brother. He's my guarantor and they said we want someone who has a Social Security number. We don't care about his income or his working status, but your guarantor must have a social security number. I said that okay he has social security you know but he just got to graduate. He didn't find a job yet and he is self-worker. So, they said OK we don't care about this point but we care about his social security number. So, we just want to have someone to like to contact with him. I said okay that's fine. I put my brother who was my guarantor then after a couple of days they said OK just come to sign the lease and you are welcome to get to your apartment. I said okay. after a couple of days, I came to office and they did not let me sign the lease. Then they said no your guarantor doesn't work with us. You have to get another guarantor. I said OK I brought another guarantor and then we put her name for information and they said we don't care about her income but she should be working. I said OK she's working. So they said OK they let me sign the lease again I will sign two lease. But after that they said oh her income is below \$3000 and we don't accept her. After two weeks living in a hotel, I decided to pay deposit. So, after that they said I had to bring another guarantor because you cannot pay a deposit because we change our policy suddenly. we have company, it's called Lease Luck, and you have to contact with them. You have to pay for some amount for them and they will be your guarantor and you can come in I said OK what's this company. And for what it's like. Tell me a lot about it. I don't know. And she said that actually it's our first time to work with this company and we don't know anything about it. Seriously! I was talking with the manager and the manager she didn't know anything about this company. She asked a lot of this stuff who was working there and all of them they said we don't know about this company actually we didn't work with this company before. I said OK. She contacted the company and in front of me and they said like she have to pay like a hilarious amount for us to let us be her guarantor. They don't like if I supposed to pay its monthly or once a year just pay it and they say we will discuss about it later. After that I completed third week in the hotel. So I went to the police department and I ask for help from them. They called the same company and they told him about my situation. The company said that we don't care about her situation and we don't want a Muslim girl in our company. they cannot do anything for me. But they tried their best to find an apartment for me and they call too many companies to find an apartment for me. One week later, I removed my cover just for a day, and the company accepted me and they didn't recognize me without my hijab. They didn't know I am same person. And there was a huge difference between like when they saw me the first time with a cover and when they saw me at first time without cover. Yes, they behaved me different. They smile more and they talked with me and they let me to rent an apartment, and they made a lot of discounts when I was without hijab. (October 12, 2017)

Her experience with leasing officers in one of apartment companies in Knoxville showed that her racialized religious identity caused overt acts of exclusion. Although in the questionnaire and during the interview she identify her racial identity as a white, her “whiteness” did not help to feel a part of community due to her hijab that is a visible symbol her religious identity and was a racialized boundary. She also believed that taking off her hijab helped her to rent an apartment even though a person in office saw her Saudi Arab passport and understood she is not an American due to her accent. She discussed that if Muslims make their religious identity invisible and adopt American culture and lifestyle, they can avoid being unfairly targeted in America.

Some non-hijabi international students consistently complained about the university’s policy such as cutting diversity funding. They believed that the university does not provide equal opportunities for American and international students. Gulshan said that:

There is some scholarship is just for them who are Tennessean residence. Application requirement says that there is no difference based on race and gender. What does it mean this fellowship just for Tennessean? It's not just for Muslim but also for all internationals. It is really bothering me because you know international students really need more these kind of scholarships and opportunities more than Americans because they don't have family to support them here. And you know they have lots of expenses that maybe American doesn't have them. Also the university should provide some opportunities for Muslim students to practice their religion (July 31, 2017)

Additionally, participants talked about the latest event in Tennessee is the legislation-cutting state funding for the University of Tennessee’s diversity office. They criticized the legislature who created the bill of cutting funding for the University of Tennessee’s Office for Diversity and Inclusion. The university practices such as offering unequal opportunities and policy are also racializing these students but more from a focus on nationality but it intersects with their other identities such as racial, ethnic, and religious identities. Thus, non-hijabi international Muslim women claimed that they face exclusion and discrimination as a form of racialization due to their citizenship status rather than their religious identity. As a result, not

only hijab, but race, citizenship, and religiosity level has caused to face exclusion or isolation as a form of racialization.

Verbal Hatred

American Muslim Female Students

Many of my participants were verbally harassed. While hijabi American Muslim students faced verbal hatred because of their religious identity, non-hijabi American Muslim students were verbally harassed due to their racial identity. Hijabi American women experienced racism at a much greater frequency than non-hijabi American women. Since, hijab made them easily recognizable as belonging to a target group. Here, again, according to these women, more hate incidents took place outside of campus such as at grocery stores and malls than inside campus. For example, Crystal, who is a hijabi Black American woman believed that when she started to wear the headscarf, some places have suddenly begun quite uncomfortable and some people have treated her differently. She said.

It's so weird because people I don't like but I'll just tell you like what happened when I was at the grocery store one day and I was babysitting so I was with a little child and we were standing in line for checking out. Then the man in front of us turned around and looked at me and I turned back around and he started singing a religious song and he didn't say anything to me. He started singing a song about Jesus but it was so weird. That's how you might approach this situation he just starts singing church songs. (August 19, 2017)

She said that she faced many uncomfortable situations like this but she emphasizes that people who are students, professors, or workers on campus are nicer than individuals outside of campus. She states that she felt more comfortable around the campus. Muslim women received the same treatment as Crystal because she wears a hijab. For example, Rabia said that she only experienced to be a target of hatred outside campus. One of the intentional face-to-face verbal

harassments she experienced was at a shopping mall. When she was walking around the mall, a man called her a “terrorist” and “towel head.”

Priya was verbally harassed too because she wore a scarf. She believes that wearing a scarf in this fashion is alien not only for white American, but also for other minority groups in Knoxville.

There are more like rude comments where I actually had a moment when I was in hibachi the Japanese restaurant and this Mexican or at least this Latino person was sitting in booth when I went by. He called me a “terrorist” even though he is minority in the United States. Because often know how white people actually being the ones who predominately would say something. But I actually have somebody who has like this media concept of being like an “illegal immigrant” whether you are or not having those stereotypes pushed on them replaying stereotypes of my people back at me so it was kind of like this moment like really. (September 28, 2017)

She experienced racialization via slurs thrown at her by a person who belongs to another minority group, and also experiences racialization but in a different way with different words. A main idea of race and racism is that groups negotiate their own racism and racialization by distancing themselves from other groups. Priya’s experience showed that Muslim identity was racialized not only by non-Muslim white American, but also by some non-Muslim minority groups in the United States.

White non-hijabi American Muslim women said that they did not face verbal hatred because they are white and non-hiabi so, they guessed that people do not understand their religious and ethnic identity by looking at their external appearances. However, non-white non-hijabi Muslim women were verbally harassed by individuals in Knoxville. For example, Zerlinda is non-hijabi Pakistani American experienced verbal hatred many times due to her skin color. She said:

Especially recently to go out because so many racial things that are happening right now especially in the South. I didn't see much like racial stuff going on here when I have moved here. But today, there are many protests and racial stuff and they are scary...In

Knoxville, when I was like driving, someone would yell like go back to India or something and you know our country is better without black people. (August 25, 2017)

She is not experiencing racialization and hatred from her religion but from her outward physical experience and looking like a foreigner and closer to African American. American Muslim female's experiences in this section illustrated that the hijab is the one of the most important racialization practices and it makes a difference between hijabi and non-hijabi Muslim female students' experiences. Since, the hijab is the most visible symbol of Islam and hijabi Muslim women have been targeted due to their visible religious identity. On the other hand, non-hijabi Muslim women is racialized as different through their perceived foreignness and race, but less about their religious identity. Thus, Muslim women's experiences with verbal hatred as a form of racialization intersect with race, ethnicity, religion, and gender.

As a result, this study shows that wearing a hijab seems to invite verbal hatred. All American Muslim female student in this study claimed that racism did not become a factor in interpersonal relationship in the university even though many participants said that they experienced racism in elementary, middle and high school in America, but not in university. Since they believed that people in the university overcome their biased behaviors thanks to the role of education. However, they argued that they faced racism when they socialized more outside campus.

International Muslim Female Students

While non-hijabi international Muslim women said that they haven't faced verbal hatred inside and outside campus, only one hijabi international woman claimed that she faced verbal hatred a few times around campus. Nisa identified herself as white Arab Muslim and believed that wearing hijab makes her a potential target for hate and discrimination due to racialization of Islam and Muslims. She said that:

I was like walking in university and they were like Christian people are talking about Jesus Christ and they distributed the Bible and stuff like that. And I didn't actually stop to listen for what he was saying but he just told me that you are going to hell fire like stupid or whatever. I was like okay, thank you. So, this is one thing I say like this person also does not represent Christianity in any way because Christianity is like tolerance and understanding other people. (October 12, 2017)

It is worth to note that some international Muslim female students said that they hear something behind their backs around campus, but due to a language barrier, they do not understand if it is hate speech or not. Thus, international Muslim women in the United States find themselves at the intersection of race, gender, language, and religion domination. The hijab is racialized and rooted in terrorism, backwardness, non-American, etc. Due to negative stereotypes about Muslim and Islam, hijabi women in one of the groups that face verbal hatred in United States. Additionally, not only being hijabi, but also being citizen or not, coming from secular or religious country, speaking English as second language or native language, having different racial, national or cultural background also acted a role as a boundary marker among Muslim female students and their experiences of racialization.

Stereotypes

The stereotypical American narratives that serve to racialize Muslims explain Islam and Muslim women in general as “oppressed,” and powerless, forced to be veil, anti-American, and/or a terrorist or terrorist sympathizer. Many studies (such as Abdullah 2013; Al Wazni 2015; Ghumman & Ryan 2013; Hyder, Parrington & Hussain 2015; Khan 2002; Mubarek 2007) claim that every Muslim in America is a victim of stereotypes although they generally focus on how Muslim women who wear headscarf feel isolated and excluded due to the stereotypes. In this study, I highlight the existence of negative stereotypes as it relates to hijabi women and women who define themselves or are described as Muslim because of the language that they use, nationality, physical appearance, clothing, and religiosity level such as wearing modesty clothes,

preferring to drink an alcohol or to eat pork, praying five times in a day, fasting, etc.

Almost all the participants in this study identified and argued that they experience different stereotypes about Muslims and Islam. Amongst these different stereotypes, there were three that were most highlighted: “Muslim Women as oppressed and forced to be veiled”, “Islam is a religion of terror and Muslims are terrorist or terrorist sympathizer”, and “Muslim Women as having homogeneities lives and identities”. They are the most common stereotypes that were faced by Muslim women in America due to the racialization of Muslim identities that they are formed by racial meanings due to the political and media discourses. Western culture often use these stereotypes to justify racialization of Muslim identity as a foreign, non-white, dangerous, orient, terrorist or terrorist sympathizer because these stereotypes contribute to the public’s opinions of Muslim groups. Additionally, the intersectionality lens allows me as the researcher to see that not only religion, but also gender, ethnicity, race, nationality, language, culture and religiosity level have an impact on facing stereotypes about Muslim and Islam.

Muslim Women as Oppressed and Forced to Be Veiled

American Muslim Women

In this study, all Muslim women used “Muslim women as oppressed and Muslim women forced to be veiled” to discuss the prevailing stereotypes about Muslim female students in Knoxville. These two phrases that were emphasized by participants showed a homogenous image of Muslim women as being oppressed by Islamic patriarchy. For example, Crystal who is a black American who converted to Islam and started to wear a hijab two years ago highlighted that many white non-Muslim individuals think that Muslim women who wear a hijab are oppressed and they are forced by their parents to wear the hijab. During the interview, she was really sad and angry about Muslim, Muslim women, and Islam stereotypes. Even though her

family is Christian, and she is only person who is a Muslim in her family, white non-Muslim Americans asked her if her parents forced her to wear a hijab due to these stereotypes.

Crystal said:

The stereotypes about Muslim, Muslim women, and Islam makes me so angry and mad. Especially stereotypes about women being oppressed and all those sorts of things because I'm pretty sure most Muslim women, like overall in US, like the percentage of Muslim women who are educated higher than the percentage of women in general. So, I don't understand how this is because it's easy and easy to believe something if you're scared. So, you're going to believe all the things about all are bad. Even though it's really easy if you look for it to see that Muslim women are oppressed and maybe if they are I'm sure there some women because all women experience oppression. But if you look, it is more culture than religion. I think people have a really hard time parsing those part even if women because women like in Iran they have to wear hijab which can be perceived as oppressive but that's not what the religion says. That's what the government of Iran says. Some people don't look at those things. It's just easier to believe the things you want to believe to make it. You don't have like stretch your mind just like what it's conveniently. (August 19, 2017)

Furthermore, both American hijabi and non-hijabi Muslim female students emphasized the hijab as a perceived significant image of Muslim women's oppression in U.S. In other words, these women believed that the hijab is considered as a part of Muslim women's oppression by many white non-Muslim American. There are many studies that similarly argue that the hijab is the most important perceived image of Muslim women's oppression (Abdullah 2013; Ahmed 2005; Al Wazni 2015; Aziz 2012; Beydoun 2013; Galonnier 2015; Ghumman & Ryan 2013; Hyder, Parrington & Hussain 2015; Khan 2002; Khosrojerdi 2015; Mubarek 2007). For example, Aziz (2012) argued that the hijab has played a significant role on how Muslim women are considered as sexually, physically, and socially oppressed based on their external appearances.

Like Khosrojerdi's study (2015), in this study, the participants who chose to wear the hijab directly faced "colonial gazes" and predominant misconceptions that Muslim women are oppressed and they are forced to wear a hijab as visible members of the Muslim community. Interestingly, non-hijabi American Muslim female student emphasized the negative stereotype

that Muslim women are oppressed more than hijabi American Muslim female students. Even though non-Muslim American people do not understand religious identity of non-hijabi American Muslim women because they do not wear headscarf and speak English that is their mother tongue; non-hijabi American Muslim women also faced colonial gazes and misconceptions about Muslim women's oppression and emancipation. For example, Asali who is non-hijabi Pakistani American Muslim woman argued:

Being a Muslim one, I think sometimes people little surprise that I have been given freedom that I have. They just know my religion is but they do not know what values I apply in my life. My parents are always stressing on education. Not going to college is not an option. People are little surprised because they say sometimes that your parent knew that you came here. Of course, they did. They knew how education is important. They want me to have every opportunity in the world. I travel a lot and people are surprised how my parents let me travel. It is not something they let me, they just support me. In my decision, they do not let me do anything, but they support me about the decision I made. People are just surprised that I have certain level of freedom. (August 1, 2017)

Being a non-hijabi, college student, and not having a sign of oppression such as a hijab do not fit with stereotypes about Muslim women such as Muslim women are oppressed or forced to be veiled. The participants believed that wearing a hijab is a choice for all Muslim women. Islam does not cause oppression of women, but some cultures can be oppressive. They also argued that women's choice and emancipation are important in Islam. For example, Bahiriya who is a non-hijabi Pakistani American woman said that "Islam is like one of the first religions to introduce the idea that a woman can own property or call for a divorce or anything like that" (August 8, 2017) These non-hijabi American Muslim women believed that the racialized stereotypes do not fit with the reality but is a part of making Islam inferior to the West. Thus, these women who do not have any visible symbol to show their Muslim identity are still racialized due to their religious identity, race, and homogenous conception about Muslim women's lives and identities.

International Muslim Female Students

Hijabi and non-hijabi international Muslim female students argued that they have been stereotyped due to not only their religious identity but also their nationalities. Two non-hijabi international Muslim women who are Iranian took off their headscarves after they came to Knoxville. Both argued that they have been stereotyped when they wore hijab. For example, Laleh stated:

When I was wearing a scarf, there was this presumption that I was forced by a husband or a father or someone. And it was like quite a surprise for so many people knowing that I am not living with my family and I'm single and I'm a Ph.D. student but I'm a Muslim and I'm not wearing scarves and that's this kind of big surprise for them. But I think that it's important to talk about these things and try to explain to the people. (August 30, 2017)

Gulshan also said that “I do not have any good experiences with my scarf. My first advisor asked me can Iranian women think by themselves. I was like what do you mean with this. It was so offensive to me.” Both these Iranian female students believed that they have been stereotyped not only because of hijab, but also their nationality because in Iran the law mandates that women must wear hijab while in public. Even though both these women took off their hijabs and attempted to make invisible their racialized religious identity, their nationality still made visible their Muslim identity because being Iranian were equated with being Muslim.

Furthermore, Jamila who is one of hijabi international female students from Egypt stated that she is also at the nexus of other marginalized locations: the inability to speak English “properly” and by being Egyptian Muslim. She said:

Actually, I'm studying engineering here. When I said to anyone “Like I'm a girl and I'm studying here in nuclear engineering”, they just shocked. They said that “wow Egyptian Muslim girl is studying nuclear engineering,” “Wow.” You know I mean. Because they have a stereotype that all Muslims girls are oppressed. And when they see me, you know, they said that you are allowed to study in nuclear engineering here away from your family and from your country. (August 23, 2017)

Almost all international female students believed that coming from a Muslim country or a country where majority population is Muslim, being hijabi and having accent have produced negative stereotypes about themselves that they are oppressed, powerless, and forced to be veiled. They said that these stereotypes create an image of the oppression of Muslim women are patently not true. In addition, they believe in Islam women have freedom and nobody can force them to wear hijab. Thus, through stereotypes such as Muslim women are oppressed and forced to be veiled, these international hijabi and non-hijabi women are racialized at the intersection of religion, ethnicity, nationality, language, and culture.

Islam is a Religion of Terror and Muslims are Terrorist or Terrorist Sympathizer

American Muslim Female Students

All participants stated that the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks have caused a negative stereotypical perception on Muslims in the United States. In Western societies, being Muslim is equated with being an Islamic fundamentalist. Especially, participants *perceived more* prejudice after the last *election* than before. This study shows that Muslim females who wear headscarf but never covers their face have encountered stereotypes that Islam and Muslims are associated with terror more than non-hijabi Muslim women. Like Caincar's study (2009), this study shows that the hijab is the most important symbol of foreignness and disloyalty to American values. Even though the hijab is not only a symbol of Muslim women's identity, it is the most visible symbol of Muslim identity and it is considered as an evidence of the failed integration of Muslims in the United States rather than marking their religious differences. Enaas who is white, hijabi, Arab American Muslim female students addressed:

There is a stigma that if she wears it, she would be more religious. And there's a stigma outside that people who see us wearing it thought that we are more extreme. I wear it because I like I identify with it. I still go to parties and I dance. I work. I wear colorful clothes. I have friends. I have boyfriends and girlfriends. You know like I say I do

everything. I swim and I hike. I play in the snow. I'm not more extreme because I wear it. And I'm not less extreme if I do not with my religious beliefs. It has to do with me choosing to identify with it or not. But other people will view you as more extreme or more old school because you wear it. More traditional Muslim or more conservative because you wear it. (August 8, 2017)

Enaas believed that being hijabi did not limit her to be a part of society and it just showed her religious and cultural differences from others. Even though she didn't view being hijabi as being more religious or extreme but others did due to racialization of hijab, Muslims, and Islam.

Another participant also said that at this age, being hijabi means being radical Muslim because anti-Muslim prejudice and policies are built on fear that was created by terrorist groups like ISIS, HADES and Western media. Yaran who is white hijabi, Kurdish, American Muslim female student also said that:

For me, my hijab is a part of my identity but for people it is a symbol of terrorism and religious oppression. People don't know me and all they see is what I'm wearing. People will hate me and do something rash. So, there was this dispute going on people around me and there's fear going on with me because I'm scared of this society. (October 2, 2017)

All participants agreed that negative images of Muslim and Islam are promoted by media. Similarly, Said (2001) stated how Western media support Orientalist picture of Islam and Muslims by describing them as barbaric, violent, oppressive, undemocratic, and uneducated. One interviewee who is white American Syrian hijabi focused on how media played a role on negative image of Muslims and Islam. Basimah argued:

I don't know the exact number of it but there is so many Muslims living in the world peaceful Muslims worldwide. And so, I guess I was just frustrated that we were never represented. We are being represented by people that essentially like somewhat call I would say aren't Muslims so or aren't practicing the faith as it should be practiced. So, I guess like really it's frustrating because time and again it would always be portrayed that way in the media. (August 29, 2017)

As a result, all American Muslim female students in this study believed that people in the United States or in other Western countries do not know anything about Muslims and Islam. They judge

Muslims what they see in movies and T.V. shows that Muslims have been racialized as terrorist, terrorist sympathizer, and threat for national security. Thus, the racialized meaning of the hijab and Islam has acted a role on Muslim women's lives and experiences. Due to the racialization of hijabi Muslim women as terrorist, terrorist sympathizer, and threat for national security have caused to face these stereotypes and to question their citizenships.

International Muslim Female Students

Like American hijabi female students, International hijabi women also believe that the hijab has played a crucial role on stereotyping Muslim women as terrorist or terrorist sympathizer. They thought that wearing a headscarf gives them the first message that she is different or maybe she's a dangerous. Additionally, they also believed that beside hijab, their accent or the language they speak has an impact on how they are stereotyping in the society. For example, Tale who is Egyptian hijabi international Muslim students stated that:

Once time, me and my husband were in the car and then when we went out to the car, my phone, my battery dropped inside a hole that was in ground. My battery and phone in there so, my husband and I were looking like how will we get out of these things. We were talking in Arabic. And then one person come and talked to us and asked what are you guys doing. He said that "are you trying to drop a bomb inside here?" I do not know why he thought like that because of my hijab or the language we talked. I think that he was a crazy person. He even went to police telling them what he saw and the police just kind of ignored him you know. We were lucky because police ignored him. (29 August 2017)

Her experience showed that the hijab still has an impact on racialization international Muslim women's identity. However, also having accent, speaking Arabic or speaking English as a second language, having different national and cultural backgrounds also played a role as boundary marker among Muslim female students. Thus, not only hijab but also language, nationality and culture have played a role on racialization of Muslim women

Another non-hijabi international Muslim female student, Gulshan believed that in the

United States, wearing hijab or other symbols that make visible Muslim identity have led to perceived negative connections. She said:

One of my neighbors who is a taxi driver came to my home. And I am all the time was so nice to meet her and take care of her when she was sick. But once she came to my home and so we have hijab in one of our family picture and she told me that are you supposed to kill me. I was like that are you kidding me. (July 31, 2017)

She gave this example also as a reason why she preferred to take off her hijab. When she was hijabi, she believed that she faced every day misconception and stereotypes about Muslim, Muslim women and Islam in the United States and she was tired of them. Again, due to racialization of Muslims and Islam, she felt emotionally threatened in her everyday life by intentionally or intentionally racism. Gulshan also talked about three Muslim Americans who were shot to death at University of North Carolina campus in 2015. She believed that the murders were a hate crime, even though the media imposed that the shooting were motivated by disagreement over parking. Thus, making visible of Muslim identity was considered as a dangerous action at this age due to the rise of anti-Muslim hate.

Jamila who is an international hijabi Muslim female student also believed that people judged them based on what they saw through the media. She said that “due to the media, people have like stereotypes that all Muslims are terrorists. One time I was walking on campus and a girl told me to call me terrorist and I am like what.” (August 23, 2017) Some participants particularly emphasized the negative image of Muslims in the Media. Nisa said that “Some people just know about the Islam from TV and what they saw from media such as killings and terrorists. They got knowledge about Muslim and Islam from media but they do not know what is wrong or right.” (October 12, 2017) Thus, like American Muslim women, international Muslim women also believed that the media has created hatred towards Muslim by relating Muslims with terrorism and death. While American Muslim women’s identity and lives are

racialized through their hijab, race, and religion, international Muslim women' identity are racialized by their nationality, ethnicity, citizenship, hijab, and religion. Moreover, these women's experiences showed that the public image of Muslim and Islam have led to a vicious circle of stereotyping.

Muslim Women as Having Heterogeneous Lives and Identities

American Muslim Female Students

In the United States, Muslims are often pictured as a homogeneous group, without much consideration of racial, ethnic and cultural differences of Muslim population. This research recognizes Muslim women as a group particularly stigmatized that experiences distinctive challenges in the society where they live in. As Khan (2012) argues, the stereotypes about Muslims and Islam rejects the "heterogeneous nature of Muslim communities and frequently further legitimizes 'the community' as homogeneous through state policy and funds" (p.13). All American Muslim female students believed that Western people see Muslims as a homogenous group or race by ignoring heterogeneous nature of Muslim communities. Participants argued that many Western people do not have a clear conception about Islam and Muslims despite Islam as one of the three major world religions. Seeing or explaining of Muslim populations as homogenous group is a racialization process due to the negative image of Muslim and Islam such as terrorist, oppressed, violence, etc. in the media or in the public discourse. Being Muslim is considered as a group of people who are terrorist or support terrorism, and are oppressed or oppressed women, etc. instead of as just a faith.

For example, Tanzila who is an American non-hijabi woman believed that Muslim people always have to explain their religion, culture, and nationality because there are a lot of misconceptions and stereotypes about them. She stated:

At work, my coworker said that she believes that Muslim is kind of a race. Like she didn't know that was actually she thought it was a part of the world. And I was a little shocked because Islam is the one of the important religions. You know that Christianity, Islam and Jews and they are the three big. That's the three big one for you to know that that's sad. I like shows that a lot of non-Muslims they don't really pay attention to. They don't really know about it. They don't know about Muslims and Islam and that's kind of disappointing, you know. (September 5, 2017)

Another American hijabi female student claimed that people in the United States see all Muslim people as the same and belong to same culture or nationality. Enaas said that:

It is true that there are many Muslim communities because Muslim people who get involved in these groups feel more safe. So, I don't think non-Muslim American think about us as a religion. I think that they think about us as a homogenous group. (August 8, 2017)

Especially, four non-hijabi Asian American Muslim women who are originally from Bangladesh, Pakistani or India emphasizes on how they practice their religion differently from Saudi Arabian women. For example, Tanuja explained that “there's this a cultural gap. Americans see things that happen like Saudi or Saudi Arabian women aren't allowed to drive or something. And that's not a Muslim category. Thus, it's more of a cultural gap between us.”

(August 1, 2017) Another non-hijabi Pakistani American Muslim female student, Asali, said:

I'm actually smiley Muslim and called as Aga Khan. I believe that Smiley Muslims were very modern compared to like a lot of Muslims. So as Smiley Muslim woman definitely different because I hear a lot of women are very open minded at home during this time. But I saw a lot of restrictions they cannot do things, they cannot eat this, they cannot wear this. I feel like smiley Muslim is definitely identified different from Muslim women in general in terms of like just the openness I have at home though but I have in my culture. So, I don't know because a lot of them seem like they were a lot more strict at home than my house is. We are not Shia or Sunni You know that's one thing I do feel a little bit different just. And then also the way we pray is a little bit different than just you know Shia or Sunni Muslims. So that's one way I like I'm a little bit different and like I connect but I also do not connect all the way with the other Muslim women. So, you know just like I said what we are it's just totally different. (August 1, 2017)

Muslim and Islam have been racialized into single category not only due to 9/11 terrorist attacks, but also long and involved productions of whiteness, orientalist thinking, cultural stereotyping,

and government policies. Muslim populations do not have only various racial, national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds but also belong to different branches of Islam that they have practice Islam differently. These Pakistani and Indian American Muslim women believed that Muslim in Middle East countries and Asians practiced Islam differently due to their national, cultural, and racial differences. They said that even though there are Muslim women who are oppressed all around the world or there are Muslim men who attend terrorist activities, these does not mean that all Muslims are terrorist or all Muslim women are oppressed. Intersectional racial, national, cultural, ethnic identities of Muslim women present themselves as the answer to generalizations about Muslims as terrorists, extremists, oppressed, etc.

International Muslim Female Students

All international women claimed that Muslim or Islam does not mean any political ideology, country, or race. They emphasized that despite the practice of homogenizing all Muslim women and Muslims in the United States, practicing different forms of Islam is quite diverse and varied. These heterogeneous experiences directly counter the stereotype that all Muslims are terrorists, Arabs, Middle Eastern, foreign, oppressed, violent, Islamic fundamentalist, etc. For them, Islam is just a faith. International Muslim female students argued although there are some basic rules in the religion, Muslim women practice differently. Oldooz who is an Iranian hijabi women said:

Some people just surprised when they see me with colorful hijab because they thought that all Muslim women must wear long black dress and headscarf because it is what they see on the media. But, I do not like a black scarf or long black dress. I like to have colorful scarf because I like stylish cloth and scarf. Western people generally think that all Muslims are poor and do not care with fashion and it is not correct. (September 15, 2017)

Additionally, International non-hijabi women in this study also complained about general stereotypes about Muslim women. They believed that non-Muslim Americans categorize

Muslims as a homogenous group and they think that all Muslims are Arab or have Arab culture in their own country. Roshni who is an Iranian non-hijabi Muslim woman stated.

Many of them have very general thoughts or assumptions about us. As I said they think that we all should be covered. People should say our prayers and practice in a specific way, we should fast, we should not drink, we should not eat pork or we should eat halal all the time. And many things that they don't know they just expect us to be something different somewhat different from who we are now. So, I think what they think about us is different people. And to be honest they cannot see and perceive us separated from that radical extreme in Islam. If they communicate with us, they will get chance to understand. (August 16, 2017)

Another participant who is Iranian non-hijabi Muslim also said that “I have had a hard time because of misconception about Muslims. When I drink wine and someone told me that oh you're Muslim and you are not supposed to drink wine. People allow themselves to judge me.”

Both women are Iranian and they believed that besides their religious identity, their nationality has large impacts on the stereotypes that they received. The diversity of Muslim women and their identities shows that there is no particular method to classify Muslim women's experience and identities due to their highly diversified cultural, historical, and national contexts. Moreover, the homogenization of Muslim identities further serves a racializing force due to the categorization Muslims into negative stereotypes such as being terrorist, being extreme Muslim, oppressed, etc.

Microaggression

American Muslim Female Students

In recent years, microaggression research has risen as an important line of analysis to experience the day-to-day subtly racist experiences people of color have to negotiate.

Microaggressions are verbal or behavioral and unintentional or intentional practices which send negative and offensive messages to individuals who are a part of any marginalized racial or religious group (Sue 2010; Nadal, Griffin, Hamit, Leon, Tobio, & Rivera 2012). In this study, I contextualized microaggression by using Sue's definition that is “unintentional behaviors or

verbal comments that convey rudeness or insensitivity or demean a person's racial heritage identity, gender identity, or sexual orientation identity" (Sue 2010:111) By using Sue's conception, I differentiated microaggression from other forms of racism because individuals who are doing microaggressions generally do not intent to offense or harm (Sue 2010). Furthermore, although the term "microaggression" was not specifically used in the interviews, it was apparent the experiences being described by Muslim female students were forms of microaggressions.

Especially, all hijabi American Muslim female students stated that they were offended by non-Muslim people who were asking questions and acting a certain way. For instance, all hijabi American women said that they had been faced the question, "Where are you from?" in some way even though they are American citizens. As explained by them, this question means that hijabi women are foreign. This apparently innocent question tends to follow with, "No, where are you really from?" For example, Basimah who is white, hijabi, Syrian American reported that:

Like people asked me where I'm from or something like that and you know that's just a tough question to begin with. But if I do say like Knoxville Tennessee where I got my college degree, most people are you know wondering like oh where did you go high school? People respond generally that well no that's not what I mean. Like where are you really from? (August 29, 2017)

The majority of hijabi American women complained about the question, "where are you really from?" Since, they believed that this question implies they are not American and it makes them feel like that they do not belong in American society. Another participant, Maysa, who identified herself as white, hijabi, Arab American stated that: "in the farmer's market, someone told me like welcome to the country. I am like, we've always been here my whole life, but thanks. They think that I am not American and I'm just a tourist to come visit here." (September 28, 2017)

Almost all hijabi American Muslim women explained that in their everyday life, they perceived different questions that imply stereotypes regarding Muslim women. For instance,

“Are you taking shower with your hijab?”, “Do you sleep with your hijab?” “Are you bald under your hijab?”, “Can your dad see you without a scarf?”, “Did you dad make you wear that hijab?”, “Are you extremist Muslim?” Tuana said:

One time I was walking into a grocery store and it was like after exams so I had like my scarf just thrown all over and still like a piece of my hair was coming out and the guy comes up to me and he's like your hair is showing. Does that mean I have to marry you now And I was like no. But thank you for letting me know that I covered it up.
(September 15, 2017)

Some Muslim women said that it is easy to understand why people ask us questions like “Can your dad see you without a scarf?”, “Did you dad make you wear that hijab?” because there are many stereotypes regarding Muslim, Muslim women and Islam. However, questions such as “Are you taking shower with your hijab?”, “Do you sleep with your hijab?” and “Are you bald under your hijab?” does not make sense for them and Muslim women weren’t sure if non-Muslim American people asked these questions intentionally or unintentionally.

While hijabi American women faced microaggression due to their hijab, non-hijabi American Muslim women encountered people asking questions or making statements that offended them due to their choice not to wear a hijab. One of the most common questions that non-hijabi American Muslim female students faced was “why do you not wear headscarf?” Bahiriya who is non-hijabi Pakistani American argued that “when I said that I am a Muslim, they said that ‘Oh and you supposed to wear a hijab? Can you not do this? Can you not do that?’ So, it's more just ignorance.” (August 8, 2017) She believed that non-Muslim Americans do not know reality about Islam and Muslims. For non-Muslim Americans, the media that stereotypically portrayed Muslims and Islam is the most effective way to get knowledge about Muslims. Microaggressions also help to repeat or affirm stereotypes about Muslims and Islam by implying disapproval of or discomfort with Muslims as a minority group. Even though Muslim

people have diverse backgrounds and identities, Muslim women represented a mostly homogenous population due to stereotypes about them such as all Muslim women should be covered, oppressed, radical Muslim, terrorist or terrorist sympathizer, etc.

International Muslim Female Students

Like hijabi American women, all hijabi International Muslim women stated that in their everyday life, they encountered different type of questions that imply stereotypes regarding Muslim women. For instance, “Where are you from”, “Are you taking shower with your hijab?”, “Do you sleep with your hijab?” “Are you bald under your hijab?”, “Can your dad see you without a scarf?”, “Did you dad make you wear that hijab?”, “Are you extremist Muslim?”

Besides these questions, both hijabi and non-hijabi international Muslim women encountered questions or statements that “you speak very good English”, “you’re doing good job studying or working here as a Muslim woman”, “Wow, you don’t even look Muslim and you are a just a normal person”, “why do you drink?”, “why do you eat pork?” Thus, international Muslim female students believed that non-Muslim American people are not aware that Muslim women in the United States are a diverse community, coming from many different cultural, ethnic, national and linguistic backgrounds. Gulshan who is non-hijabi Iranian woman said that “I have one officemate and she once told me that I never expect Muslims to behave like you because I am Muslim but non-hijabi, drinking alcohol or attending all social activities.” (July 31, 2017) She believed that non-Muslim Americans think that *all Muslim women should* cover their hair and all women who cover their head are oppressed by their father or husband. Therefore, non-Muslim Americans are a little surprised to see freedom that Muslim women have. Roshni who is another Iranian non-hijabi Muslim woman also argued that “I was judged based on being a Muslim woman because there is an assumption that Muslim women should be covered. I have

been asked all the time why do you drink? Why do you eat pork?” (August 16, 2017)

Another important point is that both non-hijabi and hijabi international Muslim female students stated that they encountered many strange questions about their home countries. For example, Tabia who is a white, hijabi, Egyptian Muslim woman said that:

One asked me that I am wearing hijab when I was taking a shower. That's is really weird and I do not know it is a joke or what. Another thing is that when I say that I am from Egypt and I always have to answer some weird questions too such as do you live in tent in your home country? Do you have electricity or internet in your country? I always have to explain that we just live in normal houses and we have electricity and internet in Egypt. (August 25, 2017)

International Muslim women discuss that Western people generally think that all Eastern or Muslim countries are poor, undemocratic, violent, etc. This is also another attempt to impose a single picture of what a Muslim and a Muslim country looks like. Additionally, Nermin who is a non-hijabi Turkish Muslim woman said that:

I think that sometimes people are just ignorant and they don't know about your country. they have some prejudice and they can ask you stupid questions like Do you still ride camels in your country? They believe that I am not wearing a headscarf because I am in the United States and if I actually turn to Turkey, I will have to. (August 30, 2017)

As a result, even though Muslim women are not sure whether acts done with little conscious awareness of their meanings and effects or not, these comments and questions are microaggressions. Stereotypes about Muslims and Islam have played a role on racialization of Muslims who especially make visible their Muslim identity by wearing a hijab, praying five times in a day, do not eating pork or drinking alcohol, clothing modestly, speaking English as a second language, being colored, etc. Microaggressions also attempt to repeat or confirm stereotypes about Muslims and Islam by implying discomfort with Muslims. Although perpetrators of microaggressions usually do not intent to offense or harm, microaggressions are one way that Muslim women are racialized – their religious identity is made most main thing

about them.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 examines the intersections amongst race, gender, religion, citizenship, nationality, culture, and language that produced a range of racialization practices that had Muslim women in the study feeling different, experience forms of exclusion and isolation, harmed by verbal hatred, stereotypes, and micro-aggression among Muslim female students. American Muslim female students explain their experiences inside and outside of campus at the intersection of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender, while international Muslim women illustrated their experiences at the intersection of ethnicity, citizenship, nationality, religion, culture, language, and gender. Thus, as much as Muslim female students stated a common identity and experiences shared by all their Muslim friends in college, they maintained to argue the personal aspect of their own identity and experience.

Unlike previous studies mostly analyze the importance of the hijab on Muslim women's experiences (Al Wazni 2015; Blakeman 2014; Cainkar 2009; Cole and Ahmadi 2003; Ghumman and Ryan 2013; Hoodfar 1993, 2003; Hyder and Hussain 2015; Koller 2015), this chapter illustrated not only religion (religiosity level such as wearing headscarf or living modestly life: not eating pork, not drinking alcohol, or wearing long sleeves etc.), but also language, citizenship, national background have impacts on Muslim female students' experiences of racialization. In this sense, of course, the hijab played a role as a boundary marker between American hijabi Muslim women and American non-hijabi Muslim women and/or between hijabi Muslim women and non-hijabi Muslim women. However, being citizen or not, coming from secular or religious country, speaking English as second language or native language, having different racial, national or cultural background also acted a role as a boundary marker among

Muslim female students and their experiences of racialization.



Chapter IV

Meanings of Hijab

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the multiple meanings ascribed to the “hijab,” how Muslim women choose to veil or not, and how these negotiations are defined along citizenship, nationality, and religiosity identities. One of the most important results of the research is the multiple meanings that Muslim women connected with the hijab. Muslim female students negotiate the meaning of the headscarf at the intersection of religion, gender, citizenship, nationality, and culture. The diversity of Muslim women’s lives, identities, and experiences has a crucial impact on their perception about the hijab and choosing or not to wear it, which reflects their unique identities. Thus, while the heterogeneity of Muslim women’s lives, identities, and experiences play a role on their perceptions about the headscarf, at the same time being a hijabi or non-hijabi affects how Muslim women define their identity and experience.

The term, hijab, refers to a Muslim woman who wears the headscarf. However, in the United States, the hijab is an image of both Islamic culture and ideology, but also a symbol that makes visible Muslim women identity and perceived lifestyles (Al Wazni 2015; Hyder and Hussain 2015). Therefore, situating understandings and choices pertaining to the hijab for Muslim women in the context of a university campus in the United States shows how Muslim women must negotiate their identity and make choices in a perceivably hostile environment to Islam. Muslim women produced a range of engagements with “the meaning of the headscarf” in this environment that intersected with their layered identities. For American and international hijabi participants’ justifications for their choices to wear the hijab ranged from seeing the hijab as a symbol to show their Muslim Identity in a Western society; as a feminist strategy; as a form

of submission to God; or as a development toward a better stage in being a Muslim woman.

On the other hand, for non-hijabi international and American female students the meaning of the hijab, and why they chose to not veil, differed by citizenship status, nation, and culture of origin. International non-hijabi women saw the hijab as a product of *patriarchal* oppression or as a rule of government, while American non-hijabi women recognized the hijab as a cultural tool rather than a religious requirement and as an unnecessary tool to be a good Muslim. As a result, religion intersected with citizenship, nation and culture of origin in that American and international hijabi women tended to define the meaning of the hijab as a symbol of religious requirement and Muslim identity while non-hijabi American and International female students tended to explain it as an unnecessary tool to be a good Muslim

In this chapter I identify four subcategories that fall along different intersecting demarcations for Muslim women that encapsulates the different meanings of the hijab for American and international students; As a symbol of identity (who I am), as a feminist strategy, as religious obligation, and as an unnecessary tool to be a good Muslim.

Symbol of Identity (Who I am)

American Muslim Female Students

In this study only five hijabi American Muslim women defined the hijab as a symbol of their identity among twenty American Muslim Women (including both hijabi and non-hijabi). These women believe that being a hijabi American women is hard because they live in the society where Western, white and Christian values are dominant and people who internalize Western and Christian beliefs and values enjoy privileges that Muslim people do not experience. Moreover, for these women, wearing hijab is a way to represent themselves in the society where Muslim are minority. For example, Enaas who is hijabi Arab American Muslim female student

said that the hijab is more than a religious obligation and it is a part of her identity. She said that:

I think the scarf does that for me. And I'm supposed to wear it to be modest but I can be modest without it. You know I don't think that's what my religion tells me is we wear modesty for protection and that's great. Part of the reason why I wear it. But every time I wear it I know that I carry around me. People never ask me what religion are you. People never ask me that are you Muslim just curious. It says a lot. I don't like to introduce myself. I don't like to meet new people and that has a lot to do with me just feeling comfortable. And I think this is an introduction for me. When I wear it, I am Muslim in UT and that's a lot without saying a single word. So, it means a lot to me (August 8, 2017).

She believed that the hijab makes visible her Muslim identity that is the main part of who she is. Especially in University of Tennessee, Knoxville where western, white, European, and Judeo-Christian values have privileges and these values are dominant, being a hijabi American Muslim woman differentiate her from white Christian Americans and makes her a target of stereotypes, isolation, and hatred. Thus, the hijab does not only mean to modesty, but also refers who she is, what religion she believes in, and her religious, social, and political identities too.

Zohreye who is another hijabi American female student also stated that “it's also important in my opinion to tell people who I am. I feel like when I wear a hijab I represent my people who want to cover up long sleeves when it's hot outside, like it's a lot easier to not wear just to be honest” (August 16, 2017). For hijabi American Muslim female students, wearing a hijab is not only an Islamic rule, but also it means to represent Islam and other Muslims. Wearing a hijab is also a message for other people to see she is a Muslim who is not involved in certain behaviors such as drinking alcohol, eating pork, and dating. Especially in the campus environment, hijabi American Muslim female students attempted to show that the hijab is not just a piece of cloth on their heads; it demonstrates their positions to speak to non-Muslim American students in the campus environment. Since, they believed that wearing a hijab established boundaries between themselves and the outside world that is not incapable with

Islamic rules or their Islamic or their modesty lives. Wearing a hijab is an easy way to show others how they live their lives and to say to other people to sustain their distance. The hijab is defined by these hijabi American women as a part of their identity and a way of their lifestyles which is incompatible with the basic views of western-style freedoms and lifestyle choices.

International Muslim Female Students

Hijabi American Muslim female students see hijab as part of their identity to show who they are in the society where majority population is non-Muslim. On the other hand, hijabi international Muslim female students who are born grew up in countries in which Islam is the majority religion of the people see hijab as a religious requirement while non-hijabi international Muslim women see hijab as an unnecessary tool to become a good Muslim, or as rule or accepting man dominance. The research findings showed that there are considerable differences found between religion, nationality, citizenship, and culture identities. There are many studies about why American Muslim women decide to wear the headscarf, not just because of their faiths, but to emphasize on their Muslim identity in a predominantly Christian society (Al Wazni 2015; Blakeman 2014; Cole and Ahmadi 2003; Hoodfar 1993, 2003; Koller 2015). However, these studies do not focus on international Muslim women. Especially, hijabi international Muslim female students state that they are not familiar with these public discourses on hijab such as the hijab is feminist way to express their identity, it represents who they are and how they are different from the rest of the society, or as a symbol oppression of women, etc. One of the reasons is that they have lived in America just for few years and they are still learning what is the meaning of being Muslim women here. Another reason is that these international Muslim women were born and grew up in the countries where the majority of the population are Muslim and moreover many of them come from the countries who are governed by sharia law. Therefore,

more international women consider the hijab as a religious necessity or/and obligation rather than a symbol of identity.

As a Feminist Strategy

American Muslim Female Students

Only two hijabi American Muslim women argued that the hijab was a feminist strategy among twenty American Muslim women. Basimah who is a hijabi Syrian American Muslim woman said that:

For me, it's a way for me to respect myself. So, both self-respect and kind of demanding respect of others. Like as a symbol of kind of like what's important about me. It's not like how I look or how much society wants to look to find me. It's how it's the thoughts that I have the things that I want to contribute to society things like my personality or what I think that to me. It's that like rejection of societies like sexualization and objectification of women it's a rejection to get that kind of like me respecting myself enough to say I'm not here by society's standards for beauty. I'm going to you know represent myself the way that I want to. But of course, it's also not perfect. So, it doesn't, you know, keep me safe from the harm from like society's ideas about women and how they should be portrayed. Like I don't think it is necessarily like automatically exempt me from not just you know just like every other teenage girl you know I grew up with all the things that the media was saying about women's body image. And I think that still like influences I think even if a woman wears a hijab like she can still struggle with that how society will perceive her and her beauty and how it places that importance on her. So, for me it's just like a constant reminder of like rejection of that. It's like standing up for it like why I believe in what I have to offer to the world. That's more than just physical beauty (August 29, 2017).

Evana who is another hijabi Syrian American also sees the hijab as a feminist strategy argued that modesty is not the only reason to wear the hijab, but it also empowers women. She said that when you wear a hijab, “people will look at you for your intelligent instead of what you look like. Wearing hijab forces people to really look for more than her physical appearance which is nice sometimes. I think that's you know that's what I appreciate about hijab” (August 21, 2017).

For both these women, they do not agree that hijab is just a tool to cover your hair, ears, neck and beauty or just to protect you from the male gaze. They believe that wearing hijab is a

kind of feminist statement for Muslim women to reject what consumerist and capitalist society always tell women what to wear and how to look like. In the article, *the veil debate-again*, Ahmed (2005) discusses that in a Western perspective, the headscarf stigmatizes Muslim as an inferior or unmodern individuals. According to Ahmed (2005), today among Muslim American women, wearing a hijab does not only emerge as a religious requirement, but also as the Islamic response to stereotypes about hijabi women and it is a way to resist against consumerist and capitalist society. Like Ahmed's study (2005), two hijabi Syrian American participants in this study agree that the hijab helps women to control their bodies and deflect threat of being sexualized. Participants also believe that women's sexuality and how women look like are imposed by magazines, television shows, and social medias is just as oppressive as forcing women to cover. For these American women, wearing hijab is not just a religious rule, but also a feminist strategy to fight against standards about sexuality and bodies

International Muslim Female Students

In contrast hijabi international women more often say that hijab is a religious requirement. Since, these women were born and grew up in countries where the majority population is Muslim, all women or many of them are hijabi, and religion plays an important role on their social, private, education, and political lives. International hijabi women are not only foreign to American culture, and life style, but also foreign to American Muslims' Americanized life style and the thoughts about the meaning of the hijab extending from feminism to anti-consumerism to bodily empowerment and autonomy.

Hijab is a Religious Requirement

American Muslim Female Students

In this study, the hijab as a religious obligation or rule is stated by seven out of twelve hijabi American Muslim women and one out of eight non-hijabi American Muslim women. For these women, the hijab is a way to practice full Islamic modesty. For example, Rabia who is an American hijabi Muslim woman said that the hijab is a religious requirement and her choice to wear it gives her a better opportunity to connect to Islam and God. She argued that:

I feel like if I didn't wear it I would not be connected to religion at all. Like I don't think I would ever pray. I don't think I would ever fast. I think it's my daily reminder because I feel like for me I need that daily reminder (August 25, 2017).

Crystal who is an American hijabi Muslim woman also said that wearing headscarf is one of most important tasks in Islam. It is not just for modesty and it is also a reminder of God.

I'm constantly a reminder of God like I can't forget about it because like I can't forget about my hijab. Especially in 90 degree weathers it would be really much more convenient if I took it off and I was really cool and I was like if I felt better like temperature rise would be really nice but I like having reminded that I'm doing it for a bigger purpose than just being comfortable (August 19, 2017).

Hijabi American Muslim women generally said that it is not just a requirement that was mentioned in the Koran, but also it is a way of practicing modesty and connecting to God. Even though these participants also agree with different meanings of the hijab extending from feminism to anti-consumerism to identity construction, to bodily empowerment and autonomy, the main reason of choosing to wear a hijab for them is religious requirement, and thus reminder of God. More American Muslim female student see a hijab as a religious requirement similarly to international students but growing up in a predominantly Western Christian society or a Muslim society differentiate them is that religion takes on a different importance. Additionally, some branch of Islam such as Shiites, Sunni, Smiley, etc. interpret Quran and Hadiths differently

based on local cultures and circumstances. Power relations, patriarchal, and traditional ideologies have impact on interpretations of hadiths and the ayah in the Quran (Gurpinar 2006). Variation in the interpretation of Quran and Hadiths have caused different meanings of the hijab among Muslims. Thus, American Muslims in a predominantly Western Christian society are minority population and they always see a hijab as a reminder to manage their life according to the Muslim belief system and to differentiate themselves from non-Muslim American people and to show what they stand for a Muslim woman. On the other hand, international Muslims who come to the United States from a Muslim country started to wear it because they saw all women wearing it in their home countries and it is a kind of religious and cultural symbol and custom.

Additionally, two non-hijabi American Muslim women said that wearing headscarf is an obligation for all Muslim women although they would not choose to wear it. Zerlinda who is a non-hijabi Pakistani American believes that headscarf is very significant piece of the religion and Muslim women should wear it because it is an obligation in Islam. She said:

OK. I personally do believe that we have to wear it. I'm not wearing it and like I feel like a hypocrite. I do think that the hijab is mandatory. I love that. What it stands for modesty respect. I don't think it is a sign of oppression. In the Koran we have to wear it. I think we have to wear. But it's just hard because we're surrounded by people who don't wear it and don't like it and have misconceptions about Muslims and Islam (August 25, 2017).

Additionally, Najlaa who is a non-hijabi Palestinian American woman believed that “I guess, the hijab brings a woman closer to God and to share their spirituality. So, I mean it's very significant piece of the religion” (August 10, 2017). Even though these two non-hijabi American Muslim women do not wear a hijab, they see it as the most important part of Islam and as requirement to be an ideal Muslim. For these women, one of the most important reason to not choose to wear a hijab is stereotypes about the hijab, Muslims, and Islam in the United States.

International Muslim Female Students

All international hijabi women consider hijab as religious requirement due to their nation and culture of origin. Since these women came from countries governed by sharia law or where the majority of the population is Muslim and Islam is chosen as a life style. These women believe that wearing a hijab is a rule based on Islamic teaching as God says in Quran. For example, Tale who is a hijabi Egyptian says that “I choose to wear it because I do know that it's like an obligation in Quran. And when I think about it, it makes sense to me.” Naima who is from Saudi Arabia see hijab as “reflection of Quran. I do not know how to say it. Why God want us to wear it. For me it is just protection and I do not show myself.” During the interview, these women said that their mother, sisters or other female relatives are mostly hijabi and they also learned from them. The most international hijabi women have started to wear hijab between age 11 and age 15 due to their cultural, religious or governmental rules.

Another international woman is Tabia who is a hijabi and from Saudi Arabia believes that:

So, I'm covering because it's like a way of me practicing my Islam. At the same time for me that hijabs are not only modesty thing and it is also the way how I'm dealing with other sex and how I am protecting myself, my belief and values in America (August 25, 2017).

These women also believe that beside religious rule, the hijab is also a way of “practicing modesty”, “protecting self”, and “dealing with other sex” for them. Thus, specifically, international hijabi Muslim women consider hijab as religious obligation and a way of life because it provides guidance not only in their home country, but also in the United States where they are a minority and they attempt to protect their religious identity and native cultures. However, non-hijabi international Muslim women who come from Iran and Turkey do not see hijab as a religious requirement due to the social and political situations in their home country.

Again, it is obvious to see that religion intersect with nationality, culture, and ethnicity and thus political, social and cultural background in their home countries affect the way of international Muslim women interpret the hijab.

Hijab is an Unnecessary Tool to Be a Good Muslim

American Muslim Female Students

While all American hijabi Muslim women in this study see the headscarf as religious requirement, seven out of eight American non-hijabi women consider the headscarf as an unnecessary tool for Muslim women identity. Tanzila said that “I feel like it doesn't really have specific meaning. I don't think that wearing a hijab makes you closer to God or makes you better Muslim than me. I don't wear headscarf and I'm very proud of being a Muslim” (September 5, 2017). These women believe that the headscarf is not an important part of Islam and wearing headscarf does not make you a good or a bad Muslim. Additionally, in this study, these American non-hijabi Muslim women dressed modestly and stated they felt more comfortable without the hijab due to the stereotypes about Muslim and Islam. Being non-hijabi is not a restriction for them in order to practice their religion.

Additionally, some non-hijabi American Muslim women also claimed that they do not prefer to wear hijab because of negative stereotypes about Muslim and Islam and negative experiences they heard from their hijabi friends, since the hijab is one of the most visible and known symbol of Islam. Although they do not wear a headscarf, they believe that they could still practice modesty. For example, Asali who is another non-hijabi Pakistani American said that “when you look at them and you can know they are Muslim. For example, you look at me you cannot understand my religion because I am not wearing headscarf and I do not have an accent. Only you can guess my ethnic identity by my external appearance” (August 1, 2017). She said

that she did not face any negative experiences in Knoxville due to her Muslim identity because her Muslim identity is not visible. Even though stereotypes have an impact on their choices to wear a hijab, they do not believe that the hijab is an important part of Islam or being a good Muslim woman.

Two of American non-hijabi women are Pakistani and Smiley Muslim. They said that they do not wear hijab because of the branch of Islam they belong to. Tanuja who is a non-hijabi Indian American said that “we do not wear a hijab due to the branch of Islam we belong” (August 1, 2017). Bahiriya who is another non-hijabi Pakistani American said that:

Quran says that you just have to prevent yourself, but it doesn't say you have to wear a scarf on your head. But my parent said that don't wear a bikini you know and I respect that. Nobody in my family wear a hijab because of the branch of Islam we belong to. I'm on this modest lifestyle and living like a promiscuous lifestyle or whatever for me that's the same modesty and I don't mean to cover my hair to be very modest. You know that's just fine (August 8, 2017).

There are many Muslim communities and Muslim countries all around the world and they have different cultural backgrounds that affect how they interpret the Quran and Islam. For example, this study also showed that there was a big difference between being a Muslim Arab American woman and being a Muslim South Asian American woman due to their different ethnic cultural backgrounds and customs because they practiced differently their religion. While Muslim Arab women generally grown up seeing women who wore a hijab and they are united by language, culture and history, South Asian American Muslim women grown up seeing people who are linguistically, culturally, and religiously diverse. Thus, the meaning of the hijab is interpreted and described in multiple intersecting ways, including by nationality, citizenship, culture, skin color, ethnicity, gender, clothing, the branch of Islam Muslim women belongs to. Again, the finding results show that there is no single meaning of the hijab.

International Muslim Female Students

While all international hijabi Muslim women in this study see the headscarf as religious requirement, non-hijabi Muslim women who specifically come from Iran and Turkey consider hijab as an unnecessary tool to be a good Muslim. Roshni who is a non-hijabi Iranian woman stated that:

For me, headscarf is associated with rule, law and force. Some women are leaving headscarves and some keep wearing it when they come to the United States. I think that it's, it is associated with self-discipline. I don't see that any restriction for a person who wants to do this and it is not restriction, it is a discipline. They want to have discipline. But in terms of me regarding myself I don't believe in it at all because I would say that the hijab and cover should be in your heart (August 16, 2017).

Roshni also used the term “self-discipline” to explain why some Muslim women choose to wear a hijab. She believed that hijabi Muslim women see a hijab as a reminder of God or modesty life, but she stated that she did not need to have discipline such as wearing a hijab to remind God or to live modestly. Laleh, Roshni, and Gulshan who are non-hijabi Iranian women say that in Iran, like other Muslim countries that are governed by sharia law, girls aged between 9 and 11 have to wear headscarf because it is mandatory in Iran. In the United States, wearing headscarf is a choice and they do not prefer to wear it because they believe that wearing headscarf does not make them a good or a bad Muslim.

Another Iranian woman, Gulshan, does not want to draw any attention to herself by wearing hijab. Even though she respects Muslim women who prefer to wear hijab, she said that wearing the hijab is a limitation for her life. Gulshan stated that, “I don't like to wear a veil and I never like to wear a bikini too. You know, when I'm living here, I don't like that people identify me as a Muslim, Iranian or anything else rather a human” (July 31, 2017). Due to Iran's current political system, Iranian female students defined the hijab as a political act a rule of government or oppression rather than a religious requirement. Thus, social and political situation of their

home country and their experiences in their home country have an impact on their definition of hijab. Additionally, Gulshan means though by not wanting to bring attention to herself due to the current politics and increasing hate crimes against Muslims in the United States. Being a hijabi woman is the most obvious image of Muslim identity and it makes Muslim women potential targets of hate crimes.

Like Iranian Muslim female students, Nermin who came from Turkey believed, that wearing a hijab is a political act and represents the dominance of men although Turkey is a secular country where people have freedom to choose the clothing and to decide what religion they want to be part of. She said that:

I felt that I can't relate to that anymore and I feel like wearing a headscarf as woman it is now is kind of accepting the dominance of men over women. That's how I started to see right now because men said that women should wear headscarf to not draw attention sexually. But I believe that wearing headscarf puts a barrier between you and man and that it's a kind of limitation. But we've seen also in our own country that rapes or sexual assaults has nothing to do with how you dress. So, I think men should learn to respect women and we should not have to wear a headscarf in order to protect ourselves (August 30, 2017).

Due to current social and political situation of Turkey, her observation and experiences in her home country, she has started to see headscarf as oppressive to women. Thus, Muslim international students' social and political experiences in their home country have played a large role in how they interpret the meaning of the hijab.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed American and International Muslim female students' views on the hijab and the four themes that emerged: the headscarf as religious requirement; as a feminist strategy; as a symbol of identity (who I am), and as an unnecessary tool to be a good Muslim women. The research findings showed that the hijab carry a complex array of different meanings. An intersectional lens provides a critical tool to examine the multiple meaning of the hijab. How

participants associated perceptions of the hijab depends heavily upon the intersections of religion, gender, race, citizenship, ethnicity, and nationality. For instance, while especially American hijabi Muslim female students who are Middle Eastern see the hijab as a religious requirement, as a symbol identity or feminist strategy based on their family background, ethnicity, and culture of origin; international hijabi women see the hijab only as a religious obligation because in their home countries most people are Muslim and they never need to represent their religious identity or their religion. Thus, culture and political environment matter for international hijabi women in a way that differs from American hijabi women.

Furthermore, culture and ethnicity matter for American non-hijabi Muslim female students and international non-hijabi students as well. Asian American non-hijabi Muslim students see the headscarf as an unnecessary tool for Muslim women identity due to their ethnic cultural background and the branch of Islam that they belong to. International Muslim women see the headscarf as an unnecessary tool due to social and political situation of their home country. As a result, this chapter underscores how Muslim female students define differently the meaning of the hijab more from a focus on religion that intersects with their other identities such as a coming from different country where is governed by sharia law or democracy, being American citizens, the branch of Islam, race, gender, and culture.

Chapter V

How Muslim Women Define Their Racial Category and Self-Identification Differently

Introduction

Current state-ascribed general racial categories (e.g., white, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and American Indians) defined by United States Census Bureau, presents a challenge for Muslim students when they need to identify what category they fall into. Middle Eastern people, including Arab Muslims, have been considered “white” by law since 1944 but it has long been debated whether it is a meaningful marker of a lived experience or a social and political position of Muslims (Alcoff 2009). Since the 1980s Arab Americans have lobbied for a reclassification as a separate racial or ethnic group due to their distinct identity and experiences (Beydoun 2015). Given that American Muslims are one of the most ethnically and nationally heterogeneous religious communities (Alcoff 2009; Zopf 2017), these general categories disguise significant heterogeneity within Muslim populations. While American Muslims have a trouble to identify what category they fall into current state-ascribed general racial categories (e.g., white, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and American Indians) defined by United States Census Bureau, immigrant Muslims are confused by American race and racial categorization.

The first part of this chapter analyzes the racial ambiguity Muslim women feel and express due to their different racial, ethnic, national, cultural, and religiosity backgrounds and citizenship status. The findings showed that the role of the hijab as a racialized boundary marker have played an important role on how American and international Muslim women define their racial category. Experiences of white American women and women of color show how wearing a hijab downgrades their whiteness and citizenship in this society. Thus, Muslim women’s racial identification is examined in the multiple intersection of race, religion, ethnicity and gender to

understand how visible symbols of Islam such as wearing a hijab have an impact on racializing people and moreover, how racialization of Muslim, Islam, and religious symbols have led to question racial and citizenship status of Muslim women.

The second part of the chapter also examines that identity construction, but specifically on the role of religion on the identity construction process. Heterogeneities of Muslim women's social, cultural, racial, ethnic, and national background has led to differences among Muslim women in terms of how they identify themselves first in the context of a Muslim woman student in college. The identities of Muslim female students are generally dependent on the view of themselves and how people see and reconstruct them in the dominate culture. This part uncovered the commonalities between the participants' views about their self-identification and three themes emerged: 1. Intersection of identity construction, 2. being Muslim is an identity, and 3. identified myself as myself.

Racial Ambiguity among Muslim Women

American Muslim Female Students

Having a better understanding of the variation amongst Muslim women in the U.S. is important in analyzing Muslim female students' experiences. Since, experiences of Muslim women play an important role on how they racially identified themselves. There is no single racial or ethnic group among Muslim populations. When I asked participants in this study to identify their racial category, ten participants describe their race as white, one as a black, four as White Middle Eastern, four as only Middle Eastern, one as Palestinian Middle Eastern, three as Pakistani, three as Asian, one as Bangladeshi, one as Turkish, one as Egyptian, one as Arab, one as Muslim, and three as mixed race. At the beginning of the interview, when I asked participants to fill out a demographic information form, all participants except one who is Black and

converted to Islam two years ago said that they were confused on what they should write about their race. All participants said that race is a complicated concept for Muslims. Participants in this study did not clearly classify their racial identity. International students who were from across the globe started to learn about U.S. conceptions of race and racism during their education in the United States. Although American Muslim students are familiar with U.S. concepts of race and racism, they were still confused to categorize their racial category. Although Middle Eastern and Arabs were officially classified as white in U.S., they do not believe others consider or treat them as “white.” One of the participants, Tuana, who is Syrian American and covered woman, expressed confusion about her race because her skin is white but she does not feel like she is a “white.” She stated that:

I have a white skin, yes, I am a white person. But, you know that I don’t feel it in that way because I look like a Muslim and I don’t think the people in America know the difference between like Syria or Pakistan or like African or Egyptian or something, and they don’t seem to care much about that because they categorize all of us as Middle Eastern, as terrorist countries. But like yeah, my hijab is like my skin color (September 15, 2017).

She believed that she does not feel accepted as a white person by American society because of her headscarf because her hijab made visible her Muslim identity. Muslim women who wear hijabs tend to face negative stereotypes and more obvious forms of Islamophobia because Muslims are racialized as a terrorist, terrorist sympathizer, oppressed, and incapable to upholding of democratic and Western principles and values. Additionally, even though Tuana has a white skin, she does not have white privilege in American society due to her hijab. When she says, “my hijab is like my skin color”, she attempts to show how being a hijabi Muslim woman downgraded her whiteness and disappeared her white privilege in the society.

Another participant is Priya who is Moroccan American and a covered woman. She described herself as white earlier in the interview but after hearing and processing all my

questions about race, she seemed to feel differently. She did not want to be associated with whatever it would have meant to say “white”. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Cainkar 2008; Selod 2014; Zopf 2017) that Arabs and Middle Easterners often recognize themselves as white, but in interviews they always explain that they do not feel “as white” and do not have privilege that non-Muslim white Americans have in society. Thus, socio-political understandings in the United States seems to push some Muslim women from their own perceptions of what whiteness means.

In addition, these American Muslim women stated that being hijabi is one of the most important factors to lose white privilege. Since, wearing hijab make these women fit into stereotypes of Muslim women appearance (Kibria et al. 2017). For example, Najat who is American hijabi female student expresses that “I’m pretty much white, but I racially define myself as Muslim because it’s more obvious that I’m a Muslim.” (September 15, 2017). Due to her hijab, she does not feel herself as white. Similarly, Cainkar and Selod (2018) argued that “for individuals who are racially classified as white, wearing the hijab darkens their appearance, resulting in their inability to claim their whiteness” (p.7). Thus, the hijab has a crucial impact on racial identification of Muslim Women. Like Mirza (2013) who argues that Muslim women see the hijab as their “second skin” show how a gendered and raced image is experienced within the body. Hijabi American Muslim women also said that they felt that the hijab is their “second skin” which caused them to question their citizenship and their white privileges although they are white individuals.

Another participant Crystal who is a hijabi Black American Muslim women says that “I am a black person, but I am sure that people first see that I am Muslim due to my hijab.” (August 19, 2017). She started wearing a hijab two years ago and she believed that she lost some

advantages of her black identity because people started to think that she is not an American.

After she started to wear a headscarf, people started to make small talk with her because they thought that she cannot speak English. She also said that:

But now I took one of my friends she's much younger than me. She needed to take like an English class in the summer before she started her regular English class. So, we were there and we were talking to one woman and I was talking to her because I was fluent in English and my friend is not. I was talking to her and telling her that we needed to sign up for this class. And I think she said she was going to go get another woman to come help us because she didn't know any other way and got there immediately she was like OK so you're the one that needs the class and she pointed to me like no I'm not actually. And I was like I was wearing a scarf and my friend did not wear headscarf like most people in east Tennessee. So, she didn't even assume that my friend was the one who needed English classes. She just like look at me with my headscarf and she said that you are one who need English class. And I'm like oh. Actually, I don't and I'm here helping my friend who needs that. So, people recognize like that if you're Muslim, you are not an American and can't speak English (August 19, 2017).

Furthermore, both American white hijabi and American hijabi women of color believed that being hijabi does not only result in their inability to claim their whiteness, but also distinguishes citizens from non-citizens or Americans from non-Americans. Although African Americans experience in racism in the United States, they are constructed as “American.” However, when a black woman is racialized as a Muslim due to her headscarf that is the most visible image of Muslim identity, she distinguished Americans from non-Americans. Since, Muslims are racialized in the United States as foreign populations who are incapable of keeping democratic or Western principles and values, which are considered as culturally and superior ways of life. Due to her visible Muslim identity, she has become a target of negative stereotypes and anti-Muslim hatred.

Maysa who is American white hijabi woman identify her racial identity as white. She said that “in the farmer's market, someone told me like welcome to the country. I am like we've always been here my whole life, but thanks. They think that I am not American and I'm just a

tourist to come visit here” (September 28, 2017). She believed that her citizenship and whiteness was questioned due to her hijab. Thus, in this society, experiences of white American women and women of color show how wearing a hijab downgrades their whiteness and citizenship in this society. Thus, while women who do not wear the headscarf are not excluded from their citizenship, hijabi women’s citizenship is questioned due to the role of the hijab as a racialized boundary maker. Thus, Muslim women’s racial identification is examined in the multiple intersection of race, religion, ethnicity and gender to understand how visible symbols of Islam such as wearing a hijab have an impact on racializing people and moreover, how racialization of Muslim, Islam, and religious symbols have led to question racial and citizenship status of Muslim women.

International Muslim Female Students

There are fourteen international Muslim female students in this study. Only one of them is South Asian (from Bangladesh) and the other women are Arab and Middle Eastern. When these women filled out demographic questions and answered interview questions, they always expressed an uneasiness or a lack of knowledge about race and racial categories in America. Many international Muslim female students were unfamiliar with race and racism in America coming from different home countries with diverse classification systems and inequalities. Some international Muslim female students, especially hijabi women, knew about race and racism from the media and stated they experienced racism when they came to the U.S. However, these women could not make clear distinctions among how they could define their racial category such as based on skin color, nationality, ethnicity or religion. In the article, *Learning Race and Racism While Learning: Experiences of International Students Pursuing Higher Education in the Midwestern United States*, the authors also found that international students have usually had

problem “with trying to tease out one social identity where one is being marginalized the most” (Mitchell et al. 2017: 9). Moreover, the study by Mitchell and colleagues (2017) similarly stated how international students define racism and their racial identity based on the notions of ethnicity, culture, and nationality rather than skin color.

In this study, there is a difference between International hijabi and non-hijabi Muslim women in terms of how they recognized their racial category. While international hijabi women recognize racial categories based on their ethnicity and nationality, international non-hijabi women usually defined their racial identity based on their skin color or nationality. For example, Gulshan who is a non-hijabi Iranian Muslim women stated:

I wore a hijab when I came here first you know just for a couple of weeks and then I removed it because I felt that it attracts more attention. You know that when I go somewhere and people are like “wow” and stare on me. But after I took my hijab off, now I feel more that I am part of this community (July 31, 2017).

She also defines her racial category as white because after she took off her hijab, her religious identity became invisible for other people. Non-hijabi international Muslim female students see themselves as white and part of American community because nobody can recognize their religious identity by looking their external appearances. She equates Americanness with whiteness even though whiteness in the United States are no more homogenous than the multiple racial identities. Discourses in the media and the current political environment in the United States have created a very particular idea about what *America is*, what it *should* be, and what the meaning of Americans are. Specifically, Donald Trump’s slogan, “Make American Great Again” is an obvious example of these discourses that attracted to individuals who felt they were becoming marginalized due to their stigmatized religious, racial, ethnic, and gendered identities. Muslim women who especially are hijabis are one of these marginalized groups. Like Gulshan,

some hijabi Muslim women thought that wearing a hijab did not only downgrade their whiteness, but also it led to face negative stereotypes, discriminations, and racism.

Additionally, Nermin who is a non-hijabi Turkish Muslim woman identified her racial category as a Turkish. For example, she said that:

I am not wearing headscarf and honestly if I don't open my mouth, I can say that I'm a white American from my external appearance because I have blonde hair and green eyes. And at the moment, I open my mouth and start to talk with people, they understand that I'm not an American because of the obvious accent. If I do not tell that I am from Turkey, they do not guess that I from a Muslim country or not due to my external appearance. However, because of my accent, they always ask me where are you from? And when I said that I am from Turkey, they thought that it is a Muslim country and I am a Muslim. And at this stage I do not feel that I am a white person in U.S. (August 30, 2017).

Even though she does not wear a hijab and has white skin, she does not identify her racial category as white due to her English skill. She has 'typical' white features and highlights her blond hair and green eye and is perceived white. She argued that having an accent or speaking poor English makes her feel different in the society and affects her racial identification. When she speaks she instantly becomes racialized and then further racialized after she tells them she's from Turkey. Her native language and her home country make visible her Muslim identity because the majority of the populations are Muslims in Turkey where is neighbor of Syria, Iran, and Iraq. Thus, not only being a hijabi, but also speaking poor English, having accent, and the nation of the origin have played an important role on racial identification.

As a result, both hijabi and non-hijabi international Muslim female students were confused about how they could define their racial category such as based on skin color, nationality, ethnicity or religion. Although many international non-hijabi women categorized themselves as white, they mentioned that some cultural and religious factors downgraded their whiteness. On the other hand, majority of international hijabi women classify their racial category in terms of their nationality or ethnicity such as Middle Eastern and Arab. For example,

Tabia who is a hijabi Egyptian woman explained that “I am an Arab and this is how American society see me” (August 25, 2017). Even though these women have white or lighter skin except one who is Bangladeshi, they did not identify themselves as white. Moreover, they said that they did not feel part of a community due to the headscarf that is visible and a racialized symbol of their religious identity. They believed that wearing a hijab has an impact on how people identify and treat them and of course, their experiences in this community affect how they racially identify themselves.

Identity Construction of Muslim Women in U.S.

As I said in previous section, at the beginning of the interview, I asked participants to fill out a sheet with their demographic information and one of the questions in this form is about their race. Most of participant were confused about it. Therefore, during the interview, I asked participants in the study how they identify themselves first in the context of a Muslim woman student in college and fourteen participants identify themselves in terms of their nationalities, one participants identify as a Black, five as Muslim first, fourteen participants identify themselves in terms of multiple coexisting identities. Three subcategories emerge: Intersection of identity construction; being Muslim is an identity, and identified myself as myself.

Intersections of Identity Construction

American Muslim Female Students

One of the significant result of the study is that there is no single way to classify Muslim women. Muslim women are differentiated from many different cultural, historical, racial and national contexts. These differences among Muslim women affect how they identify themselves. Some Muslim women students define themselves with their multiple identities such as their race, citizenship, religion, cultural, and national heritage. These women believe that there is no one

part of their identity that stands out from the rest. For example, Tanzila, who identifies herself as an American Muslim woman and non-hijabi said: “I identify myself as an Asian American Muslim woman. I don't know my future but I know who I am right now. It is a part of my claim as a person what I have to offer. I would be really different if I do not have one of these identities.” (September 5, 2017) She stated these multiple identities construct who she is and has impact on her personality, life and experiences. Another participant, Priya who is a hijabi Moroccan American Muslim woman, highlighted the importance of several intersections of her identity. She stated:

I think I'm someone of several intersections of identity too where it is very important because America is itself a salad bowl you know a melting pot so that wherever you're from also fits with what you are at now. So, for me I'm proud to be Moroccan and I am proud to be an American citizen. But the same time I think being Muslim in Trump's time is not easy. And so, having those kind of issues as Muslim should help or be more eyes open towards species of other minorities. So, I think of being Muslim it's of the struggles we go through here and the cultural identity of being Moroccan in Africa actually, it's kind of like almost that kind of foundation that I have for being able to see where I am in terms like your social status in America and where I would rather be as a whole of Muslims for Africans who are immigrants really, I'd rather be in the future. And that for me I think is an American value equality for all. So that's why I am fighting for American values. But with the mentality of a Muslim and of a minority immigrant. So, I think it's a bit quite [a lot of] intersections (September 28, 2017).

She believed that especially in America, having diverse identities are important to show who you are and what your differences are from others. Since she believes that all these differences have contributed to diversity in America. Additionally, she explained why it is the best way to explain herself in term of several intersections of identity to avoid many questions about her nationality, citizenship, and religious identity. Since, if she says she is from America, she needs to explain why she looks different or wears a headscarf. If she says she is Morocco, she needs to explain why she speaks English so well.

Although hijabi American Muslim female students mostly emphasize how each of these

intersectional identities such as ethnicity, race, gender, religion, nationality, and culture are equally important for them, non-hijabi American Muslim women state that their ethnic, racial, national, and citizenship status come first over their religious identity due to their invisible religious identity such as being non-hijabi and speaking English as a native language. For example, Asali who is a non-hijabi Pakistani American woman said that:

I identified myself racially as Pakistani but ethnically as a Pakistani American. And nationally, I am American. There is a sensitive retrial from I feel like the country raised me in such a huge role on shaping the person who I am. I think I am Pakistani American first and then others come (August 1, 2017).

She believed that these complex and multiple identities of Muslim women shape her perspective and opinions on her identity and cultural heritage. While her religious identity is invisible to others because she does not wear a hijab or other Islamic symbols, her skin color uncovers her racial and ethnic identities. Even though she still believes that the importance of the intersection of identities and described herself in terms of her racial, ethnic, national, and religious identities, she explains being a Pakistani American come first for her because it is her most visible identity that have more influence on her racialized experiences too.

International Muslim Female Students

Like American Muslim women, international Muslim women in this study also believe that the intersection of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and religion effect identity formation for them. All participants said that they cannot describe themselves with only one of their identities. For example, Sadiki believed that “being an Egyptian is also being a Muslim and white”, so she wanted to identify herself as “a white Muslim Egyptian woman.” All international Muslim female students described themselves based on their ethnicity, nationality, and religion because all of them had encountered some difficulties to construct their multiple and fluid identities. Furthermore, one of international students Nermin stated that:

If I only say I am a Muslim, all my American friends will think that I come from a country govern by sharia law, but it is not true and my country is a secular country. So, I think, I need to explain to them (August 30, 2017).

Thus, these women believed that one part of their identity do not fully represent their identity as whole. Since, there are many negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims in the United States and they influence how Muslim women identify themselves and how they perceive their identities. Especially, international Muslim women said that Muslim women should identify themselves in terms of an intersection of different identities to show heterogeneity of Muslim population in the United States due to these negative stereotypes about Islam. These Muslim women believed that it also helps to defend their religious and national identity and moreover to show compatibility between two.

As a result, both many American and international Muslim female students illustrate religion as a part of their intersectional identity rather than as a central part of their identity. The result show that their experiences shape how they identify themselves and in turn, their identities shape their experiences and practices. They also believed that their racialized religious identity does not replace a racialized ethnic, racial, or national one but intersects with them. It shows why they explain their identities as multiple and intersecting part rather than as singular term.

Being Muslim is an Identity

American Muslim Female Students

All participants stated that being Muslim forms the person who they are. While religion is a central part of their identity for some participants, it is just a part of their identity for others. In this part, I discuss some American and International women who identify their religious identity as a central part of their identity. According to some American hijabi women in this study, wearing hijab makes their Muslim identity visible to others and being Muslim is a central part of

their identity. For example, Enaas who is a hijabi Palestinian American said that:

I usually don't have to tell people I am a Muslim because I wear a headscarf. Usually it's not something I have to identify me and it's usually something people can already see. So, I never feel that nobody come to me and asked me what religion I am. I think the Muslim part in myself speaks for itself whether I want it or not. My religious identity is the main thing in my life (August 8, 2017).

In the United States, being a Muslim is the most distinguished identity over racial identity for these hijabi Muslim women. Since, wearing a hijab makes visible Muslim women's religious identity and makes them a target in the public whether they want it or do not. Islam or being Muslim is a racializing identity that has the potential to create misconception about Muslim and Islam, and darkens Muslim individuals who are white. Therefore, some hijabi American Muslim women thought that being a Muslim, especially wearing a hijab, is a central part of their identity due to racialized religious identities and the impact of the racialized discourses on their experiences such as Muslims are terrorist, hijabi women are terrorist sympathizer, and incapability of Islam with democracy, freedom etc. Thus, the outside forces such as stereotypes and hatred against Islam and Muslims shape Muslim women identity position.

Almost all American non-hijabi Muslim female students discussed that religion as a part of their identity that shapes their life and experiences even though they do not wear the one of the most visible symbol. Zerlinda who is a non-hijabi Muslim Pakistani American woman believed that being Muslim is central of her identity because it helps to show her religious, ethnic, and cultural differences from non-Muslim American and she identifies herself as Muslim first. She explains, "I believe I am most Muslim before I am an ethnicity, race or nationality... I believe that saying I am a Muslim is more important than saying where you're from because being a Muslim is a way of being" (August 25, 2017). Even though she does not wear a hijab, she modestly dresses, such as with long sleeves of shirt and dress that covers rather than

emphasizes the shape of the body. Moreover, she does not drink alcohol or eat pork in order to obey some Islamic rules. She believes that the traditional Islamic rules of a modest life she makes her religious identity visible to others. As a result, not only does the hijab play a role as a boundary marker, but also modestly dressing and her lifestyle play as a boundary marker between hijabi and non-hijabi American Muslim women and the importance of their religious identity in their lives.

International Muslim Female Students

Especially, all international female students explain that being Muslim is one of the most important identity for them in the U.S because they are a minority here and their religious identity shows how they are different from Americans in terms of religion, culture, and nationality. Additionally, religious identity has played an important role on how they are perceived by society. But, in their home countries (such as Egypt, Palestine, Syria), all people are Muslim so, being Muslim does not mean being different. Thus, being Muslim in a non-Muslim country is different than being Muslims in a Muslim country in terms of showcasing their identities and practicing their religion. For example, Serena who is a non-hijabi, Syrian, international student said:

I think that religion is first, especially in here. Especially in Knoxville and I think if I were in another state or city, it would not be going to be like this. I mean in here, it's big being a Muslim and that's what I feel. But in big cities like New York, Chicago or other it's not a big deal because there is a lot of Muslims. Everything is going to relate to being Muslim first (September 5, 2017).

Although she does not wear a headscarf, her modestly clothing and life style, her poor English skill and accent make visible her religious identity. She believed that especially in Knoxville, her different life style, clothing, and language make her a target of hatred and discrimination because Muslim community is small in Knoxville where is not a diverse Southern city. She argued that

being Muslim has an impact in all part of her life due to stereotypes about Islam and Muslims.

Several interviewees who are specifically hijabi students emphasize that we are more than white and black when we wear headscarf because it is the most visible and stigmatized symbol of Islam. Crystal who is a hijabi black American supported this idea and said that “most people see first me as Muslim and then black” (August 19, 2017). She stated that after she converted to Islam and started to wear a hijab, her religious identity became a central part in her social, political and educational lives and experiences. Furthermore, before she converted to Islam, she was just a black woman and nobody questioned her citizenship. However, being a Black Muslim woman has caused the rejection from American society she wants to belong to. Since, she believed that wearing a hijab makes her a foreign object. Additionally, Egyptian hijabi female student, Jamila said that “I identified myself as Egyptian. I generally do not need to explain my religion because I am wearing headscarf and it is the most visible symbol of Islam” (August 23, 2017). Wearing hijab is an important factor to understand why being Muslim come first for her.

The findings showed that not only wearing a hijab, but also modestly dressing and lifestyle, poor English skill, having an accent make visible religious identities of American and international Muslim women and have influenced their experiences. Being Muslim come first for American and international Muslim women who make visible their religious identity that shows that how they are different from Americans in terms of religion, culture, and nationality.

Identified Myself as Myself

Identities are connected to how we identify ourselves not only in relation to others but also the societies and cultures in which we live. Individuals can identify themselves according to religion, where they're from, gender or race. Although Muslim American hijabi, non-hijabi

women and International hijabi women are identified themselves in the same manner, some non-hijabi International Muslim women in this study did not wish to be viewed through a collective identity, as they see themselves as individuals. Thus, they did not want to define themselves based on the standard racial, national, or religious categories. Gulshan who is a non-hijabi Iranian Muslim female student stated:

All the time, I want people to not see me as a Muslim, you know and I am Iranian or anything else. For example, I go to play soccer. I just want you to see me and people to see me as a soccer player. They should not judge me according to my nationality, race, or gender. But and you know when I do something some work in the lab I never talk about my religion, my country, and other things. I just don't like people judge me based on these things (July 31, 2017).

She argued that people around her always categorized her as a Muslim woman or as an Iranian woman or just a woman and she does not any category. Furthermore, she believed that religious, national, racial, sexual or gendered identification has caused limitation in her political, social, private, and educational life. For these reasons, she did not prefer to identify herself based on one of these identities or intersecting of multiple identities.

The identities of minority groups are heavily dependent on the view of themselves and how people see and reproduce them in the dominate culture. One of the participants who is a Turkish non-hijabi Muslim female student explains that in the U.S., there are many negative stereotypes about Muslims and the country where she came from. She said, “Normally I have identified myself as myself. If someone forces me to put myself in a group such as Muslim, Turkish or other, I would go with my nationality because other groups are so diverse and so many thing happening.” Because of these stereotypes and racism towards Muslims and some Middle Eastern countries, some participants in this study do not want to identify themselves with their religious identity or nationality and they want people to see them only as themselves. For example, Gulshan has come to Knoxville from Iran to get her degree. She wore a headscarf her

first two weeks in Knoxville and then she took it off. She feels safer and more relaxed in this way than when her religious identity became invisible to others. To be treated equally and feel a part of society where she lives in currently, she does not want to identify herself in terms of her religion, nationality, or race.

Conclusion

In the first part of Chapter 5, by using racialization as a main critical theory, I tried to understand how Muslim women racially identified themselves in the United States where Muslims are identified by Islamophobic discourse and practices in their everyday lives even though they have different national, cultural, racial, ethnic backgrounds and experiences, citizenship status, language, religiosity level such as wearing a hijab or modestly living. For example, white American hijabi do not feel accepted as a white person by non-Muslim American society because of their hijab and thus racialized religious identity of Muslims. Moreover, while women who do not wear the headscarf do not feel excluded from their citizenship, hijabi women of color and white Muslim women's find their citizenship questioned due to the role of the hijab as a racialized boundary maker.

On the other hand, International Muslim women follow a different process than American Muslim women when they categorize their racial identity due to their unawareness of racial categories in the U.S., their citizenship status, nationality and culture such as being non-American, speaking an English as second language, being raised in a Muslim country, etc. Although many international non-hijabi women categorized themselves as "white," they mention how some cultural and religious factors downgraded their whiteness. On the other hand, the majority of international hijabi women classify their racial category in terms of their nationality or ethnicity such as Middle Eastern and Arab.

As a result, in the first of this chapter, Muslim women's racial identification is examined at the intersection of race, religion, ethnicity and gender to understand how visible symbols of Islam, such as wearing a hijab, have an impact on racializing people and having racial experiences such as facing questions about their religious, racial and citizenship status in their everyday lives. Even though Muslims experienced living racial as a racial "Other," they are not officially identified as a race or racial category in the U.S.

The second part of this section discussed that heterogeneities of Muslim women's social, cultural, racial, ethnic, and national background that has caused differences between them in terms of how they identify themselves first in the context of a Muslim woman student in college. The identities of Muslim female students are generally dependent on the view of themselves and how people see and reconstruct them in the dominate culture.

The results showed that not only wearing a hijab, but also modestly dressing and lifestyle, poor English skill, having an accent make visible religious identities of American and international Muslim women and that have influenced their experiences on how they identify themselves. Due to the heterogeneities of Muslim women, being Muslim comes first for some American and international Muslim women who especially make visible their religious identity that shows how they are different from Americans in terms of religion, culture, and nationality. On the other hand, some Muslim women advocated that their racialized religious identities do not replace a racialized ethnic, racial, or national one but intersect with them. As a result, this chapter demonstrated the role of being a Muslim on identity construction of Muslim female students by examining their gender, racial, ethnic, national, cultural, and religious backgrounds and experiences.

Chapter VI

Being a Muslim Female Students in the Trump Era and Coping Strategy of Muslim Female Students in America

Introduction

The current situation for Muslims in Western countries, and especially in America, represents an array of changes and challenges underway that will continue to loom large in the foreseeable future and threaten Muslims in America. According to the FBI report, especially, the 2016 election of Donald Trump has caused an increase in anti-Muslim prejudice and hate crimes (Cohen 2017). Donald Trump repeatedly has described Muslims and Islam as a threat to national security and his anti-Muslim sentiments have received a lot of media coverage, especially during the election campaign. After Trump became president, one of his first actions was through Executive Order barring the entry from seven Muslim-majority countries, and he also temporally stopped the admission of all refugees to the United States in order to protect the nation from the perceivably Muslim terrorist threat into the United States. Although originally halted in the Court system, his third attempt at a “travel ban” is currently in effect. Because of these latest political actions, Muslims have faced discrimination and suspicion on account of their religious belief again.

The first part of the chapter addresses the feelings and experiences of Muslim female students during the election campaign and the early period of Trump’s presidency. The second part of the chapter highlights the coping strategies adopted by Muslim women to fight against severe and exclusionary anti-Muslim discourses in American society. Because of misconceptions and negative stereotypes about Islam among non-Muslim Americans, the presence of Muslim extremists in other countries, and Trump’s attitudes and policies toward Muslims, being a

Muslim represents contested identities created and recreated in relation to the dominant and hegemonic discourse in the United States for participants. This study identifies how Muslim women attempt to break negative stereotypes and misconception, that especially have been on the rise in Trump's era, by using coping strategies such as take-off their headscarf or changing their clothing style, remaining silent/being afraid to complain, educating other people about stereotypes, misconception, and biases, and feeling added pressure to be extra nice, kind, and hardworking, and lastly, being a member of MSA or another religious group and their support. As a result, both parts in the chapter showed that there are differences between intersecting identities such as being an American citizen or not; being a hijabi or not; coming from a secular country or a religious country; being a colored Muslim or a white Muslim in how Muslim female students understand and respond to the new Trump era.

Being Muslim Female Students in the Trump Era

American Muslim Female Students

Since Donald Trump became president, he has initiated executive actions meant to threaten and terrorize other racial, religious, ethnic, and sexual groups such as immigrants, Muslims, women, African Americans, and transgender people. During the 2016 presidential election, Trump called for a "total and complete shutdown on Muslims entering the United States" (Considine 2017: 11). Because of these latest political discourses and executive actions, Muslims have faced discrimination and suspicion on account of their religious belief and their Muslim identity has been racialized as a terrorist, foreign, violent and dangerous again. Due to Trump's discriminatory and racist actions and speeches against Muslims, American Muslims evidently voiced concerns and worries about the future of the country and their place in American society in the era of Trump in the United States. Many hijabi American Muslim

women stated that after the last presidential election, people started to speak out loud and Islamophobia and a racism against Muslims have been put into practice. For example, Enaas who is a hijabi American Palestinian woman said that:

When after the last presidential election happened, you know I can't go to Wal-Mart anymore without somebody saying something or somebody just staring at me. That's the new thing. People have no filter anymore or nothing holding them back. Since the new presidency, hate really, really, really has increased. I think it's ridiculous. For example, I was verbally abused at a Wal-Mart in the self check out three days ago. I was at Walmart, a person told me: "If you're not going to dress like us go home and what are you doing here. What do you want from us. You know go back to your country." And the manager was standing at the self-checkout thing. You think that that would be someone of authority somebody who would step in. Nobody stepped in. It was really sad (August 8, 2017).

Tuana who is a hijabi American Syrian woman also said that:

When he first got elected I remember I did get a lot more stares in public and more hateful comments walking down the street or like doing something. I remember I was kicked once by someone for nothing. I got stares and I was told to like to go back to my country for something like it was just a lot of hateful comments on those days. But nowadays, like after you were off a little bit, or just kind of used to him. I just remember at the beginning like the number of stares you would get and a lot of hateful talk and the jokes and people purposely try to hurt us (September 15, 2017).

These Muslim women are unhappy and frustrated with the direction the country is going and the unfriendly view of Trump and his supporters toward Muslim Americans. And hijabi American Muslim women say anti-Muslim discrimination is not a new thing in American society, but it has increased during the last presidential election. Similarly, Univision and other media channels pointed to hate crimes and bias at Walmart and other superstores that draw client with a wide range of backgrounds in recent months in the United States (Weiss 2018). Specifically, Weiss (2018) talked about Muslim women whose hijab was pulled off by someone and who experienced verbal hatred in these stores. Additionally, Tuana's experience showed how hatred against Muslims worsens from threats and verbal abuse to physical violence. Many Muslim women in this study claimed that they did not face physical violence except Tuana due to their

religious or racial identity. However, hijabi Muslim women said that they were afraid to walk alone due to increased hate speeches after Trump presidency.

Women of color Muslim women also believed that racism based on skin color has a long history in the United States and Muslim women of color have suffered from it. However, Muslim and Islam have been racialized and discriminated not only due to 9/11 terrorist attacks, but also from long and involved productions of whiteness, orientalist thinking, cultural stereotyping, and government policies. For example, Crystal who is a hijabi Black American Muslim said that:

It was a really hard, really hard day for everybody to get through that day. So, the last presidential election was really bad and horrible. So, you know what his mindset is like a very privileged like white male mind set. So why should he worry about other people. And that's scary how the leader of the country like blatantly does not care about the safety of the people he's supposed to care about and supposed to be governed. I mean that's a really scary feeling but he doesn't care what happens to other people. As a black person, I can say that people always have been racist. But now I feel like they really are unbolted and quite blatantly racist not only against Black people but also against Muslims. I've been looked at and stared out a little bit more and I feel a little bit more tension and pressure from other people and they feel hesitant around me. And then I start to feel a little bit nervous (August 17, 2017).

Bushra who is a hijabi American Bangladeshi woman said that the intersection of Muslim identity and black/brown identity has led to difficulties in their lives. On the other hand, she believed that the current movements such as Black Lives Matter and protests against the Trump administration's Executive Order on immigration made her feel more confident and showed the importance of the intersection of her racial and religious identities.

Well Trump has done a lot of bad things about Muslims and other immigrant groups. He increased a lot of hate. I am a Muslim because of my hijab and my brownness because of my skin color. And I think people are more scared of me due to Trump's hate speech and other stereotypes about Muslims and other minority groups on the media. And also, good things are happening such as Black Lives Matter and protests against the Trump administration's Executive Order on immigration. These give me a hope for my future (August 25, 2017).

Thus, hijabi women of color believed that they have been victimized by discrimination, racialization, and racism because of their intersected identities: having a darker phenotype and being a Muslim person. They have faced a double block to integration and public life. As a result, both women of color and white hijabi Muslims believe that wearing hijabs make visible their Muslim identity and make them a target of verbal or physical hate crimes. Therefore, they feel insecure and unwanted in the era of Trump.

Not only hijabi Muslim women, but also non-hijabi Muslim women are concerned about Donald Trump's presidency and they feel unwanted and insecure after he became president.

Asali, who is a non-hijabi Pakistani American woman said that:

It was devastating. I denied the election and I cried myself to sleep. I have lived in this country for 17 years and it is really my home. I identified myself racially as Pakistani but ethnically as a Pakistani American. And nationally, I am American. There is sensitive retiral from I feel like the country raised me in such a huge role on shaping the person who I am. I felt alone and unwanted. Yeah...hmm...It was devastating to see Trump has become a President who has been reaffirming misinterpretations of Islam. I feel like that people are taking this misinterpretation and people think that this is Islam when he talked about it (August 1, 2017).

Non-hijabi Muslim women also believed that Islamophobia and racism against Muslim women have increased during the last presidential election and after Trump's presidency. These women do not wear a hijab and being non-hijabi Muslim renders invisible their religious identity to others. However, these women felt that they were still a part of the Muslim community in the United States and the last election was a vote against all Muslims regardless if they are practicing Islam or not, hijabi or non-hijabi, white or person of color, citizen or non-citizens, Middle Eastern or African, and speaking English as a native or a second language. For example, Tanuja who is a non-hijabi Indian American Muslim woman stated that:

My Mom, she wears a hijab and I have seen effects on her. The morning of the election I remember my mom asked me that can you go get groceries for me? And it was like something so simple you know. But she didn't have to explain why but I understood why

she asked me. Especially, after the last presidency, sometimes I travel with my mom in my small town, it is a redneck town, I have been personally told “go back to your country” and my mom too. Especially after 9/11 my Mom and Dad had bad experience. I think it is fluctuating again (August 1, 2017).

Even though Tanuja does not wear a hijab, she can compare how hijabi Muslim women suffered more from racism than non-hijabi Muslim women due to her mom’s experiences. She is also a brown Indian American, but she said that nobody told her “go back to your country” due to her skin color. However, when she walked with her mother who is a hijabi woman, they generally face this comment because her mother makes visible their Muslim identity. Especially, in the aftermath of the terror attacks in Paris and in San Bernardino, California, anti-Islamic discourse has increased in American political discourse such as the hate speech of Trump and his supporter against Muslims and Islam. These anti-Islamic discourses have re-centered classic racialized discourses on Muslims such as being a “terrorist,” “terrorist sympathizer,” and a threat to national security. Tanzila who is also another non-hijabi Indian American woman believed that anti-Islamic discourses have impact her life even though she does not make visible her Muslim identity. She said that:

My dad’s name is the biggest terrorist name out there. So, like personally it's frightening. It's really scary when he travels because he travels a lot for his job. He travels every month. And so, I'm very nervous when he travels because I feel like there must be a time when he can be stuck in a security check because our last name is like a prophet’s name so that's kind of scary (September 5, 2017).

Her experiences show that there is not only one way to make visible a Muslim identity. Other cultural signifiers of Islam, such as through language, names, and/or being in proximity to open visuals of Islam also serve as an Othering practice. Especially, after Trump become president, one of his first actions was barring entry from 7 Muslim majority countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. This travel ban also has caused discrimination against Muslims and racialization of Muslim identity as dangerous and terrorist. All Muslim women

agreed that a hijab has played a crucial role on making visible Muslim identity and making Muslim women a target for harassment. At the same time, many Muslim women with diverse backgrounds claimed that the hijab is not the only way to make visible Muslim identity, skin color, language, name, the origin of the nation, and culture, religiosity level such as praying five times in a day, fasting during the Ramadan, living modestly, etc. make visible and racialized their Muslim identity. As a result, during the last presidential election campaign and after Trump become a president, American Muslim women believed that they have been increasingly victimized by discrimination, verbal hatred, and isolation because of their racialized intersecting identities.

International Muslim Female Students

Like hijabi American Muslim women, hijabi international Muslim women also believed that being a hijabi Muslim woman is hard in the era of Trump. The hijab is one of the most visible and racialized symbols of Islam and wearing a hijab makes Muslim women the objects of harassment, isolation, verbal hatred, and offensive comments in the public area more than non-hijabi Muslim women. Many hijabi international women also said that they were afraid to walk alone due to increasing hate speech after Trump presidency. For example, Banan who is a hijabi Palestinian Muslim woman stated that:

Yeah actually it's been a hard time adapting to the situation. That the fact that Trump has won the election. Hopefully, he will not to do anything affecting Muslims and other minorities. I think that the hate crimes have increased during the election and after the election. These racist comments have happened against Muslims and other minorities. And yeah I became more afraid to be alone or to walk by myself even in my complex. I don't prefer to walk alone. I always have my friends or my husband” (August 16, 2017).

Additionally, Tale who is a hijabi Egyptian woman:

It starts for me from the last presidential election. So, I feel like that. Before I came here and I was in Texas before, it was so pure. I had never thought about these things. Whenever anyone smile in my face and think that he or she likes me. That was the

reality. Now after what we have here too with the whole news you realize that people might smile in your face but they have inner hate inside their heart that they don't show, you know how it is and that makes you not able to perform as you were before. I came here it was so pure. I was open to like I went to churches several times and they've been so welcoming. Nothing happened. And I was very hopeful, you know, and they were friendly to others. But since what happened with last elections, I'm having hard time to deal with people like I know they will smile in my face but they have hate inside their heart and they have some stereotypes inside. You know they don't show but they have honestly (August 29, 2017).

Especially, after Trump become president, hijabi Muslim women claimed that they did not feel safe and secured and they started to face more verbal hatred than before Trump's presidency. They also stated that they do not trust what Trump says, but also American people who support Trump and his racist ideas about Muslims and other minority groups. Thus, Trump's presidency also affect their social life and their daily communication with non-Muslim Americans.

Especially, Muslim women who came from Iraq, Iran and Syria talked about the travel ban because their home countries are on Trump's travel ban list. These women were concerned to visit their families or travel to any places outside the U.S. for fear of being denied re-entry due to the travel ban. For example, Serena who is a non-hijabi Syrian woman said that:

Yeah exactly. I think the most important thing is that now I feel like that I cannot go to Syria to visit because I just feel afraid of coming back. I am scary what they're going to do and how they are going to act. That's like the main thing. Another thing is that a lot of people don't know anything about Syria and Muslims. They only know a few things. So, when they like watching the news and listen to Trump, then they have the idea that being Syrian or being Muslim that means you're going to be a terrorist. I do not feel good (September 5, 2017).

Roshni who is a non-hijabi Iranian woman believed that this travel ban does not only racialize Muslims as terrorist or a threat for the security of the United States, but also embody prejudice and bigotry against Muslims and Islam. She also said that "on this travel ban, they put Muslims in the inspection room for a couple of hours before they can enter the country. This implies that you always have to be worried about opportunities, equality and justice" (August 16, 2017). The

travel ban also showed that Muslim women are racialized not only based on their hijab, but also their nation of the origin, citizenship status, language, name, and culture. Muslim women always claim that they are not only Arab or Middle Eastern, but their nation of the origin also played an important role on who they are and on their experiences. Yet, Muslims have diverse and intersectional identities and these situations make each of Muslim women experiences unique. For example, Syrians were officially considered “white” until the turn of twentieth century, but in today’s context they are not considered as “white”. Since, they have seen the horrors of war, the effects of terrorism and Islamic State. Not only Syrian people, but also other Middle Eastern people have not been considered as “white” such as Iranian, Iraqis, Egyptians, Turkish, etc. even though they are officially categorized as a “white”. Due to political, social, cultural differences among Middle Eastern countries, some countries are more strict in following the Islamic rules than others or some countries are Islamic states and some are secular countries. This also explains why each international Muslim evaluate their experiences differently during Trump’s presidency.

Different, from American Muslim women, some international Muslim women said that they do not bother with the Trump’s presidency or the future of America because America is not their country, they are not American citizens, and they plan to go back to their home country after they finished their degree. For instance, Jamila who is a hijabi Egyptian woman stated that:

I don’t care with the last election. The girl who called me “terrorist” it was the day when Trump won election. Also, one time I was in a bus and someone called me “Oh wait do you know that Trump won that election.” I was like “yes.” He said that “you know that he hates Muslims.” I was like “yeah, I know. So, what.” What should I do. I’m here. And Just accept that (August 23, 2017).

Nermin who is a non-hijabi Turkish woman said that:

My country is still going through very harsh time. I was more concerned and worried about my country than here. To be honest, I don't really care with Trump’s presidency.

OK. Because this is not my country...So some of the things Trump says I think it is ridiculous. I find him racist and sexist. But now it's not my problem. I'm mostly evaluating American presidents based on how their approach towards the Middle Eastern politics and how that affects my own country (August 30, 2017).

These Muslim women still believed that the last presidential election campaign and Trump's presidency has led to an increase in racist slogan and hateful comments against Muslim. They have faced verbal hatred during this time. Additionally, these Muslim women are not American citizens and come from different countries to America in order to get their undergrad or grad degrees. When I asked participants, "what do you think about the last presidential election?" These women said that "We don't care because it is not our country." Even though they said that they don't care with the last presidential election and Trump's presidency, they still talked about how hate crimes targeting Muslims increased recently and how this situation affected their daily lives in the United States.

In conclusion, not only hijabi, but also non-hijabi international Muslim women believed that Trump's presidency has acted an important role on increasing discrimination, verbal hatred, and isolation against Muslims because of racialized identities of Muslims. Like American Muslim women, international Muslim women also explained that the hijab is not the only way to make visible a Muslim identity: skin color, language, name, the origin of the nation, and culture, religiosity level such as living modestly make visible and racialized their Muslim identity. Intersectional identities of Muslim have also influence Muslim women's experience with racism, hatred, and discrimination.

Coping Strategies of Muslim Female Students in America

This study tries to understand experiences and identity construction of Muslim women by looking at their intersectional identities, rather than as a homogenous and static form of identities or experiences, with attention to discourses of othering, exclusion, and microaggressions.

Muslim identities are often constructed and reconstructed in relation to the dominant and hegemonic discourses of Islam in the United States. Thus, due to stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam, Muslim, and Muslim countries, Muslim female students have had to develop coping strategies to overcome the results of Islamophobia. This chapter shows the strategies and coping mechanisms implemented by Muslim female students to resist severe and exclusionary discourses and practices which to some extent form their strategies of resistance in the United States.

Throughout the interviews with Muslim female students who have different nation of the origin, culture, religiosity level and citizenship status, it was evident that participants used different coping strategies in order to deal with the consequences of Islamophobia and racialization of Muslim identity. Thus, when a Muslim person is threatened due to stereotypes about Muslim, Islam, and Muslim countries, coping strategies have played a crucial role to deal with the pressures of society. Five strategies emerged: Take off headscarf or changing clothing style; remaining silent/ being afraid to complain; educating other people about stereotypes, misconception, and biases; experiencing double pressure to be extra nice, kind, hardworking, and being a member of MSA or another religious group and their support.

Take off Headscarf or Changing Clothing Style

American Muslim Female Students

Dress is an influential way of non-verbal communication. Especially, for Muslim women, wearing a hijab is the most obvious image of Muslim identity and shapes Muslim women's experiences of racism and Islamophobia. In this study, some Muslim women who choose to wear a hijab feel somewhat uncomfortable, even though they live in a modern society where diversity of religion, race, and culture are expected to be tolerated. Some Muslim American women,

specifically, explained how making Muslim identity visible, such as wearing a hijab, has become hard after Trump's presidency. These American Muslim women believed that due to Trump's silent welcoming of these hate groups there is increase hatred against Muslims. Tuana who is a hijabi Syrian American said that "so, I'm not going to lie. Wearing headscarf is very hard for me nowadays. I am thinking to take it off sometimes" (September 15, 2017). Even though she keeps wearing a hijab, sometimes she wanted to take it off due to increasing hatred against Muslims and negative stereotypes about Islam. She wears a hijab but she still has hair showing because she does not want to be considered as an extremist or a radical Muslim in the United States. Thus, changing her hijab style, she just wants to show how she is different from Muslims who live in the Middle East or who are radical.

Najlaa who is a non-hijabi Palestinian American said that she started to wear a hijab when she was ten years old. Until she started to high school, she just attended Islamic schools. She wore a headscarf because she wanted to be like her mom and her teachers in Islamic schools. Especially, during 2016 election campaign, she believed that verbal and physical hatred against Muslims have been on the rise and moreover she felt that people stared more at her and she experienced verbal hatred inside and outside campus area due to her hijab. Due to increased hate crimes, negative stereotypes against Muslims, and her experiences with racism and exclusion, she took off her hijab one and half years ago. She stated that:

Yeah. I mean when I wore the hijab, in public I guess sometimes I kind of feel like I expect someone to be hateful. And so, I'm always on guard. I wouldn't say that I behave differently I think I behave similar. But I think I just kind of I have that idea in the back of my head that someone might say something and I need to be ready for when they do say something you know. So, I guess when I wear the hijab, I am always on guard and I always feel uncomfortable due to people's gaze and hate speech (August 10, 2017).

She believes that after she took off the hijab, she saw immediate change in how people treated her. Although she is a white and an American citizen, and English is her native language, the

hijab was the only thing that questioned her whiteness and Americanness. She also believes that being non-hijabi Muslim, she feels now more part of American society. Thus, for her, taking off the hijab is way to integrate herself in American society and to prevent herself against hate crimes or stereotypes.

International Muslim Female Students

International women also believed that Muslim women choose to wear or not wear the hijab for many different reasons. While some Muslim women choose to wear the hijab to make visible their Muslim identity and to show their differences from the rest of the society, some Muslim women do not prefer to wear it due to restrictions they face from societal pressure.

Serena who is a non-hijabi Syrian woman said that

I really believe that all Muslim women should wear a hijab because it is a rule in Islam. I was like pretty close to wear it in Syria but I changed my mind after I come to America because I don't want to feel uncomfortable with it (September 5, 2017).

She stated that being non-hijabi is one of the strategies for coping with non-Muslim Americans' gaze and verbal hatred. Since, to wear the hijab meant to put herself under suspicion of being a member of any Islamic terrorist groups due to stereotypes that are created through the media and politics. Gulshan who is Iranian non-hijabi woman took off her headscarf after she came to the United States. She said that:

I wore hijab when I came here first you know couple of weeks after that I removed it because I feel that it attracts more attention compared to you know think when I go somewhere and people are like oh you know but now I feel more that I am part of American community (July 31, 2017).

Laleh is another non-hijabi Iranian Muslim woman and she started to wear the hijab in middle school at age 12. She came to the United States for her undergrad education. After she finished her undergrad education, she got accepted into a Ph.D. program and then she decided to stop wearing the hijab. She explained that:

I just wear it one or two week in U.S. and I did not have good experiences and I preferred to take it off. I know lots of my friends who wear hijabs took off their hijabs after they came to U.S. I think that I am more usual now and less being specific after I took off my hijab. Yes. maybe it was like my own thinking because I was thinking that I am unwanted due to my religion. Now that I'm more usual like other people I wouldn't get like that much of looks like.

During the interview, they always stated that they feel more comfortable after they took off their headscarf because non-Muslim Americans cannot recognize their Muslim identity now. They also believed that people know that she is minority in America due to her skin color and language, but for her being a brown minority in the U.S. is easier than being a Muslim woman at Trump's era. These two non-hijabi and Iranian women argued that taking off hijab does not mean that they do not believe in Islam and in God. They still pray and do other Islamic requirements such as fasting during Ramadan. They do not wear hijab now and they believed that in many ways they feel closer to their religion than ever.

As a result, these non-hijabi international women stated that in the United States, stereotypes and hate crimes against Muslims have an influence on Muslim women's choice to wear or to stop wearing the hijab. These non-hijabi international Muslim women decided to take their hijabs off before Trump's presidency because of the negative stereotypes and hatred against Muslims. However, they believed that hate crimes targeting hijabi Muslim women have doubled during the Trump's election campaign and presidency and they do not want to put it back again at this age. Serena who is a non-hijabi Syrian woman said that "if the president changed, and Americans' views on Muslims changed, I would love to wear a hijab" (September 5, 2017). Since, the hijab makes Muslim women easy to target in a crowd where majority of individuals are non-Muslim and these non-hijabi international Muslim women do not want to wear a hijab due to fear of violence, verbal hatred, and discrimination.

Being Silent/ Being Afraid to Complain

American Muslim Female Students

Coping strategies are activities that help people to remain calm during stressful situations such as social, gender, and racial inequalities, racism, exclusion, or discriminations. American Muslim women use silence as one of important strategies for coping with non-Muslim Americans' gaze and verbal hatred. Thus, this study showed that American Muslim women used silence as a coping strategy in the highly-politicized environment in which they are now living in order to distract themselves from stereotypes about Muslim and Islam and to protect themselves from hate crimes against Muslims. Enaas who is a white hijabi Palestinian American woman said that she has always two approach when someone says something offensive. One approach is to ignore and another is to confront what he/she says. She believes that nowadays, especially in Trump's era, the best way is to ignore or to be silent in order to protect themselves when Muslims perceive prevalent hostility toward their faith.

Zohreye who is a white hijabi Palestinian American said that:

I guess why I've never been mistreated because I just keep my opinions to myself. You know maybe some people are against that or they don't agree with me keeping my opinions to myself. There are also some web-sites that target Muslims and that's why I am scared to talk (August 16, 2017).

Asali who is a non-hijabi Pakistani American stated that:

I heard that people say some strange things. In the Fall semester, I was in history class and one guy said that "I do not get this religion (Islam) and it is weird." I did not say anything and I should but... I am scared to tell my opinions because I am a Muslim and a brown person and a woman. Since I don't want to be someone who disagrees with all society. The president it really sucks. I want to be able to voice my opinion (August 1, 2017).

Their stories are not only examples of the use of silence as a coping strategy in the different conditions such as in specific the group and intrapersonal context, but also their experiences are

examples of violent acts. These women feel uncomfortable and do not feel respected when someone talks about a fear, hatred and hostility toward Muslims and Islam that is perpetuated by negative stereotypes. However, they did not prefer to confront biased and negative ideas about Muslims and Islam because hate crimes and racism against Muslims is making them fearful. These women also talked about some anti-Muslim web-sites that target Muslim students and faculty who criticize hatred and negative stereotypes about Muslims in the Middle Eastern and in the West, and Islam. They believed that if they speak about hatred, racism, discrimination against Muslim in the current political environment, they will be targeted in one of these web-sites and they are scared to lose some opportunities such as finding a job, getting scholarship, etc. Thus, being a silent is not just a choice for these women because they are silenced by Islamophobia and racism.

International Muslim Female Students

Some international Muslim women also preferred to be silent as a means to cope with non-Muslim Americans' gaze and verbal hatred in the United States but more due to their poor English skills rather than the fear of racialization as a radical or dangerous Muslim. For example, Nermin who is a non-hijabi Turkish woman said that:

My native language was not English. Sometimes you can say something that you don't actually mean when you are not speaking in your own language. So, I think that was also a language barrier. Sometimes, I heard something offensive to Islam or to my nationality and I want to say something but I generally ignored what they were talking about due to my low English (August 30, 2017).

Naima who is a hijabi Saudi Arabian woman said "I have lots of things to say but not enough words. I would like to be quiet. I have a lot of things to say but sometime my English skill is not enough to explain myself and my religion" (October 4, 2017). Due to their poor English skills, they do not want to lead to inaccurate judgments of their intrinsic view about Islam, Muslims,

non-Muslims Americans, East, and West. Thus, for some international Muslim women, being silent is a way to cope with negative stereotypes and hatred against Muslims because these women do not feel confident to confront with these negative stereotypes due to their low English skills rather than fear of discrimination or racialization of their Muslim identity.

Educating Other People about Stereotypes, Misconception, and Biases

American Muslim Female Students

Negative stereotypes about Muslims and Islam have caused racialization of all Muslims as terrorist or terrorist sympathizer, oppressed, etc. American Muslim women attempted to challenge those stereotypes through educating others. American Muslim women who experience stereotype may answer by directly challenging the negative stereotype through their interactions with others. For instance, when an American Muslim woman faced with a stereotype said she tried to educate people who have misconceptions about Muslims. Enaas who is a hijabi Palestinian American woman said that:

My other approach is to calmly rationalize with that person like this is wrong because I believe in one, two, three and four. Like when someone tells me to take off that scarf you feel the need to tell them you have the right to wear your shorts. And I have the right to wear my scarf. And you start to compare how we're both wanting the same rights. You have the right to not like me or I have the right to ignore you. You have the right to go to your church and I have the right to go to a mosque and when you start to compare the privileges they have with the privileges that you want. I think people start to realize that we're both in this together. You're here for freedom but you've got your freedom and you have it and nobody's giving you a hard time about it. You have the freedom to wear whatever you want to believe in whatever you want and speak about whatever you want. And I'm here for the same reasons and for the same freedoms. So just like I respect yours and respect my right and this approach to be is a safer and a lot better at solving the issue than just yelling back would be you know or even ignoring (August 8, 2017).

In this example, a Muslim woman holds the non-Muslim American directly responsible for her stereotypical beliefs and actions and she challenges her stereotypes thorough educating her and comparing a Muslim and a non-Muslim woman's choices. She also explains she just wants the

same freedom that non-Muslim American women have. While a non-Muslim American woman does not face stereotypical discourses about her clothing style, a Muslim woman must challenge stereotypical belief of all Muslim women are oppressed due to her hijab.

Evana who is a hijabi Egyptian American Muslim woman said that “telling my personal story is a good way to show people how I wouldn't accept the oppression of my own self. So, I wear a hijab for a reason and I'm not just wearing it because I was forced to” (August 21, 2017).

Tanzila who is a non-hijabi Indian American woman also stated that, “I say that I am a Muslim woman and I am not oppressed by my family and live in a great life like many other women out there” (September 5, 2017). Thus, these Muslim women did not only try to raise awareness about the misconception about Muslims and Islam, but they also rejected the idea that Muslim women had been oppressed by male through showing how they lived far away from their family to get their education as proof of their freedom.

International Muslim Female Students

International Muslim female students discussed that people were always confused about the differences between culture and religion. Even though religion and culture are closely connected to each other, they are different in nature and description. These Muslim women advocated that non-Muslim Americans thought all Muslim women came from the same nation or culture and ignored cultural and national diversities among Muslim women. Banan who is a hijabi Palestinian woman said that:

Yeah, actually, I faced some stereotype and I tried to show them that this is wrong. We have different people in different cultures. So, Muslim women live their life and do what they love and their family support them. And I should say how achieving my dream and studying here when my husband is taking care of our child. So yeah, I'm just trying to like to change these stereotypes and to show them that we are understanding and respectful (August 16, 2017).

Laleh who is an Iranian Muslim woman also emphasized on heterogeneities among Muslim

women and how diversity among Muslim women affect their experiences. She stated that, “if you see a Muslim girl wearing a scarf by choice or even by force that Muslim girls do not represent the whole millions of Muslims” (August 30, 2017). She explained that religion is not only a factor that affects Muslim women’s choice to wear or not to wear a hijab, but also culture, nationality, political situation in their home country, patriarchal family structure, etc. She also felt sometimes pressure to explain diversity among Muslim women because she does not want to be seen as oppressed, terrorist, or terrorist sympathizer due to negative stereotypes about Islam. Many international Muslim women believed that educating non-Muslim Americans about Islam and diversity among Muslims is the best way to cope with negative stereotypes.

Sadiki who is a hijabi Egyptian Muslim woman said that:

I mean me myself like as a hijabi I think I have like a powerful situation because like I can tell people that it's my option. I mean I live away from home. So, I don't have any parents who can oppress me. Yeah away from them so I can do whatever I want but even though I choose to wear it so that like that's really good proof that I choose it they don't force me to do so. Being in the United States is opportunity for to explain my religion and my people to others (August 25, 2017).

She attempted to break the ‘oppressed Muslim woman’ stereotype by showing her existence and education in the United States and by interacting with members of the non-Muslim American people. Like Sadiki, there are some international Muslim women also represent themselves as modern, educated, and liberated and they attempt to alter the dominant picture of Muslim women in American society, and thus also that of Islam. They believed that their social and educational lives in America are the best to break negative stereotypes about Muslims, Muslim women, Muslims countries, and Islam. In the article, *Epistemic Exploitation*, Berenstain (2016) states that people of color who have to “educate” whites about their own experiences and she describes this as epistemic exploitation that is “common within institutions of higher education, activist coalitions and alliances, and interpersonal relationships”, and it is a form of racism (p.3).

Similarly, participants in this study claimed that they always faced with the demand to educate by non-Muslim Americans. Even though they sometimes felt emotionally exhausting to explain their faith and experience, they felt the need to explain in order to break stereotypes about Muslim women and Islam.

Double Pressure to Be Extra Nice, Kind, Hardworking...

American Muslim Female Students

All hijabi American female students tried to be good representatives of other Muslims. However, they emphasized the extra pressure they felt to be good representatives of other Muslims and to make a positives impact against the negative perceptions of Muslims, especially women who wear a hijab. Enaas who is a hijabi Palestinian American said that:

When in high school, ISIS the attacks started coming up, and even when I was in UT, the three Muslims were killed. I was what I felt almost like you look at the news and you don't blame people for hating us that's what the news is showing when they don't know. You know like I can't be mad at you for not knowing. And the new station said should be teaching you what you should know. They're not teaching you the right way and you don't come from a Muslim background so you can't understand what I know. So, my only thing that I felt and I was felt like I had to be perfect, I had to always be nice and always be extra nice and always be helpful because I wanted to change the way people felt about Muslims. And I think that put a lot of pressure on me because I couldn't ever be lazy and I couldn't ever just have a bad day. I always felt like I had to force myself to be extra, extra, extra nice and extra, extra, extra kind which I like to do. But you see other people they can just have a bad day where they can feel like they just don't want to talk. When you do that as a Muslim in this world at this time, you start to feel like you're making your reputation worse. So, there is a lot of pressure to be extra when you just want to be warm (August 8, 2017).

Basimah who is a hijabi Syrian American stated:

I think, you kind of get the way of like representing the faith. In your everyday actions like you don't have as much to intimidate you were if you were not. So, I think if I were to make a mistake or do something wrong, for example if I'm driving my car next steps because I'm like I get road rage or something like that might reflect badly on my faith because I like representing my entire faith by wearing the scarf that was visibly Muslim whereas if I wasn't I think that weight of like the representation would not be as heavy as because I wouldn't physically be an apparent (August 29, 2017).

Hijabi American Muslim women knew that their hijabs made visible their Muslim identity to others and therefore stigmatized them as outsiders to mainstream American society. They felt pressure to act in certain ways as representatives of all Muslims and of all Islamic culture while they were out and in the public because they were Muslims. Enaas emphasized on pressure to be “extra, extra nice” and the weight of not being able to have a bad day because she felt under pressure in moment of communicating with peers, and non-Muslim American due to negative stereotypes about Islam, forcing to respond these stereotypes, and anti-Muslim hatred in the United States. She believed that wearing a hijab does not only make her Muslim identity visible but it also makes her able to break negative stereotypes about Muslim women and Islam by showing how a hijabi woman is successful, kind, independent, modern, etc. Wearing a hijab has played a crucial role on female students to develop their own identities as Muslim women while they were trying to prevent their identities and the image of Muslims and Islam that are stigmatized by negative stereotypes. Additionally, non-hijabi American Muslim women did not express that they felt pressure to act as representatives of all Muslim and Islamic culture due to their invisible Muslim identity.

As a result, being good representatives of other Muslims is a way for coping with negative images of Muslims and Islam in the United States because these Muslim women are scared to be considered through the lens of a negative stereotypes. “Stereotype threat” that the risk for living up to negative stereotypes about their group (Stroessner & Good 2011) and has played a crucial role on why Muslim female students felt pressure to be “extra, extra nice” and the weight of not being able to have a bad day due to the fear of doing something that unintentionally confirm that stereotype. Like the article, *Creating Identity-Safe Spaces on College Campuses for Muslim Students*, Nasir and Al-Amin (2006) talked about Muslim students

who felt stereotype threat and need to persistently manage others' impressions of them due to negative stereotypes about Islam (p.25). My study showed that Muslim women in the United States where they perceive their group to be judged as terrorist, terrorist sympathizer, oppressed, inferior put a heavy burden on themselves to prove how these stereotypes are wrong.

International Muslim Female Students

This study also showed that only hijabi international Muslim female students attempted to be good representatives of other Muslims, Islamic culture and their nation of origin as a way for coping with negative images of Muslims and Islam in the United States. They felt a double pressure to be extra nice and a hard worker in order to be a good representative of other Muslims, Islamic culture and their nation of origin. For example, Urvi who is a hijabi Bangladeshi woman stated that “people have bad stereotypes about Muslims and I am always trying to be a good Muslim because I do not let them feel that Muslims are bad. I have tried to be more nicer and polite always” (September 15, 2017). Tabia who is a hijabi Egyptian Muslim woman also said that:

It helps me to like be a better Muslim because everyone was just looking at you and they know that this is a Muslim and how Muslim women are treated. For example, like if I didn't do well and of course then people who would like to say that these Muslim women are not intelligent and they are oppressed and so whatever. Alhamdulillah's, I'm on the top of my major and I have high school percentage of university. So, I think this is a challenge to me to prove everyone my hijab does not affect or judge my intelligent. I think, I am also a representative of other Muslim girls and I do not want to give anyone a bad idea about Muslim women, Islam, and our culture (August 25, 2017).

The hijab plays a role as a boundary maker between hijabi and non-hijabi Muslim women in terms of how they feel pressure to be a representative of other Muslims and Islam. Muslim women choose to wear a hijab for many different purposes all of which can alter over time such as a symbol of faith, feminism, identity, culture, or simply because they want to do. While non-hijabi Muslim women can blend easily into American society, hijabi Muslim women are not only

required to defend their decision to wear a hijab, religion, and culture, but also, they are forced to explain negative stereotypes about Muslims and Islam that are defined as antagonistic to democracy and American values. As being a representative of other Muslims, these hijabi women want to change the way that non-Muslim Americans feel about Muslims. Due to their hijab that is the most visible and stigmatized symbol of Islam, hijabi Muslim women felt more responsible to change non-Muslim Americans' negative perception about Muslims and Islam than non-hijabi Muslim women. Thus, Muslim female students in the United States want to be "model minority"-a hard-working, high-achieving, law-abiding Muslim women. In this study, these women believed that they are model minority of Muslim but being a model minority also causes anxiety or pressure on them. There are many studies on "model minority", but these studies generally focus on Asian American who stigmatized as academic superstar and who felt anxiety about living up the model minority label (Lee 2012; Suzuki 2010; Taylor & Stern 1997). On the other hand, in the United States, Muslims face far less "model minority stereotypes" than negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. In this study, Muslim female students who attempted to break negative stereotypes about Islam and to be model minority in the United States believed that they can change negative stereotypes and biases. These women's experiences also showed that being a model minority is related to the stressors associated with the pressure to succeed, to be kind and nice, to help others, and to be an ideal Muslim who prays regularly and live modestly.

Being a Member of MSA or Another Religious Group and Their Support

American Muslim Female Students

Another coping strategy is being a member of the Muslim Student Association or other religious groups in order to be able to challenge discourses of exclusion and racism in American

society. Many, both hijabi and non-hijabi American Muslim women, believed that MSA acts as an important role to construct a Muslim student group, to get together, and to think together on Muslim students' problems and experiences in the diasporic space, and to help Muslim students to actively engage in all forms of resistance and to assert their identity. Many hijabi American Muslim women believed that being a member of MSA helped them to feel safer inside and outside campus and to resist against the negative stereotypes about Muslims and Islam. For example, Enaas who is a hijabi Palestinian American said that:

Yes, I am. I think being a member of MSA would be more comforting. But we do a lot of event interchange with the Jewish society with other clubs which I didn't really realize how much we would be talking to people who were not Muslim because our job is to represent Islam and Muslims. You know what is our job is to outreach and to prove that we are not what the media portrays. So, I think it did affect my experience in a good way. I went in there I was like oh I'll be sheltered I have this nice little library a group. At the end of the day here you are representing yourself. But you have a team of people also representing something and you feel safer than doing it on your own (August 8, 2017).

Tuana who is a hijabi Syrian American Muslim woman stated that:

I like having MSA, it was really nice that like I can go to some place that can be like my safe haven kind of I can go and there's like people like me and I can talk to them and you know the guys they look out for us and the girls are there to talk to and chill with. For instance, when the girls who don't have brothers or don't have a guy to walk them to their car or to walk up to their house. I know that they would have like a group of Muslim men and they would list their numbers and say if any girl needs to walk to a car or to go to her house like text one of us and we'll do it for like walk with you just keep the girl safe. Which I found like amazing because you know brothers and sisters look out for each other and we have up on that just like create such a safe space for us. Like, yeah, we might get the racist comments down the road or like someone yells like that go back to your country or something like that. But then again like you have this group of MSA students that are always there for you no matter (September 15, 2017).

After three Muslim students (two of them are hijabi women and one is a man) were killed in North Caroline, Trump's presidency, and an increase in reported hate crime against Muslims in the United States, especially, hijabi American Muslim women were afraid to walk alone in or outside of campus due to their visible Muslim identity. They explained that being around other

Muslim people who have same experiences made hijabi American Muslim women feel comfortable.

Muslim female students who are a member of MSA generally are Sunni Muslims. Muslim female students who belong to other branches of Islam such as Shia and Smiley said that even though their fundamental beliefs are same with Sunni Muslim, they are practicing Islam differently. For example, Asali who is a non-hijabi Pakistani American said that “I am not a member of MSA because I am Shia and it is a minority branch of Islam here. We are not connecting with Sunni because we are practicing differently. Our fundamental beliefs are same” (August 1, 2017). Additionally, Tanuja who is a non-hijabi Indian American, and Yaran who is a hijabi Kurdish American believed that MSA attempted to introduce Islam to non-Muslim Americans and people in this group helped and supported each other. These two women were really proud what MSA was doing but they still do not feel a part of them because of the branch of Islam they belong to.

Another important point in this chapter is that some hijabi Muslim American women believed that being a member of MSA makes them a target of hate while many hijabi American Muslim women stated that being a member of Muslim student association or another religious groups is a way to challenge discourses of exclusion and racism against Muslims. For example, Zohreye who is a hijabi, Sunni, Palestinian American Muslim woman stated that:

I'm not in MSA. I won't become an MSA member. I'm kind of worried what people think about me because when I go apply for a job, people start to categorize you according to groups you are a member. I know I have some friends and they are members of MSA and some people took their profiles and they started saying oh this person is against Christians or Jews and who are there against this organization and they start talking about it on this Web site. I really forgot that the website is called, but it includes hatred against Muslims. And I'm scared that when someone for example if my friends would search up my name, they can think like oh she's associated with these people and this is how she thinks. So, they might think that we're not going to lead or we're not going to hire her. So that's what I'm thinking. What other people think about me. I'm scared about missing

opportunities (jobs, graduate schools, etc.) because I know and that I think that website is still up. And I just can't remember the name and my friends are on there and I know a lot of people on there. I'm glad I'm not a part of it. But at the same time, I'm kind of scared of entering a MSA just because I don't want to miss opportunities like graduate schools and jobs and whatever I don't want people to think about me as a dangerous or radical (August 16, 2017).

She was scared to be a part of Muslim student association due to stigmatization of Muslim in this association as anti-Jewish, anti-Christian, radical Muslim, and terrorist sympathizer. Even though she wears a hijab and make her Muslim identity visible to others, she still believes that being a part of any Islamic groups cause to face discrimination. Since, religious groups like MSA that is the most visible and influential Islamic student organization was considered more dangerous than a Muslim person due to their role to construct a Muslim community to get together, and to think together. Additionally, MSA stands for justice for Palestinians and attempts to break negative stereotypes about Middle Eastern countries, Islam, and Muslims. These missions of MSA plays a crucial role on how some members of MSA became targets of anti-Muslim hatred groups.

Canary Mission, Campus Watch, Alt-Right are some of these anti-Muslim hatred groups that create a blacklist to target Muslims who stands for justice for Palestinians or support countries and people in Middle East. Therefore, some Muslim female students are scared to be a member of MSA because they do not want to take a place in the blacklist of anti-Muslim hate groups. Additionally, the Alt-Right is a group of white supremacists who hate diversity and disrespect democratic principles (The Alt-Right on Campus 2017). The members of the hatred group believed that “white identity” is threaten by multicultural groups (The Alt-Right on Campus 2017). Especially, during the Trump’s election campaign and presidency Alt-Right targeting of campuses increased and Muslim student associations became one of campus groups targeted by the Alt-Right. Thus, not only being a hijabi, but also being a member of MSA that is the most visible Islamic student organization have played an important role on stigmatization of Muslim

people as a threat for the national security and incompatible with Western and Democratic ideals.

International Muslim Female Students

Some hijabi international Muslim women also believed that being a member of Muslim student association is a strategy to be able to challenge discourses of exclusion, discrimination, and racism in American society. For example, Sadiki who is a hijabi Egyptian Muslim woman stated that “I am a member of MSA. It makes a lot of easier. I do not feel alone in this community. It is good to have people who share same experiences” (August 25, 2017). She also said that being a member of MSA helped them to adopt their new lives in the United States.

Tabia who is also a hijabi Egyptian woman said that:

MSA gives me a chance as a member of MSA to deal with other groups on campus. For example, I participated in a dinner of Jewish organizations as a representative of the MSA, which is good. it just clears a lot of the misconceptions that people have about others. I am a Muslim and I am an Arab from Egypt. I grew up having like a stereotype about the Jews like that Jews killed people in Palestine. Jews attack and are bombing people in Gaza and everything. So, it was a good chance to know that there are really good Jews too (August 25, 2017).

These hijabi international Muslim women also considered themselves as representative of other Muslims and Islam. Muslim student association does not only help to unify the many Muslim students on campus, but also to provide Muslim students to answer questions of other students about Islam and to talk about their faith.

Even though some international Muslim female students did not prefer to be a member of MSA on campus, they became a member of associations that are connected to their nation of the origin. For instance, Naima who is a hijabi Saudi woman also said that “I do not know about MSA. We have Saudi Arab club and I am a member of it. I do not think that people in MSA represent me or Saudi women” (October 4, 2017). This Saudi woman believed that people in MSA become more Americanized and they think and act more like American people. For

example, she stated that in MSA, male and female students spent time together and they eat meat in the restaurant without checking it is halal or not. She thought that MSA did not represent her because people in MSA did not behave appropriately according to Islamic rules that she followed. In University of Tennessee, Knoxville, there are many international student associations such as Bangladesh student association, Iranian student association, Middle Eastern student association, Nepali student association, Saudi student association, and Turkish student association. This study showed that there are many international Muslim female students who preferred to be a part of an association according to their nation of the origin. Due to their cultural and national differences, these Muslim women did not feel to belong to Muslim Student association event though they defined themselves as a Muslim woman.

Conclusion

Trump's anti-Muslim sentiments has harmed Muslim people in the United States. All Muslim women believed that discrimination, verbal hatred, and isolation against Muslim women has been on the rise because of racialized identities of Muslims in recent times. These women stated that Muslim women have suffered the most from hate crime due to visible symbols of their Muslim identity and the hijab was explained as one of the most visible and stigmatized. Not only a hijab, but also other things that make visible religious identity such as skin color, language, name, the origin of the nation, and culture, religiosity level such as praying five times in a day, fasting during the Ramadan, living modestly, etc. make visible and racialized their Muslim identity during Trump's era. Moreover, these intersecting identities have an impact differently Muslim women's experiences of Trump and coping strategies. For example, American Muslim female students clearly explained concerns about Trump's presidency, future of the country, and their future in the United States while many international Muslim female students expressed that

they did not care about Trump's presidency and politics in the United States because America is not their home country.

This study also showed that all Muslim female felt responsible for challenging the stereotypes, but their strategies for challenging the stereotypes changed based on the intersection of their racial, religious, and nationality/citizenship status. For example, white and colored hijabi Muslim female students construct their responsibilities around the issue of representation due to visibility of their Muslim identity and they attempted to change the dominant image of Muslim women through their behavior in their everyday lives. Additionally, both hijabi and non-hijabi, colored and white Muslim women felt a need to educate non-Muslim Americans about Islam and Muslims to fight against the negative stereotypes about them. Like the results of studies of Nasir and Al-Amin (2006) and Seggie and Sanford (2010), being a representative of other Muslims and educating others about stereotypes about Muslim and Islam put a heavy burden on American Muslim female students because of the stereotypes threat that refers to the risk of confirming the negative stereotypes about Muslims and Islam.

Furthermore, this study showed that there are different reasons to choose being silent/being afraid to complain among American and international Muslim women. For example, some American Muslim women chose to be silent when they faced negative stereotypes due to highly-politicized environment in America in which they are now living in order to distract themselves from stereotypes about Muslim and Islam and to protect themselves from hate crimes and racisms against Muslims. On other hand, some international Muslim women's motivations to choose to remain silent when they faced negative stereotypes are different than American Muslim women. Since, they chose being a silent as coping strategies due to their low English skills.

In conclusion, Muslim women attempted to break misconceptions and negative stereotypes about Islam among non-Muslim Americans. They used coping strategies to integrate American society and to fight against severe and exclusionary discourses in American society such as take-off headscarf or changing clothing style, being silent/being afraid to complain educating other people about stereotypes, misconception, and biases, being a double pressure to be extra nice, kind, hardworking, being a member of MSA or another religious group and their support. These women believed that in America, they are representatives of Islam, other Muslims, and their nationality to make a positives impact on negative perceptions of Muslims. By using these coping strategies, they did not only attempt to be representatives of Islam, other Muslims, and their nationality, but also, they tried to adopt American culture and to feel themselves a part of American community.

Chapter VII

Discussion and Conclusion

This study provided an investigation into the concepts of racialization, citizenship, and intersectionality within the reality of Muslim female students' lived experiences in the United States at a large, Southeastern, research university. Importantly, the role of intersectionality shaped Muslim female students' opinions and responses about negative stereotypes, their racial and religious identities, and the coping strategies they employed to mitigate prevailing stereotypes about Muslim women in U.S. More specifically, the intersection of religion, race, ethnicity, and gender affected how Muslim women saw themselves and how they navigated their social environments.

As is made clear throughout the thesis, it demands much care to analyze a religious group that is constantly experiencing Islamophobia, exclusion, discrimination, and racial discourse in contemporary United States. In Trump's era, especially, due to discriminatory U.S. policies (such as Trump's travel ban) against Muslims, the spread of negative stereotypes about Muslims, there is an added need to give particular attention to Muslim female students. But Muslim women do not experience and understand this political moment the same way. Thus, by focusing on the diversity among Muslim women, this study attempts to fill the knowledge gaps about their experiences not found in the literature.

One of the most important results of this research is that the hijab played a role as a boundary marker between American hijabi Muslim women and American non-hijabi Muslim women and/or between hijabi international Muslim women and non-hijabi international Muslim women in experiencing racialization practices. Almost all Muslim women talked about the difficulties related with wearing the hijab in the United States. All Muslim women in the study

stated that they experienced racialized practices such as feeling different, experienced forms of exclusion and isolation, felt harmed by verbal hatred, and were made to feel unwelcome and different from stereotypes and microaggressions. However, compared to the hijabi Muslim women in this study, the experiences of racialization practices amongst non-hijabi Muslim women were less pronounced. Because the hijab is the most visible figure of Muslim identity, hijabi Muslim women have suffered more from racialization practices in their interaction with non-Muslim Americans. The majority of Muslim women who wear the hijab discussed that it was difficult for them to communicate with non-Muslim students, to walk and to shop alone in Knoxville, and to integrate into the American community.

The findings also showed that for hijabi and non-hijabi Muslim women's experiences racialization intersected with their citizenship status. American and international hijabi Muslim women experienced racialization practices in the same ways. Since their Muslim identity was made visible through the hijab, hijabi American women's citizenships were questioned and accentuated their marginalization in American society. Thus, like hijabi international women, hijabi American Muslim women also were considered as "outsider", and thus not a part of American community. Citizenship status also played an important role on non-hijabi Muslim women's experiences. For non-American Muslim woman having an accent or limited English skills made visible non-hijabi Muslim women's religious identity. Having an accent or poor English skills highlighted their foreignness and their nation of origin.

Additionally, this study highlighted that intersection of religion, gender, race which has an impact on Muslim women's experiences. White hijabi Muslim women stated that their "whiteness" was questioned in American society due to her hijab. Their visual religious identity was a racialized boundary. On the other hand, hijabi Muslim women of color explained that they

are more racialized due to their hijab rather than their skin color. Especially, one hijabi Black American woman who converted to Islam three years ago showed how her Americanness is downgraded because of her hijab and her visible Muslim identity. Moreover, while non-hijabi Muslim women of color are racialized as different through their perceived foreignness and race and less about their religion non-hijabi white Muslim women do not feel different or are seen as different because of their religious and minority position are invisible to others. However, these non-hijabi white Muslim women who are not American citizens and speak English as a second language are still racialized and face negative stereotypes about Muslims because their language skills or religiosity levels, such as not eating pork or not drinking alcohol also make visible their Muslim identity. Additionally, this finding is also connected to definition of racialization that I conceptualize in the table 2. Thus, all Muslim women experience practice of racialization, but intersectional identities shape how they experience racialization in different way. In this study, the role of intersecting identities is the main structure of diverse forms of racialization.

Another important finding of the study showed that racialization practices that Muslim women experience: such as feeling different, experiencing forms of exclusion and isolation, harm by verbal hatred, stereotypes, and microaggressions affect their perceptions about the hijab. Muslim female students define differently the meaning of the hijab. Religion intersects with their other identities such as a coming from a country that is governed by sharia law or democracy, being American citizens, and the branch of Islam practiced. For instance, American hijabi Muslim female students who are Middle Eastern see the hijab as a religious requirement, a symbol of their identity or feminist strategy based on their family background, ethnicity, and culture of origin. On the other hand, international hijabi women see the hijab only as a religious requirement because in their home countries most people are Muslim and they never need to

represent their religious identity or their religion. Thus, culture and political environment where they grew up matter for international hijabi women in a way that differs from American hijabi women. Additionally, American and international non-hijabi Muslim women identified the hijab as an unnecessary tool but, for different reasons. This study demonstrated that Asian American non-hijabi Muslim students see the headscarf as an unnecessary tool for Muslim women identity due to their ethnic cultural background and the branch of Islam that they belong to. International Muslim women see the headscarf as an unnecessary tool due to social and political situation of their home country.

The findings of the study also indicate that Muslims do not officially identify as a race or racial category in the U.S. even though they experience living as a racial “Other”. The findings showed that wearing a hijab is the most significant factor that acts as a boundary maker among Muslim women in terms of how they racially identify themselves. White American hijabi women do not feel accepted as white by non-Muslim American society because of their hijab. Moreover, while women who do not wear the headscarf do not feel excluded from their citizenship, hijabi women of color and white Muslim women find their citizenship questioned due to the role of the hijab as a racialized boundary maker.

Finally, findings of the study demonstrate that intersecting identities of Muslim women have played a role on how Muslim women negotiate and deploy coping strategies in the Trump era. All participants agreed on that hate incidents towards Muslims during Trump’s era has increased, but their citizenship status affected how they evaluate Trump’s presidency. Trump’s presidency made American Muslim female students feel worried about the future of the country, and their future in the United States. However, many international Muslim female students expressed that they did not care about Trump’s presidency and politics in the United States

because America is not their home country and they are planning to go back to their home country after they finished their degrees.

Another important finding of this study also indicated that all Muslim females felt responsible for challenging stereotypes, but their strategies for challenging those stereotypes changed based on the intersection of their racial, religious, and nationality/citizenship status. The hijab plays a role as a boundary maker among Muslim women in terms of how they cope with negative stereotypes or hatred. Since, white and hijabi women of color students felt more responsible to educate non-Muslim Americans and to break negative stereotypes about Muslims and Islam due to visibility of their Muslim identity. Their hijabs made them feel as a representative of all Muslims. Non-hijabi American and international students also felt a need to educate non-Muslim Americans but they did not feel pressure to be representative of all Muslims due to their invisible Muslim identity.

The findings also show that citizenship status and speaking English as native language are other factors that played a role on choosing a strategy to cope with negative stereotypes. American and international Muslim women chose to be silent as a way to cope with the stereotypes but for different reasons. American Muslims chose silence when they faced negative stereotypes due to the highly-politicized environment in America and wanted to distract themselves from stereotypes about Muslim and Islam and to protect themselves from hate crimes and racisms against Muslims. However, some international Muslim women chose to remain silent due to their limited English skills. Since, speaking English as a second language makes these women worried about being misunderstood and not understanding others.

This study also highlighted that the Muslim Student Association is one of the most important associations for Muslims on campus. Many American and international hijabi women

in this study are a member of MSA. However, due to differences among their religious affiliations, the origin of their country, and citizenship status have played a role in their choices to be a member of MSA or not. For example, participants who are a member of MSA are Sunni Muslims and the data showed that Shia and Smiley Muslims generally prefer not to be a member of MSA. Additionally, non-hijabi and hijabi international Muslim female students who preferred not to be a member of MSA on campus chose to become a member of an association that is connected to their nation of the origin. For them, they thought that MSA was not representative for their Muslim identity. While some hijabi international women stated that people in MSA are more Americanized and they think and act more like American people, non-hijabi international Muslim women believed that people in MSA are more religious.

Most clearly this study analyzed multiple and intersecting identities of Muslim female students and how practice of any one identity (e.g. gender) has played a role on the other identities (religious, national, racial, ethnic, etc.). The data also showed that multiple and intersecting identities of Muslim female students affect differently their experiences and perceptions about the hijab, their identity, Trump's presidency and their strategies used to cope with negative stereotypes about Muslims and Islam. Additionally, the study showed that wearing a hijab acted the most significant boundary marker among Muslim female students and their experiences of racialization, their perceptions about the hijab, racial identification, Trump's presidency and their strategies to cope with negative stereotypes about Muslims and Islam. Still being a citizen or not, coming from a secular or religious country, speaking English as a second language or native language, having different racial, national or cultural background also acted a crucial role in their experiences.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research

This study attempts to improve knowledge about Muslim female students and to understand the different parts to the difficulties that these women face in the United States, by exploring their distinct relationships, experiences and views. Giving a voice to Muslim women who come from diverse national, ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds is one of the most significant outcomes of this study because this study emphasizes the importance to the diversity of Muslim women rather than homogenizing them based on their religion.

As Selod and Embrick (20013) call for, this study also analyzed the intersection of other variables such as skin tone, gender, language, religiosity level, race, ethnicity, and nation of origin in order to understand how Muslim women are racialized in the United States.

Additionally, this study showed that racialization does not only provide the information of how racial meanings are applied to Muslim women's bodies, but also shows how practices of racialization are experienced by Muslim women affect differently their perception about the hijab, their racial identity, the current political discourses in the U.S., and their strategies to cope with negative stereotypes.

Like many studies, my research also has some limitations. I purposively selected a sample of participants who would be diverse in terms of citizenship status (i.e., to include both American and international students), levels of studies (both graduate and undergraduate levels), race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, being secular or traditional, and religiosity levels such as wearing the hijab, praying five times a day, not drinking alcohol, not eating pork, living modestly, etc. With this purposively selected sample I found diverse samples necessary for my study. However, this study has just nine women of color and one of them is an African American and the others are Asian Americans. Due to time constraints and the small Muslim populations at

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I would not be able to find more American and international women of color as participants. Despite this limitation, the findings of this study uncovered important differences amongst these Muslim female students and emphasized the diversity of Muslim women.

Future research should use the intersection of other variables to understand how Muslim men are racialized in the U.S. and how practices of racialization they face affect their perception about their Muslim and racial identities. Additionally, future research can analyze how “sexuality” intersects with other identities of Muslims in order to understand more deeply the racialization of Muslims and how LGBTQ Muslims felt marginalized by both the larger Muslim community and American society. In conclusion, there is a wide range of ways for more researchers to engage methods that extend the perspective and acknowledge and the diversity of Muslim populations in Western countries. Thus, the findings of this study broaden the existing literature and help future studies that not analyze Muslim population but also other minority groups in Western or Middle Eastern countries. Additionally, this study provides information to university authorities and policy makers about Muslim female students’ experiences inside and outside campus environment and gives them opportunities to find a solution for Muslim women’s problems.

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Appendix



Interview Questions

- 1- Can you tell me a little bit about your background, where you grew up, how you got to TN and UTK?
- 2- What were your experiences broadly as a Muslim woman?
- 3- What were some of your experiences after the 9/11 attacks and other terrorist attacks? How did you feel, what you saw and heard on TV, on the radio and any newspapers or magazines? How did those articles, coverage etc. make you feel? What do you think about the 2016 U.S. presidential election?
- 4- What do you think non-Muslim Americans think about Muslims or Islam?
- 5- How do you negotiate the prevailing stereotypes about Muslims and Islam?
- 6- Do you identify yourself in terms of your nationality, ethnicity/race, or your religion first?
 - a. Why is how you identify important?
- 7- How do you think your race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, and/or an intersection of them effect your experiences as a Muslim woman studying in an American university?
- 8- Can you tell me about your experiences as a Muslim female student at UTK?
- 9- Do you think that as Muslim women, your national, cultural background and religiosity level such as wearing a headscarf, praying five times a day and fasting during Ramadan affect your experiences differently than other Muslim women?
- 10- Do you wear hijab or traditional clothing? How do you feel about you wearing hijab? How do other people treat you when in hijab?

11- Could you give me a sketch of why you choose to wear or not wear the hijab and at what age?

12- And lastly, is there anything that we missed that would be important for me to know or would you like to explain anything that you have said?



Vita

Nuray Karaman was born in Istanbul, Turkey. She obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology from Cumhuriyet University, Sivas, Turkey in 2009. She also got her Master's degree in Philosophy Education from Sakarya University, Sakarya, Turkey in 2010. After obtaining her Master's degree, Nuray was awarded with a scholarship that allows her pursuing her graduate career abroad by the Turkish Ministry of National Education. After completing her Master's degree in Sociology from Florida Atlantic University, she attended the University of Tennessee in 2013 to pursue her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Sociology.