RACAILIZATION: THE EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM GRADUATE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

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Abstract

The need to understand how Muslim students experience college is a growing concern, given the number of incidents that indicate a hostile environment after the events of September 11, and the subsequent war against terror. Muslim graduate students are more visible on campuses across the United States. This study examines the experiences of Muslim graduate students as they navigate their campus and make sense of how they perceive their campus climate. This study uses an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and uses Campus Racial Climate as a theoretical framework. IPA focuses on how a given person in a given context experiences and makes sense of a given phenomenon. Campus Racial Climate is used because it allows an extensive analysis of the findings. This study revealed that Muslim graduate students report positive experiences when they do not carry religious markers, however, if students are carrying religious markers, such as hijab for women or long beards for men, they report racial behavior on campus. In addition, the study revealed that Muslim graduate students’ interactions, support and perceptions shaped the way they perceive their campus climate.
Dedication

In the name of God all mighty, all merciful,

Thanks to Allah that blessed me with this knowledge.

I dedicate this work to my dear parents who believed in me and called me Doctor since I was accepted in the program. To my dear mom and dad, Haniya Alaoui Soulimani and Mohammed Naji Amrani, this is our dream come true. Thank you for raising me to believe that nothing is impossible and that dedication and sacrifice pay off. I will never forget the feeling of boarding the first plane that brought me to the United States to start this journey of knowledge and education, the bitter sweet feeling of leaving you and starting a new adventure still makes my eyes water when I recall that turning point in my live. You gave me the opportunity to develop and learn and nurtured it with your unconditional love, affection, encouragements and prayers. My success is your success in raising me the righteous way. This doctorate degree is yours.

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To my father and mother in law, Larbi and Naima, and to all my sisters and brother in-law Naoual, Hanane, Kaoutar and Zakaria.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Hakim is a graduate student, born in New York City to a wealthy family. He and his sister Salma, attend the same college, one year apart and are soon to graduate as dentists. They have been raised in a modern, Muslim family that values American culture while keeping the Islamic values present in their upbringing. As all graduate students, Hakim and Salma are involved in social events on campus and are very popular with their entourage. After the events of September 11, many hate crimes were committed against Muslims. Hakim and Salma’s parents were very concerned about their safety and decided that they should stop going to school for a while. Hakim did not agree with his parents because he felt that he is as American, the same as those who were killed in the attacks of September 11.

When Hakim arrived on campus, his friends did not talk to him. As shocked as he was, he went to console one of his classmates that lost her father in the attacks. Unfortunately, her brother witnessed this interaction and when he saw Hakim talking to his sister, he rushed over calling Hakim a terrorist. In self-defense, Hakim was trying to explain that he had nothing to do with the attacks. Soon after, another student showed up from behind the crowd, shot Hakim and ran away. Fortunately, Hakim was not killed but he will never return to that campus the same. He felt that his experiences as a graduate student would never be the same. This feeling is shared amongst many Muslim graduate students after September 11.

The need to understand how Muslim students experience college is a growing concern, given the number of incidents that indicate a hostile environment. After the events of September 11, and the subsequent war against terror, many incidents were reported against Muslims and
Muslim students on college campuses (Ali & Bagheri, 2009). Prior to September 11 attacks, the FBI recorded between 20 and 30 anti-Muslim hate crimes per year (Ingraham, 2015). However, in 2001 that number rose to nearly 500 (Ingraham, 2015). In the years since, annual hate crimes against Muslims have consistently hovered around 100 to 150 range, roughly five times higher than the pre September 11 rate. These numbers found an echo in the collegiate environment (Ingraham, 2015). The 2011, media attention sparked a roar when the CIA’s infiltration of Muslim groups were exposed spying on different Muslim Student Associations (MSA). In February 2015, three, three, young Muslim students were killed in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, prompting an uproar around among Muslims (Ingraham, 2015). Moreover, female students reported encountering negative stereotypes because of the submission and inferiority to men a veil connotes (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010). While higher education professionals should contemplate how to provide additional support for Muslim students in the United States, the growing number of Muslim students suggests an additional need to further examine their experiences. There have been several assumptions of the exact number of the Muslim population (Pew Research Center, 2011) however; scholars agree that there are growing segments of the population across the U.S. (Ali & Bagheri, 2009). Despite the increase in the population, little is known about Muslim students’ perceptions and daily experiences of their college environment.

**Topic.** Given increases in discrimination among Muslim students and the growing number of the Muslim population, this study explores the experiences of Muslim graduate students. Using Campus Racial Climate Framework, students were interviewed to understand their experiences and how they make sense of / cope with their racialized experiences. In this research, the term, “racialization” is used in the sense that Muslims, as a religious group, are discriminated against based on their biological, physical, and religious attributes. The use of the
term *racialization* highlights the fact that Muslims are usually discriminated against based on their religious practices or their physical and religious symbols they convey.

**Research problem.** After the attacks of September 11, Islamophobia continues to grow in America where 45 percent of Americans hold negative perceptions toward Muslims (Pew, 2011). Muslims became more visible after the attacks of September 11 resulting in the growth of violence against undeserving Muslims (Haddad, 2001). This reality had seeped into American university campuses. Muslim students across the country became overtly aware of their identity and the perceptions of their faith, which resulted in what Gotanda (2011) called racialization of Muslims. The racialization of Muslim students affects their experiences socially and academically (Gotanda, 2011). Muslim students have to suppress their identity in order to successfully integrate into the dominant culture on campus (Badr, 2004; Peek, 2003). It is here where Muslim students are prejudiced, discriminated against and racialized. This suggests the need for a study that will focus on this population of students and better understand their perceptions and experiences of their college campus environment (El-Haj, 2009; Sabry &Bruna, 2007; Tindongan, 2011).

The literature does not provide a definitive answer to how American college students experience college campus but it does present relevant information that may explain the way Muslim students are perceived. Numerous studies report that Muslim students face many challenges that affect the way they make sense of their experiences (Jandali, 2013; Ibrahim, 2008). These challenges are categorized into two types: interactions and experiences. On one hand, Muslim students face challenges related to interactions due to their Muslim identity and physical appearance. These Muslim students have to cope with issues such as racialization, bullying and discrimination (El-Haj, 2009; Cole &Ahmadi, 2003; Ibrahim, 2008; Jandali, 2013;...
Sabry & Bruna 2007; Shammas, 2009; Naser & Al-Amin, 2006). On the other hand, Muslim students encounter challenges when experiencing adjusting issues to the dominant culture academically and socially. These students reported feelings of alienation that affected their experiences negatively (Sirine & Fine, 2008; Novera, 2004; Peek, 2003; Speck, 1997). The challenges that Muslim students encountered may explain the problem of practice. However, most studies do not examine how these challenges affect the experiences of American graduate students or how Muslim students cope with these challenges as they navigate their college campus.

**Justification for the research.** There is little research that focuses on Muslim graduate students and how they experience campus climate. According to Muslim Student Association National (MSAN), an organization connecting Muslim students across college campuses, there are approximately 75,000 Muslim students currently enrolled in United States colleges and universities (MSA National, n.d). The need to explore Muslim graduate students in colleges is necessary, given the increase in both the number of this student’s population as well as the increase of incidents that indicates a hostile environment on campus (Nasir & Al-Amine, 2006). After the attacks on September 11, and the subsequent, “War Against Terror” initiative let by the United States, there has been an increase in the number of report cases of discrimination and harassment against Muslim American students on college campuses (Ali & Bagheri, 2009). A study that seeks to understand and explore the experiences of Muslim graduate students on a college campus after September 11 might reveal new information.

**Deficiencies in the evidence.** The examined literature did not address the experiences of Muslim graduate students in the United States. There is not a concrete study that documents incidents of experienced racialization among Muslim graduate students after September 11.
Speck (1997) conducted a study about the perceptions of Muslim students in New York City before September 11. The study revealed that even before September 11, Muslim students did not feel integrated academically because of misconceptions about their religion (Speck, 1997). Cole and Ahmadi, (2010) noted that there were several studies that examined how Muslim students experience the academic environment, yet much of this research did not underscore the importance of the impact that Muslim student’s religion has on their experiences. In other words, the existing research looks at Muslim students in comparison to other faiths in relation to their academic achievements, social/campus involvements and interactions with other students. Yet, the research did not focus on Muslim graduate students’ experiences to understand how they perceive their campus and how they make sense of their experiences as they navigate their academic and social environment.

In this current research study, American-born Muslim graduate students will be the focus of the study. The research study will assess how American born Muslim graduate students experience the aftermath of September 11. In addition, the research will examine Muslim graduate students’ experiences and how they make sense of incidents of racialization in their campus environment.

**Relating the discussion to audiences.** The research will be of interest to three audiences. First, it will help Muslim students provide help and support to each other by addressing and analyzing how they experience racial behavior. Second, the research will help higher education professionals develop strategies to better attend to the Muslim graduate students’ needs on campus. Hurtado, et al. (1998) asserted that if institutions intend to diversify campus enrollment, more information is needed to help them address the behavioral dimensions of the climate (p. 296). Third, the research will provide voices for those who experience/d
incidents of racialization. This can serve as a space in which the participants describe how they interpret their own college experiences.

Personal, practical and Intellectual goals. Maxwell (2005) depicted personal, practical, and intellectual goals that drive and influence research. One personal goal associated with this study relates to the attraction of conducting research into an area that was previously unexplored, perhaps facilitating future publications. The practical goal of this study is to provide information on the negative associations that affect Muslim graduate students in the academy and be able to assist practitioners to effectively serve the unique needs of Muslim graduate students. Negative associations and misconceptions shape the experiences of Muslim students in graduate schools. These misconceptions lead Muslim students to feel alienated and unwelcome in colleges. This separation and isolation may lead to Muslim graduate students feeling alone and unsafe. Unfortunately, the research on Muslim graduate students did not focus on how they make sense of their experiences related to racialization. Thus, the intellectual goal of this study is to research and explore the experiences of Muslim graduate students who encountered incidents of racialization. These incidents are important to analyze, as they shape the everyday lives of Muslim graduate students. In short, these goals will guide the researcher to examine what shapes racial behavior towards Muslim students in graduate schools. This is important as it may lead to a solution to the problem of racialization on campus, which can reduce the racial behavior projected onto Muslim graduate students.

Significance of Research Problem

This study is significant for three reasons. First, the research attempts to explore the racialized experiences of Muslim graduate students and how they cope with such encounters. The results of this study may shed light on the experiences of many Muslims in this country.
Although the educational system in the United States is thought to be an equalizer, the social and economic inequalities of the country are replicated in the educational system. Therefore, it is necessary to learn from Muslim graduate students themselves, regarding how they feel about their personal experiences. Although schools do not explicitly, “teach racial identity”, academic institutions are settings where people acquire some version of the rules of racial classification. Thus, the research will seek to provide information on racialization and the challenges faced by students.

Second, the research provides an opportunity for Muslim graduate students to voice their experiences and perspectives on how they feel when racialized. As a community, Muslims have been seriously misunderstood and subjected to prejudice and stereotypes, even more so after the attacks of September 11 (Ahmad & Szpara, 2003). Ahmad and Szpara (2003) explained that there have been no efforts made to present a positive portrayal of Islam or Muslims. This resulted in an indifference and ignorance toward Muslims. The researcher will provide a safe space for Muslim graduate students to express themselves and explain how racialization affects them. This will help educators to be able to appropriately respond to Muslim graduate students in ways that show respect and effectively address the complex and diverse issues they face (Hodge, 2005).

Finally, the research will inform higher education administrators and educators to better accommodate Muslim graduate students, perhaps helping them create strong support groups within their academic surroundings. According to Cole and Ahmadi (2010), faculty support and encouragement seems to have a great deal of positive and consistent effect on students’ educational satisfaction. Simply put, Muslim graduate students are likely to be more successful
when they are in a supportive academic environment, free of negative connotations, frequently associated with those of Muslim descent

**Research Questions**

The following questions should help investigate and examine the experiences of Muslim graduate students after September 11.

1) How do Muslim graduate students make sense of their experiences in American colleges?
   
a. In what ways do dominant misconceptions shape Muslim graduate students’ experiences?

b. In what ways can racial behavior be expressed toward Muslim graduate students?

2) How do Muslim students experience and cope with racialization in graduate schools?

The rationale for choosing these research questions is to explore how these students understand and articulate their interactions on campus with faculty, administrators and other students when encountering racial behavior. The questions are sought to provide a better understanding of Muslim students’ experiences and highlight their specific needs, challenges, involvements and the processes particular to Muslim graduate students. The information gathered will also help in explaining racialized experiences and the extent to which they impact Muslim graduate students’ satisfaction, involvement and overall climate on campus. Findings of this study will contribute to research on Muslim graduate students, racialization and higher education and will provide new information on how these students interpret their college experiences.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study builds upon the framework established by Hurtado, Milem, Clayton, Pederson, and Allen (1999), which models the interrelated elements of the campus climate for racial/ethnic diversity. These elements form the institutional context of the framework. These four elements are: historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion, structural diversity, psychological climate, and behavioral dimension. These elements will each be explained in the following sections after defining campus climate and presenting a brief history of Campus Climate and Campus Racial Climate as a framework.

Defining Campus Climate. Campus climate is commonplace within higher education. Hall and Sandler’s (1984) study of women’s experiences in postsecondary education was the first national report to unveil the unequal treatment of women and men in the university classroom (Siefried, 2000). However, definitions of the term, “campus climate” have varied significantly because this compound concept has been difficult to study and define. Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano and Cuellar (2008) define campus climate as, “part of an intricate web of relations, socially constructed by individuals in an environment” (p. 204). Rankin and Reason (2005) define campus climate as, “current attitudes, behaviors and standards and practices of employees and students of an institution” (p. 264). Peterson and Spencer (1990) compare climate to culture, and they suggest campus climate to be “more concerned with current perceptions and attitudes rather than deeply held meanings, beliefs, and values” (p. 7). Based on these definitions, Rochenbach and Mayhew (2014) speculate that campus climate “is comprised of various phenomena within an organization, and, more importantly, individuals’ views of those phenomena” (p.42). Consequently, all definitions tend to revolve around a central theme of
student comfort with the college campus environment. Campus Racial Climate framework seeks to measure how the atmosphere affect underrepresented and minority student populations.

**Campus Climate and Campus Racial Climate.** In general, campus climate research highlights the differences between majority groups and historically oppressed populations in their perceptions of campus climate (Rochenbach & Mayhew, 2014). Groups that traditionally have been underrepresented in higher education including women, students of color, LGBT (lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and transgender) and students with disabilities. In general, these groups experience the climate more negatively than do most of the other students (Rochenbach & Mayhew, 2014). Many studies focusing on campus climate were conducted regarding issues of race and ethnicity (Hurtado et al., 1998; Milem et al., 2005). Campus racial climate researchers consistently found that students of color experience more racism, and they perceive a more hostile campus climate compared to White students (Rankin, & Reason, 2005); specifically, Black Students as they perceived more discrimination and racial conflict than White, Latino, and Asian students and LGBT (Suarez-Belcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Rowan, & Andrews-Guillen, 2003). Themes in the research of campus racial climate as a whole reveal that groups that were historically seen as “advantaged,” such as White students, often report a greater sense of belonging on campus and describe more positive perceptions of campus climate (Johnson et al., 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005). This research indicates that a welcoming and positive campus climate is important for all groups that are considered as marginalized or underrepresented.

As noted by Hurtado et al. (2008), existing campus racial climate research has been studied using a variety of methods. Since 1985, more than 90 surveys have been administered to assess campus climate. The purpose of the research conducted by Hurtado et al. (2008) was to
provide a framework to summarize features and trends of research available to assess the dynamic aspects of diversity on college campuses.

When Hurtado et al. (2008) synthesized and analyzed the assessment of campus racial climate studies from the past; they discovered some commonalities among the 24 studies completed. They found four dimensions of campus racial climate: historical, structural, psychological, and behavioral. Although these four dimensions were a common thread among campus climate studies, it was uncommon for all dimensions to be present in one campus climate study because each dimension was studied in a different manner (Hurtado et al., 2008). Another main finding of their research indicated that regardless of how this research was conducted, it was meaningless if not linked to educational outcome and practice. In other words, campus climate dimensions are intertwined and present a robust framework to explain and analyze how diverse entities experience campus climate. Rochenbasch and Mayhew (2014) reported that campus climate has been widely used and implemented by several campus climate studies, with most involving racial dynamics. Recently, Hutchinson, Raymond and Black (2008) validated the study conducted by Rochenbasch and Mayhew (2014). Across multiple student subpopulations, it was concluded:

a multidimensional model of campus climate, comprised of psychological and behavioral climate exemplars, . . . appears to be supported for both undergraduate and graduate students across race/ethnicity and gender. (p. 245).

**Campus Racial Climate Dimensions.** Campus racial climate takes into account four interrelated dimensions. The historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion, the structured diversity, the psychological climate, and the behavioral dimension are important, however, they are not independent of each other. For example, structural diversity creates a context where diverse
students can interact but structural diversity is not sufficient, since external and internal forces will directly and inexorably shape the students experiences.

External and internal forces shape campus climate experiences. The external forces, for instance, involves state and federal programs and policies that have affected and will continue to impact higher education. These external forces include financial aid policies and the Higher Education Act of 1965, which created the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant and Guaranteed Student Loan program. The events of September 11 and the country’s reaction to the war on ISIS (the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) are external socio-historical forces that have profound effects on campus climate and result in greater hostility toward people of Middle Eastern descent (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005). Thus, institutions have to make accommodations and improve the campus climate for minority students. These external forces interact with internal forces to produce the campus racial climate. To describe these internal forces, Hurtado et al. (1998, 1999) highlight four dimensions that result from the educational programs and practices of an institution.

**The Institutional Context: Historical Legacy of Inclusion and/or Exclusion.** The segregation in colleges continues to affect the climate for racial/ethnic diversity on college campuses (Hurtado et al., 1998). In other words, the resistance of desegregation in colleges and specific campus settings, as well as old campus policies, continue to exist at predominantly White institutions because they are embedded in the culture of a historically segregated environment. Although some campuses have a history of admitting and graduating students of color, most predominantly White institutions have a history of limited access and exclusion (Thelin, 1985). The history of a college of exclusion can determine the dominant climate and influence current practices (Hurtado, 1992). Higher education has a long history of resistance,
however, it is important for educational institutions to take steps to ensure that diversity and students’ success become central values of their educational mission.

**Structural Diversity.** Increasing the structural diversity of an institution is key to improve its climate (Hurtado et al., 1998). Student distribution on campus can contribute to the visibility of ethnic students and that can lead to their social stigma on campus (Steelee, 1992). Loo and Rolison (1986) assert that adequate racial/ethnic enrollments can give potential recruits the impression that the campus is hospitable. The racial/ethnic restructuring of student enrollment can trigger conflict and resistance among groups. However, it creates changes such as development of ethnic studies programs, diverse student organizations, specific academic support programs and multicultural programing (Munoz, 1989). Chang, (1996) reports that maximizing cross-cultural interaction and encouraging discussions about race are all educational practices that benefit all students. Nevertheless, when minorities increase without implementing these educational practices, students of color report dissatisfaction with their college experiences (Chang, 1996). Consequently, increasing only the structural diversity of an institute without considering the effect of each of the other dimensions of the campus racial climate is expected to produce problems for students at these institutions (Hurtado et al., 1998) In other words, campus racial climate cannot be improved by substantially increasing the structural diversity via more representation of students of color on their campuses. In fact, increased structural diversity will fail unless institutions increase their efforts to encourage opportunities for ongoing students’ interactions.

**The Psychological Dimension.** This dimension involves individuals, ‘views of groups, institutional response to diversity, perceptions of discrimination or racial conflict, and attitudes toward those from other racial and ethnic background than one’s own (Hurtado et al, 1998, p.
An individual’s position and power within and institution determine his or her status as an “insider” or “outsider” (Collins, 1986). In other words, one’s perceptions depend on one’s position in an institution. Loo and Rollinson (1986) reported that 68 percent of White students were under the impression that their institution was supportive of minority students when only 28 percent of the African American and Chicano students expressed the same opinion. These differences in perceptions of the college experience are significant. These perceptions and experiences have real consequences for individuals (Hurtado et al., 1998). Institutions need to ensure that students perceive the institutional climate as fair and just via supporting faculty and administrators to create deliberate and positive cross-racial interaction opportunities in their institution. Hence, there will always be significant differences in perception of the climate based on the experiences of the person asked (Hurtado et al, 1998).

**The Behavioral Dimension.** The behavioral dimension of the institutional climate consists of (a) actual reports of general social interaction, (b) interaction between and among individuals from different racial/ethnic backgrounds, and (c) the nature of intergroup relations on campus (Hurtado et al., 1998, p: 293). Social interaction among students is poor (Altbach & Lomotey, 1991). In fact, incidents of racism and harassment were, and still are, occurring on campuses. To improve the behavioral dimension of racial climate, faculty and administrators can facilitate and promote positive interaction via in class and out of class learning activities.

Campuses are complex social systems and the above dimensions form the different levels of how personal perceptions and historical events intertwine to produce a climate on campus. Developed by Hurtado et al. (1998) this figure illustrates how these four dimensions characterize the complex forces that outline the experiences of Muslim graduate students in American colleges. Permission to reproduce this figure was obtained from the primary author.
Summary

Hurtado et al.’s (1998, 1999) framework for understanding campus racial climate will be used in this research for several reasons. First, it has an empirical foundation, drawing from the body of research on the impact of climate on student learning and development. Second, the framework considers campus racial climate as a multidimensional phenomenon that is shaped by the interaction of external forces and internal forces (the four dimensions). Third, the framework offers specific propositions on how to improve educational policy and practice through the
engagement of campus diversity (Milem et al., 2005). Thus, to capture a deeper understanding of Muslim graduate students’ experiences of this study, stories of racialized graduate Muslim students will be presented and analyzed using the different dimensions of the Campus Racial Climate framework. Furthermore, the framework will help the researcher explain the experiences of graduate Muslim students and offer transformative solutions that may help this minority group to better cope with racialization based on the different dimensions that are presented. Consequently, this framework will serve as a crucial lens through which this study is approached and will better inform the interview questions and analysis of the participants’ responses.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter outlines the existing scholarly research, informing the experiences of Muslim students in the collegiate environment. Though this study focuses on understanding the experiences of Muslim graduate students, it should be noted that some of the reviewed research focuses on the meaning of racial behavior and how it affects other minority groups as they navigate the collegiate life. Specifically, this study focuses on the racialized experiences of Muslim graduate students who are currently enrolled at a graduate school in the United States. This literature review is guided by the following questions:

1) What is racialization?

2) How are Muslims racialized in American society?

3) How do minority groups experience racialization?

4) How do Muslim students experience the collegiate environment?

What is racialization?

Omi and Winant (2014) define racialization as: “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified social relationship, social practice or group” (p: 111). There are other definitions of racialization substitute racial outcomes for meanings (Powell, 2012). These definitions highlight the harmful outcomes to the racialized. As a result, researchers and scientists always condemn racialization (Gans, 2016). Racialization is a process that appeared with the arrival of immigrants who are perceived as different or undeserving. In addition, the term racialization is most often applied to populations and groups whose characteristics are very prominent. The harshest effects of racialization are usually visited on the poorest or the darkest skinned among the population.
Garner and Selod (2014) argue that the concept of racialization is frequently used in preference to racism. In other words, religion can be ‘raced’. In the case of Muslims in particular, people read, “Muslim-ness” based on Islam indicators such as Hijab (head cover for women), Jilbab (long dress for men or women), a Muslim name or country of origin. Thus, racialization draws a line around the same group and ascribes characteristics or “groupness” to that one specific group, not because they all look the same but because they all transform the clearly cultural and religious markers into a homogenous bloc (Garner & Selod, 2014, p.14). In other words, linking racism to religion is the concept around which Muslim students racialization is based in this study.

Racialization results in reducing an individual to one aspect of their identity; racial meaning is extended to a religion or a religious group that has previously been unclassified. These groups are usually associated with physical characteristics that may or may not be a common feature of a religious group (Joshi, 2006). However, Garner and Selod, 2014) argue that racialization can be an act of resistance as well as a demonstration of power when the group itself has a political strategy for organizing around an identity (Miles & Brown, 2003, p. 102).

Racialization is a process of racial formation where racial categories are constantly created, occupied, transformed and destroyed within particular political, social and economic contexts (Selod, 2015). Murji and Solomos (2005) state:

‘The idea of racialization is useful for describing the processes by which racial meanings are attached to particular issues – often treated as social problems – and with the manner in which race appears to be a, or often the, key factor in the ways they are defined or understood’ (Selod, 2015, p79).
Thus, racialization is understood as a process where new racial meanings are attributed to bodies, actions and interactions (Selod, 2015). These meanings are not only applied to skin tone, but other cultural factors such as language, clothing, and beliefs. Racialization enables a discussion of how new racial meanings are created, transformed, and destroyed. It aids in understanding how race and racism are constantly fluctuating and being transformed due to the political and social contexts in which they exist (Selod, 2015).

**Racialization of Muslims in America**

In this section, the researcher provides an overview of the research on Muslims in the United States and how they are depicted and racialized in the American society. The purpose of this section is to start from a general (all Muslims) identification of a population to a view of specific members (Muslim graduate students). The researcher identifies the literature that examines Muslims racialization as well as the representation of Muslims in the media and how it affects the prejudice and discrimination directed toward Muslims.

Within the past decade, Muslims became a more visible minority. This was due to the growth of the Muslim population in the United States as well as the association of Muslims with terrorism (Haddad & Smith, 2002). With a population between two and five million, Ayers (2007) asserts that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the U.S. He adds that after September 11, Muslims worldwide felt the brunt of the attacks, as they became a target of religious profiling. Only one week after September 11, seven anti-Muslim murders and forty-nine related assaults were reported (Ayers, 2007). In addition, Gallop (2011) reports that 60 percent of U.S. Muslims face prejudice from most other Americans. What contributes to Muslims’ visibility is the negative representation of Muslims and Islam in the media. Meer and Modood (2009) report
that the media ridicules Islam and the Islamic culture. In other words, Islamic practices are represented as regressive, especially the hijab worn by Muslim women.

After September 11, Muslims and Arabs found themselves racialized and treated as an enemy. In addition, scholars are increasingly using the term racialization to describe the experiences of Muslims who are racially classified as White by US Census (Bayoumi, 2006; Cainkar, 2008; Hassan, 2002; Jamal, 2008; Naber, 2008). Many Arabs and Muslim looking people were denied privileges associated with their whiteness. Racialization is a process, for Muslims, which means the process of how Muslims and Muslim looking people are denied their whiteness. This process of racialization includes rejection from social membership or belonging, acquiring the status of the enemy within and being perceived as violent and misogynist (Jamal, 2008; Naber, 2008).

Few scholars used the term racialization to examine the Muslim experience since September 11 in Europe and the United States (Meer & Modood, 2010; Rana, 2011; Selod &Embrick, 2013). Meer and Modood (2010) argue that racialization allows for and examination of the impact anti-Muslim feelings has on people and Muslims rather than examining how faith is criticized. After September 11, racialization of Muslims resulted into the classification of a number of ethnicities and nationalities represented by Muslims. The unique, political and economic, cultural situation of each nation is ignored when the religion of the individual is overtly exaggerated (Selod, 2015). Selod (2015) reveals in his study that Muslims experience racialization. He adds, Muslim Americans are racilized and experience higher levels of scrutiny when they are identified as Muslims. However, if they are not wearing religious markers, they can pass as White (Selod, 2015).
Badr (2004) notes that women in particular receive the brunt of the negative reaction and association with terrorism because of their visibility fulfilled by the head covers, or ‘hijab’. As a result, hijab had to be compromised after September 11. Selod (2015) suggests that women who wear hijab are more likely to be questioned about their lack of American values by strangers in public spaces compared to American Muslim women who did not. Moreover, there has been more prejudice against women who wear hijab than men with beards, which resulted in more discrimination cases after September 11 (Sekhon, 2003).

Cainkar (2009) argues that Muslim women who wear hijab are targeted for verbal and physical assaults because of the association of hijab with terrorism. Moreover, Navarro (2010), in her study that focuses on the representation of Muslim women in the media finds that media enhances the racialization of Muslim women. The media examined in Navarro’s study explains that the representation of Muslim women in the media is reduced to one type of Muslim women. In Islam, like in any other religion, there are traditional and non-traditional Muslims living in America. The media does not differentiate Muslim women by culture. In the media, it is always suggested that all Muslim women are oppressed, look the same, and behave in the same manner (Jandali, 2013; Navarro, 2010; Wagner, 2012). Navarro further observes that when the media reports about Muslim women, it is commonly in relationship to violence against women and this reinforces a negative image of Muslim women and Muslims in general. Byng (2010) reports, in her study that describes how Muslim women are depicted in newspapers, that media reflects the overall sentiment toward Islam and Muslims. Byng (2010) compares how countries represented media events. For example, France and Britain banned wearing the hijab. American reporters ignored multiculturalism and suggested that Muslim women should assimilate into the culture rather than stay with tradition (Byng, 2010).
This negative depiction of Muslim women in the media is not exclusive to women, men are often associated with terrorism. Selod, (2015) interviewed 48 Muslim Americans who report that they experience more intense forms of questioning about their status as American once they are identified as Muslim. The reason for this racialization in airports and public spaces is the association of Islam with terrorism. Selod (2015) notes that Muslims are often looked at as a threat to American cultural values and national security.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2001) argues that what makes racialization of Muslim men and women complex is that they are not placed within one racial category. Muslims occupy many racial categories due to the fact that they belong to different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However, Muslims’ religious identity has become racialized because of the physical and cultural aspects of their religion the remains associated to violence, disloyalty and terrorism.

**Summary.** This body of literature captures the different aspects of racialization that are endured by Muslims. Today, the American Muslim population numbers are approximately 4.5 million (the U.S. census does not inquire about religious affiliation; thus, the total is difficult to determine) (Pew Research Center, 2011). Two thirds of the Muslim population hold a bachelor degree or higher, compared to just 44 percent of Americans (Pew Research Center, 2011). These numbers are increasing with the globalization of higher education in the US (Pew Research Center, 2011). As a result, more Muslims are being integrated into American society as well as into American colleges. Muslims regard themselves as “thriving” and friends to Americans (Pew Research Center, 2011). However, despite the fact that most Muslims are integrated into the American mainstream, negative attitudes toward Islam and Muslims still exist on the part of the general American population (Byng, 2010; Jandali, 2013; Navarro, 2010; Selod, 2014; Wagner, 2012). These negative attitudes are reflected toward Muslim students in American
universities, especially with the impacts of the attacks of September 11 events which echoed in educational institutes (Shammas, 2009). This review informs the study by outlining how Muslims are linked to terrorism and violence and how racialization is leaked into educational institutes.

**The Experience of Minority Students in Higher Education**

In this section, I will present an overview of minority students’ status in White colleges and the resurgence of racially motivated harassment and violence directed at minority students in higher education. Since the literature on Muslim graduate students’ experiences in higher education is very limited, the literature on minority students is reviewed in this section to posit that Muslim students have similar experiences in higher education.

Cress (2008) confirms that minority students experience prejudice and discrimination in and out of class context. A sense of alienation from an institute and exposure to discrimination can be accounted for by the differences in the way minority and non-minority students experience campus climate. Nora and Cabrera, (1994) define alienation among minorities as a feeling of estrangement and noninvolvement from the institution with a feeling of helplessness (p. 388). Students are alienated when they fail to adjust in both the social and the academic dimensions (Nora & Cabrera, 1994; Smith 1989). The proponents of this view regard alienation as an implicit intolerance when members of an institution do not accept or welcome another sub-group culture or behaviors (Smith, 1989; Hurtado, 1996). Smedley, Meyers and Harrell (1993) assert that minority students experience racial campus stresses as well as discrimination in a dominant-cultured campus. In other words, the above scholars contend that minority students usually are not tolerated and that leads to perceptions of prejudice or discrimination that triggers feelings of alienation. Despite the increasing research on the experiences of minority students,
scholars have been consistent in admitting that minority students are in fact facing racial incidents in higher education.

Minority students’ experiences in higher education are complex. Shirin (2011) conducted a study in a multicultural university. The findings reveal that being in a multicultural space resulted in positive experiences. Shirin (2011) notes that minority students felt more at ease within their own racial group. The study shows that minority student’s positive experiences are related to their in-class and academic engagement, but external factors such as supportive staff and belonging on campus remains crucial in shaping those experiences. It is worth mentioning that Loo (1993) explains that sociocultural alienation is distinct from academic satisfaction for minority students. In his study where he surveys undergraduate White and minority student’s attitude and feelings, Loo (1993) confirms that a heightened feeling of satisfaction is reported, even when feelings of alienation are present. In other words, minority students feel alienated if their representation on campus is small. Similarly, Harper (2006) concluded that peer support plays an important role in student’s sense of belonging and satisfaction among African American students. The author concludes that meaningful engagement and leadership roles in campus organizations enhanced the participants’ experiences by providing support to their peers.

Minority students face many different forms of stress on campus (Lee, Castellanos and Cole, 2002). Minority students stress consists of 1) interracial stress that is informed by interaction of a minority with the dominant culture on campus. 2) Racism and discrimination, which is, being mistreated and disrespected because of the minorities ‘race (Lee et al., 2002). Nettles(1988) and Allen(1991) confirm in their widely cited studies that students of color experience higher levels of alienation and discrimination at Predominantly White institution (PWI). However, Chang (2000) reports that racial incidents remain motivated by ‘racial
antipathy’ yet the racial circumstances have improved in the last 30 years. Lee et al., (2002) focused on ethnic minority groups and how they experience campus climate in a PWI. Participants reported lack of support, alienation, racism, and lack of minority student involvement.

Support and belonging are crucial factors in the integration of minority students. A study conducted at a large, predominantly White university examining sense of student belonging in 254 Black and 291 White first-year college students reveal that sense of belonging has positive impact of student’s commitment (Stebleton, Soria, & Huesma, 2014). Findings from this study are consistent with evidence suggesting that sense of belonging is related to educational satisfaction, commitment and persistence (Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, & Woods, 2009).

A recent study of 212 mainly White undergraduate at a large Midwestern university shows that social and academic faculty positively impacts students’ sense of belonging (Zumbrunn et al., 2014). In the study, students who felt accepted and comfortable tend to have higher self-confidence and positively impacted their engagement and academic achievement. Students’ perceptions and feelings of belonging relate to students’ interaction with classmates. Findings of this study suggest that minority students’ perceptions of the classroom affect their motivation, engagement, interaction and academic achievement (Zumbrunn et al., 2014).

Studies show that high levels of engagement and sense of belonging are related to the large number of minority students on campus. The impact of campus climate on racially and ethnically underrepresented students is also highlighted in other studies (Cabrera et al, 1999; Edirisooriya & McLean, 2003). These studies indicate that minority students report prejudice from faculty and administrators and also report incidents of discrimination in their campus

**Summary.** While minority students are still alienated, discriminated and racialized, the research assets that minority students seek support within their own ethnic groups. Students of specific faiths struggle to thrive in environments where religion still carries negative connotations. Research (Hausmann et al., 2009; Zumbrann et al., 2014) on the importance of sense of belonging and student support reveal that is directly affecting minority students’ interaction, engagement and academic achievement.

**The Experiences of Muslim Students**

In this section, I am going to explore the literature related to the experiences of Muslim students in higher education. While there is an abundance of research focusing on Muslim identity and Muslim students in American (public and private) schools (El-Hajji, 2003; Sabry and Bruna, 2007; Tindongan, 2011), it has been noted that there is a limited research on Muslim graduate students’ experiences in the United States.

Muendini (2009) examines Muslim students experiences five years after September 11. Students report that the Patriot Act made it more difficult for Muslim students to enter the United States. Some Muslim students were not satisfied with the way they were treated by border patrol. Muendini further explains that negative stereotypes affected Muslim students in the sense that they fell alienated and isolated from American culture (2009). Mohammad-Marzouk (2012) reports that Muslim students try to overcome these feelings of alienation by introducing non-Muslim students to their Islamic culture but these actions did not always help non-Muslim change attitudes.
Shammas, (2009) posits that after September 11, an increase of hate crimes and racial incidents became a reality for many Muslim students and those who resemble Muslims, despite the claims that most college campuses are tolerant environments. Muslim students became more visible, and intolerance towards their religious practices became more overt (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006). This resulted in Muslim students reporting apprehension and discomfort in performing their religious practices (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006).

Speck (1997) interviewed international Muslim students who encountered prejudice in college classrooms. The study reveals that Muslim students face misperceptions and misunderstanding of their religion (Speck, 1997). Moreover, students expressed that because of the misperceptions, they often felt that their professors failed to maintain attitudes of respect for certain religions in the classrooms. One of the students explained that most Americans associate Saudi Arabia with Muslims all over the world, where there is no Islamic culture since different countries incorporate different culture in their religion (Speck, 1997). The study also shows that professors do not make efforts to accommodate students’ religious practices. For instance, Muslims need to perform prayers five times during the day. One student reported being embarrassed when she had to ask for permission to leave the class to perform her prayer.

In a similar study, Peek (2003), surveyed 68 university (undergraduate and postgraduate) students on New York City campuses to explore their overall experiences after September 11. The study found that a number on Muslim students were not able to assert their Muslim identity. According to the study, female students had to quit wearing or change the way they wear hijabs to appear ‘less Muslim’ (p. 276).
Most Muslim students feel alienated because of their appearances and ethnic/religious affiliation. Cole and Ahmadi (2003) focus their study on the perspective of seven Muslim women who veil in a U.S. college. The participants report feelings of isolation, alienation and discrimination on campus and attribute this to wearing the hijab. Similarly, Abdallah-Shahid’s (2008) study highlights feelings of alienation, stigma, embarrassment and identity concerns among female students in secular schools in the United States.

Cole and Ahmadi (2010) compare Christian, Jewish, and Muslim students’ experiences and its impact on their religious identity. Results of the study indicate that while Muslim students are more involved in school than their Christian and Jewish peers, Muslim students report that they are less satisfied with their overall education experience compared to their Jewish counterparts. According to Cole and Ahmadi (2010), Muslim students are more likely to participate in racial/cultural awareness workshops, having a roommate of a different race/ethnicity, and socialize with someone of a different racial/ethnic group (p.133-134). The researchers suggest more research is needed to better comprehend such findings.

After the events of September 11, Muslim students became associated with the “axis of evil” and were subject to harassment, name-calling and physical abuse by peers (Shah, 2011). Some teachers were unable to distinguish between their Muslim students and the terrorists who committed these attacks (Shah, 2011). As a result, this made Muslim students feel alienated in their school community.

In another study, Khoury-Kassabri and Ben-Arieh, (2009), found that Muslim American youth are challenged as they navigate their schools. Public schools have tremendous impact on the way Muslim students develop and manifest their religious identity. Research (Abdel-Khalek,
2010; Ali & Bagheri, 2009; Cole & Ahmadi, 2010) that focused on Muslims in post-secondary schools reveals a struggle between the American values and Islamic religious beliefs. There is apprehension among Muslim students when performing their Islamic duties that include the five daily prayers, the modest dress that may include the hijab (veil or head covering), fasting in Ramadan, and lack of socially acceptable norms such as drinking alcohol or dating (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006). Therefore, Muslim students are not able to display their religious identity as open and freely because they are often a minority.

Moreover, a lack of understanding and a lack of accommodations by professors and administrators in educational institutes create challenges for Muslim students (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006). These Muslim students have dietary restrictions that require them to abstain from pork and/or have halal (slaughtered according to religious practice, similar to kosher in the Jewish tradition) meat and the prohibition against alcohol (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006). Nassir and Al-Amin (2006) report that students living on campus have a difficult time, especially if they are fasting in the month of Ramadan, during which students are only permitted to eat before sunrise and after sunset. Campus dining facilities usually do not service students at these times, making it very difficult for students to adhere to their religious practices and maintain their academic standing (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006).

In addition, due to the prohibitions on dating and alcohol, students on campus have little alternatives for entertainment while in college. It is also noted that when students interact with their peers in academic-related activities they see significant negative effects on their grade point average (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010). Therefore, isolation and lack of opportunities made available by schools, teachers and educational programs create missed opportunities for integration and interaction between diverse groups.
Sirin et al. (2008) claimed that Muslim students prefer engaging in social and cultural activities in both their religious and ethnic communities. In their study, participants mentioned that they had developed either an integrated identity or they had a parallel identity. Crafting such an identity and developing a sense of belonging for this group of 18-28 year olds was a time-consuming process (Sirin et al., 2008).

Kunst, (2011) focuses on the coping strategies that Muslim students use when their identity is threatened. Muslim students can choose to either trivialize the stigma associated with them or they engage in ‘counter-stereotypic’ behavior to appear as different as possible from the stigmatized group. Kunst, (2011) finds that Muslims in general cope with their stigma by not associating themselves with their religious group or by decreasing their involvement in their natural identity leading to social isolation.

Nasir and Al-Amin (2006), indicate a necessity to accommodate Muslim students’ needs on college campuses. It is reported that practicing Islam in a college environment is personal. However, Muslim students reported fear of being stereotyped as “terrorists” when practicing (religious duties/prayers) in front of other students on campus (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006). The researchers present a number of suggestions for college administrators to make their college campus a more welcoming, learning and social space for Muslim students. This need to accommodate Muslim students was also solicited by Novera, (2004), who interviewed 25 Indonesian postgraduate students in an Australian university (17 of the students are Muslim). The participants in the study report difficulties in culturally and academically adjusting to the new, Australian culture, contributing to their feeling alienated as well as discriminated. The results of the study confirmed that the students had fewer problems adjusting to the social life on
Racialization: The Experiences of Graduate Muslim

Campus; however, issues of racism and discrimination were present. The study confirms that Muslim students face cultural differences that negatively affect their experiences.

In their mixed method study, Sirine and Fine (2008), researched the identities of Muslim, American youth, college students included. According to their results, 88% of the students reported at least one act of discrimination because they are Muslim. In addition, their focus group revealed that both men and women feel like outsiders in the larger American society because of the misconceptions, discrimination and profiling they encounter on their campus.

Summary. Although the attacks of September 11 took place more than a decade ago, the literature suggests that campus climate for Muslim students in a post September 11 era has been increasingly challenging. Muslim students face even more challenges as they navigate education in this post September 11 context. Feelings of alienation, isolation, discrimination and racialization are still present on campus. Muslims students do not feel comfortable practicing and expressing their identity overtly; in fact some practices had to be confined (hijab and prayers). Campus racial climate can affect Muslim students in the sense that they feel very isolated and racialized due to their physical attributes or their Muslim identity.

Conclusion

This review of the literature reveals that Muslim students encounter racialized behavior that affects their commitment, progress, and perceptions of the campus climate. Using the literature provided, racial behavior is salient for Muslim students. However, there are a number of gaps in the literature including studies to further explain how racial behavior is being experienced or how Muslim graduate students cope with racial climate. Also, there is only one study (Nassir & Al-Amin, 2006) that addresses the challenges faced by (Indonesian) Muslim
students in graduate school to explain the relationship between climate and its effect on the
general development of students.

The current body of literature also lacks of a strong conceptual understanding of how
Muslim graduate students encounter racial behavior. Although many researchers examined race
and discrimination in relation to identity formation and perception, none have directly used
campus climate as a theoretical framework to further explain the dynamics of racial behavior and
Muslim graduate students in higher education. Consequently, there is no research that explicitly
defines these notions regarding the ways it impacts Muslim graduate students’ experiences in the
United States.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of American-born Muslim graduate students and how they make sense of racial behavior that they encounter (if any) on their campus at a private university in Massachusetts.

The use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is essential to investigate how the participants make sense of the phenomenon that the study is exploring. In this study, IPA was used to explore how Muslim graduate students make sense of their college experiences. In this section the researcher will provide a positionality statement where she provides information on her position toward the research problem. Then, the researcher will provide information on the research design and methodology used in this study, site and participants, data collection and data analysis, validity and credibility and protection of human subjects.

Research Questions

This research is guided by the following questions:

1) How do Muslim graduate students make sense of their experiences in American colleges?
   a. In what ways do dominant misconceptions shape Muslim graduate students’ experiences?
   b. In what ways can racial behavior be expressed towards Muslim graduate students?

2) How do Muslim students experience and cope with racialization in graduate schools?
Purpose statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of American-born Muslim graduate students and how they make sense of racial behavior (if) they encounter it on their campus at a private university in Massachusetts. For the purpose of this research study, the racialization of Muslim students in higher education will be generally defined as the way the public associates Muslims with terrorism and violent behaviors.

Positionality statement

Denzin (2001) states that all researchers are caught in the circle of explanation. They must state their prior interpretations of the phenomena under enquiry; otherwise subsequent explanations will remain unclear and misunderstood. I decided to explore the racial experiences of Muslim students in graduate institutions because of my religious, cultural, and professional background. I completed my Master’s degree here in the United States. I attended school with American-born Muslims on campus. I became interested in students’ complaints, especially when I worked with groups of Muslim friends who came from different origins in the Middle East. They frequently grumbled that their grades did not reflect their competency and reported feelings of isolation and difficulties in practicing religious duties such as prayers, fasting and dietary restriction of pork and alcohol. As a Muslim who lived, studied, and worked in the U.S. for more than 10 years, I was appalled. In my mind, either I did not notice it or it did not happen to me! As I grew professionally, I started working as an adjunct faculty member teaching both English and Arabic and the cultural aspects for both languages. During this time, I had the privilege to hear reactions from different perspectives during class discussion sessions. The American students expressed how they perceived me as a Muslim woman and how they felt
about their Muslim peers. Muslim students expressed their feelings towards peers and their campus life.

I decided to explore the experiences of American-born Muslim graduate students at the higher education level because at that age range (23-35) and level of education, one is more critical and capable of making sense of one’s own life experiences. Another reason for this study is that it will serve as a pioneer study of how Muslim students experience racialization on campus and can inform further research in the field. Finally, the growing interest in Muslims and the media representation of Islam demands more research and better understanding of students in this category with the ultimate goal of providing them with a nurturing and successful academic environment. I believe that an analysis of the unique racialized experiences of Muslim graduate students will help faculty and administrators contribute to a critical dialogue about race in higher education, and impel it forward so that all educators can manage their own assumptions and practices while serving our students.

Research Design

Qualitative research is the most appropriate research design for this topic. Merriam (2001) defines qualitative research as, “an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as a part of a particular context and the interactions there” (p. 6). The purpose of this qualitative research is to capture a deep understanding of how Muslim students experience campus climate. The ultimate goals of this research is to explore and understand how graduate Muslim students make sense of and cope with their experiences. Qualitative research design has three distinct features. First, qualitative research utilizes an inductive reasoning process. As the researcher, I intend to understand the participants’ experiences and to understand the meaning of their everyday experiences. Second, qualitative research is emergent and flexible. The research design
is a process that is subject to change as the study develops. Finally, qualitative research design is non-linear and non-sequential in the sense that data collection and data analysis can happen at the same time (Frankel & Devers, 2000). A holistic approach will be adopted for this study since it enables the researcher to capture a deep understanding of the participant’s experiences (Creswell, 2012). This study will focus on a specific group of people (Muslims students) in a specific situation (Muslims graduate students who are willing to share information on their experiences on campus).

**Methodology.** IPA is a recently developed approach to qualitative inquiry. It originated in psychology and then was picked up by those working in the human, social and health sciences. IPA is committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences. The origins of IPA are phenomenology and hermeneutics founded by Husserl and Heidegger. Merleau-Ponty and Sartre are significant contributors to the philosophical ideas behind IPA in the sense that the former recognized the importance of subjectivity and the latter contended that individuals are constantly trying to make sense of their experiences (Smith, 2004). IPA is ideal for this study because it uses a double hermeneutic approach, which means that both the researcher and the participant contribute in the sense making process (Smith & Osborn, 2008). IPA allowed the researcher to have an active role in the inquiry and interpretation process. IPA also allowed the researcher to use their experiences as a lens to identify and interpret the participants’ experiences. IPA helped achieve the goal of the study that is to capture an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of Muslim students.

**Site of the study.** For the purpose of this study, participants were recruited from a university in the northeast. It is among the leading, private research universities in the area. It is one of the most diverse universities in the country where students come from all 50 states and
belong to different ethnic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. With such a diverse student body, the researcher was able to gain easy access to Muslim students through their Muslim Students Association (MSA) and get rich data from participants.

**Participants.** For the purpose of this study, eight participants were recruited but only five were interviewed (Three students provided their contact information and were saved in case one of the five main participants decided to change their mind about their participation in the study). In IPA, sampling is often purposive (Langdridge, 2007). This is a strategy to select particular settings and people to get information that cannot be obtained from other people (Maxwell, 2005, p. 88). For this study, several MSAs were contacted (each school have their separate MSA) to get access to their e-mail list server (Appendix C). Purposeful and convenience sampling was used to ensure that the participants were selected on the basis that they can grant the researcher access to particular information. Participants had stories to share and information that informed the research. The researcher selected five, American-born, Muslim students who agreed to share their experiences in college.

**Participant profiles.** The five students that participated in this study belong to different departments and disciplines, are enrolled as graduate students or recent 2016 graduates. This sample of Muslim students included those who lived on campus and those who lived in their own apartments. The names assigned to each participant are pseudonyms that the researcher used to protect the participants’ identity. Of the five participants, three were male and two participants were female. Of the two female participants, only one wore hijab.

Alma is a 24-year-old student. She is half Caucasian- half Indian. She is from Maine. She described her family as very religious (They fast and pray five times a day and live life
according to Islamic teachings). Growing up, she did not attend Islamic schools. She attended public school in a predominantly white city. She has one twin brother. She applied to many colleges and decided to enroll in a university in college because it was financially more affordable than the other schools where she applied. She started wearing hijab (head scarf) when she started middle school. She received her bachelor’s degree in Education and graduated with a Master’s in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) in 2016.

Jamal is a 26 years old dentist from Florida. His parents immigrated to the United States from Lebanon. He described his family as religious. He attended mainstream schools and attended Sunday school for Islamic studies. Jamal has one older brother and one younger sister. His complexion is very light with light brown hair and hazel eyes. He applied to many dental schools across the country. He decided to go to dental school since it was the only school where his application was accepted. He graduated in August 2016.

Yasmin is 23 years old. Her parents are both from Pakistan. She is from New York. She attended public schools along with her three sisters in mainstream schools. She described her family as very educated and has a strong religious background. She did her undergraduate studies at the school of medicine. She has a light brown complexion and very dark long hair. She doesn’t wear hijab. She is attending her third year of dental school. She will graduate in 2017.

Nabil is a 25 years old student. His parents are from Saudi Arabia. He is from Boston. He described his family as moderately religious (he mentioned that his mom is a Christian convert). He attended private, Islamic schools and decided to attend since they offered him a scholarship. He described himself as moderately religious as well. He is attending his second
year in a Master’s of Business Administration (MBA) program with a concentration in accounting. He will graduate in May 2018.

Amin is 24 years old and from Rhode Island. His parents are African Americans and both converted to Islam before he was born. He grew up attending public schools and attended Sunday school (in the mosque) to learn more about Islam and Arabic. He decided to go to college because he was accepted in the program he chose. He is enrolled in a program to earn a Master’s degree of education in social studies education. He is planning to study abroad in an Islamic Arabic speaking country to explore the Islamic culture.

The following table summarizes the participants’ demographic information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Birth state</th>
<th>Attended Islamic school</th>
<th>Study program</th>
<th>Parent cultural heritage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Masters’ in TESOL</td>
<td>Caucasian Indian</td>
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<td>Jamal</td>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Master’s of education</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Participants demographic information

Data collection
Two, in-depth interviews were used in this study to understand the lived experiences of Muslim graduate students who may have faced racial behavior. This can provide a rich data as it allows the participants to account for their lived experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In depth interviews can provide an opportunity for the participants, “to tell their stories, to speak freely and reflectively, and to develop their ideas and express their concerns at some length” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 57). The interview protocol was conducted (Appendix A), based on Seidman’s (2010) recommendations. The first interview (Appendix A) focused on the participant’s background. The second interview (Appendix A: part two) focused on the phenomenon explored and gives participants more time to reflect, express their thoughts and elaborate on the questions that are asked. Each interview took between 60 to 90 minutes. The researcher recorded the interviews with an application on their I-phone called Voice Memos. The interviews were semi structured to allow flexibility and to elicit relevant information concerning the participant’s lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The researcher considered the following suggestions by Smith and Osborn (2008) regarding semi-structured interviews:

1. There is an attempt to establish rapport with the respondent.
2. The ordering of questions is less important.
3. The interviewer is freer to probe interesting areas that arise.
4. The interview can follow the respondent’s interests or concerns. (p. 58)

The interview protocol as suggested by Smith and Osborn, (2008) was used to ensure that the researcher covers all questions. The interview protocol included four parts:

1. The participant filled out the background information form.
2. The participant signed a consent form and the study description.
3. The participants answered introductory questions about the phenomenon.
4. The main questions that captured the lived experiences of the participants.

**Data Analysis**

Once data was collected, the researcher stored, organized and coded data in her personal computer, all coded data was transcribed manually. The researcher analyzed the data using the following analysis strategies based on recommendations by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009):

1. The close line-by-line analysis of the experiential claims, concerns, and perceptions of each participant.
2. The identification of emergent patterns from the collected data, emphasizing convergence and divergence, commonality and nuance.
3. The development of a “dialogue” between the researcher, the coded data, and his knowledge about the participant’s experiences and meanings.
4. The organization of the data in a format that allows for analyzed data to be traced right through the entire process, from initial comments on the video, through initial clustering and thematic development, into the final structure of themes.
5. The development of a full narrative evidenced by a detailed commentary on data extracts, which takes the reader through this interpretation, usually theme-by-theme, and is often supported by some form of visual guide.
6. Reflection on one’s own perception, conceptions and process. (pp. 79-80)

**Validity and credibility**
Limitations. Generalization is an anticipated limitation for this study. First, the number of participants that may be willing to respond might be small. Second, the small number of participants in this study may make it challenging to represent all Muslim students in higher education. Finally, purposeful sampling is not inclusive. For instance, the researcher might not have access to other students who have stories to share or students will not have access to the researcher.

Biases. As mentioned before, it is very important to clearly communicate biases as a qualitative investigator. Given the researcher’s religious background, personal and professional experiences, it is believed that Muslim students will have special concerns and challenges (racial behavior) as minority students at a PWI. Another researcher bias is the fact that the researcher is Muslim and has experienced racial behavior (off campus). The researcher’s personal experiences can influence the process of understanding the participants’ experiences. Therefore, reflectivity of the researcher is crucial. These biases and assumptions will be considered throughout the course of the study, in order for all students’ opinions to be heard and analyzed openly and honestly.

Member-Checking. For validation purposes, the researcher conducted member checking which included two steps. The first step is to send the written form of the interviews to participants for verification of accuracy. The second step is to share the analysis with the participants for validation. Both steps will ensure that the findings accurately reflect the participant’s statements.

Protection of Human Subjects
The relationship with the participants will be built on the basis of trust, fairness, honesty, and respect (Maxwell, 2005). Creswell (1998) and Merriam (1998) propose guidelines to maintain ethical standards of qualitative studies that will be considered.

These guidelines include:

- The researcher must protect the anonymity of the participants.
- The researcher must treat the participants with dignity and respect.
- The researcher must not engage in any deception about the nature of the study and must explain the purpose of the study.
- The researcher must have written permission from the participants.
- The researcher must present the truth when reporting the research findings.
- The researcher must seriously consider whether or not to share personal experiences with the participants.

When appropriate, the researcher can share her personal experiences to make the participant feel more comfortable. Participation will be voluntary; the participants can withdraw at any time with no consequences. Creswell (2007) suggests that a researcher protects the anonymity of the informants to ensure confidentiality. Thus, names will be changed to safeguard their privacy.

Conclusion

Due to the scarcity of research and literature on Muslim students in higher education, it is important to make them the center of further studies. It is also important to look at how these students experience campus climate and how they describe incidents of racialization to capture a
deeper understanding of their lived experiences, as well as how that impacts their unique involvement on campus. The previous studies used the same question as of how students experience campus climate or how students perceive their experiences on campus, however, only one study in the United Kingdom focused on how Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) students related the question to racialization. The current research is sought to better understand the racialized experiences of graduate Muslim students using specific questions that address the students’ interpretation of how they experience campus climate, which is different from the previous studies found in the examined literature. Furthermore, identifying the challenges faced by Muslim students in higher education may provide the missing details in how they experience racial campus climate. Finally, the focus on American Muslim students in higher education may begin to fill the gap in the literature related to Muslim students, race and higher education.
Chapter 4: Summary of Findings

This study focused on a group of five Muslim graduate students who have attended graduate school at a university in the northeast. The students identified as ‘Muslim American’ and they were enrolled in graduate School for at least one academic year. They all had different ethnic backgrounds and different stories to share according to their own experiences as Muslim. In fact, after the participant interviews, it became clear that Muslim students lived different experiences and coped with racialization. The researcher interviewed five participants, four males and two females. All participants were enrolled in different disciplines and different schools. Two of the participants graduated in 2016. Only one female participant was wearing hijab (head scarf).

The findings provided a clear picture of these experiences and are described below. There were two research questions that guided the interviews:

1. How do Muslim graduate students make sense of their experiences in college?
   a. In what ways do dominant misconceptions shape Muslim students’ experiences?
   b. In what ways can racial behavior be expressed toward Muslim graduate students?

2. How do Muslim students experience and cope with incidents of racialization in graduate school?

The researcher held two, one-hour interviews with each participant. Following the completion of the interviews, data was coded to interpret emerging themes. Ultimately, Four major themes emerged: Muslim Graduate Students Interaction, Muslim Graduate Students Experiences, Muslim Graduate students Perceptions and Muslim Graduate Students Support. Under the theme: Muslim Graduate Students interaction, two sub themes emerged: 1) Friends and 2) Faculty. Under the second theme, Muslim Graduate Students Experiences two subthemes emerged: 1) Positive Experiences and 2) Racialized Experiences. Under the third theme, only
one subthemes emerged: 1) Perceptions. Finally, under the fourth theme, tow subthemes emerged: Social Support and Religious Support. The table below summarizes the themes that emerged in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Muslim Graduate Student Interaction</td>
<td>1. Friends 2. Faculty</td>
<td>Muslim Friends Non-Muslim Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Muslim Graduate Student experiences</td>
<td>1. Positive Experiences 2. Racialized Experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Muslim Graduate Student Expectations</td>
<td>1. Perceptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Muslim Graduate Student support</td>
<td>1. Social support 2. Religious support</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Table 2 Emerging themes summary

Campus climate (Hurtado et al., 1998; 1999) was used as a theoretical framework to analyze the experiences of Muslim students. Upon the completion of coding/interpretation, some findings were anticipated and other findings were significant.

**Muslim Graduate Student Interaction**

Students make sense of their experiences according to their interactions within their college environment. The theme: Muslim Graduate Student Interactions emerged when participants were asked about what shaped their experiences in college. Participants mentioned that interactions with friends and faculty affected their overall experience in college. After the interviews, Friends and Faculty are the two sub themes that captured the essence of the lived experiences of the participants. Friends of participants were divided into two categories: Muslim friends and non-Muslim friends.

**Friends.** During interviews focusing on students’ experiences, friends were a common topic. All of the participants discussed their interactions with different students populations. It
appeared that Muslim students were open to interact with students from different cultural backgrounds.

**Muslim friends.** It was obvious that at the college level, all participants expressed a sense of an over-all satisfaction and sense of belonging within their Muslim community. Participants reported feelings of “belonging” in the sense that they found support through their Muslim friends. Four participants (Jamal, Alma, Amin, Nabil) reported that they felt “a sense of belonging” hanging out with their Muslim friends than their non-Muslim friends. Jamal explained that he never needed friends prior to college since family was enough for him but, as a college student, he had his circle of Muslim friends who are from different nationalities (Indian, Pakistani, Lebanese…) and different backgrounds (Arabs, American converts…). Jamal said that his positive experience with his Muslim friends shaped his experience in college. He found refuge in the Muslim Student Association (MSA) when he first arrived. He explained that he had established many friendships through the MSA Facebook page prior to arriving to Boston. He explained how he felt when he attended the first MSA group meeting:

When I first arrived [to this school], I already knew a lot of students here, when I went to my first MSA meeting, I knew almost everyone and it was such a good feeling that I was able to connect with so many Muslim brothers and sisters before I arrived on campus. They welcomed me to the group, after the meeting we, me and three friends from [this school], ordered halal food and hang out on campus.

He defined his community on campus as:
A very good group of Muslim friends in class…. We were a very close net for most our dental school years. We kept each other grounded that was basically our small little community.

When asked about what shaped her experience in college, Alma, (who wore hijab), immediately started talking about how lucky she felt because the campus is a very diverse place where she always feels welcomed. Alma explained that when she was with her female Muslim friends who wear hijab, she felt a strong sense of belonging and empowerment because the looks and comments of other people do not bother her when she is with her Muslim friends. She explained:

When I go to the cafeteria and there’s a group of my friends there, I feel like oh! It’s okay, I don’t really care about who’s looking or who is judging, I just go hangout with my friends and have fun …. But when I’m somewhere were the majority of the people are not Muslim, I feel like they’re looking at me like I’m from a different planet, or at least that’s how I feel…I think I stand out more when it’s just me.

Alma evoked that a similar sense of belonging was present even when she was in high school. She mentioned that her non-Muslim friends used to call her and her friends, “taliban”. Calling a Muslim, “taliban” has negative connotations, especially if a non-Muslim calls a Muslim ‘taliban’. This has the same effect if someone calls a Muslim, ‘terrorist’. The word ‘taliban in Arabic means two students but, it can be offending because it is related to the regime of taliban in Afghanistan where women and girls are oppressed. However, the participant did not feel offended because she was called taliban along with her Muslim friend. As a result of feeling empowered by her entourage, Alma chose to stick with her Muslim peers to feel integrated
(sense of belonging) and not alienated. She stated that she feels more comfortable when she is with her Muslim, “sisters and brothers” because she doesn’t have to worry about being “judged or misunderstood” by non-Muslim friends who do not know her up close.

Like Alma, Amin commented that he is always with his Muslim friends. He stated:

I am who I am with my Muslim friends, I don’t need filters and I can talk about anything. Don’t get me wrong, I like hanging out with my other friends, but with my Muslim friends, I like that we can pray together, in Ramadan (month of fasting), we are all fasting during the day, we all eat at the same time (after sunset), it’s easier to find friends that do the same thing.

Amin reported that he prefers to interact more with his Muslim friends because he feels a sense of belonging with them, but he expressed that at the same time he is open to “hanging out” with non-Muslim friends Amin mentioned:

I have many non-Muslim friends …we play sports together, we go to the gym together but I try to stay away from their social gathering, I mean, I don’t like to be around alcohol or drunk people … growing up, I was the only Muslim kid in my school, I guess I was not paying attention to how people treated me, or maybe no one really knew I was Muslim, so I most of my friends were not Muslim. I was a typical American kid at school… now, things have changed with terrorism and Muslims being targeted everywhere.

**Non-Muslim friends.** In addition, participants affirmed that their interactions with their non-Muslim friends shaped their college experiences. The interviews clearly established that
Muslim graduate students’ interactions with non-Muslim friends were not necessary for some, but very important for others.

Some participants were very sensitive to incidents that hindered their social or academic interactions with their non-Muslim friends during their college years. Some participants reported that they needed to adjust to a “different culture” that they defined as, “having fun” and “drinking, partying, smoking weed and doing things that do not comply with the Islamic teachings”. Thus, some participants expressed a sense of alienation with their non-Muslim friends. Jamal described interactions with non-Muslim students consisted, most of the time, of “… partying, drinking and going out”, which is something that never enticed him. He explained that he did not have time for that kind of fun and that he grew up having fun in “a different way, but certainly not drinking”. When asked about his relationship with his non-Muslim classmates, he mentioned that they used to help each other in class and that there were “no complains”, he said: “I would help around if someone needed help.”

When asked about what shaped her experiences in college as a graduate Muslim student, Alma mentioned the looks and stares that she used to get from her non-Muslim peers when she dressed in a conservative way. She explained that when she wears jeans or pants and a long shirt with her hijab she felt more integrated than when she wore her abaya (a long black dress) she recounts:

I dress casual and modest in class and I always make sure that what I’m wearing something that will be appropriate to Jumua Prayer (Friday prayer), so I really love to wear my abaya (long black dress) most of the time, umm… but I feel that some students who don’t know me or see a muhajaba (female that wear the scarf) for the first time stare or even sometimes, do the double
I didn’t feel comfortable attending one of their parties (Non-Muslim friends). It happened once and will never happen again, … to fit in means you be open to dinking, making up with a boy friend or a girl friend and getting wasted for the rest of the night, which by no means is one of my intentions when I go to a social gathering.

When reporting her stories, she mentioned that she chose to mostly hang out with Muslim friends as a decision of several incidents that happened with her non-Muslim friends when she was in high school. She reported:

I remember the summer before I started high school I told my American, like, white American, or just basically non Muslim friends that I was gonna be starting to wear hijab and they are all like: OK! Like, you know, just kind of warning them so that no one asks “what’s on your head on the first day of school?” and then, um, I remember on the first day of school,… I was so nervous on the first day of school and my friend was like: “what is that thing on your head? I was like: “I told you that I was going to start wearing the scarf!” and she just gave me that look of disgust, you know. I remember feeling so
embarrassed and then slowly, slowly, my American friends started drifting away from me and I guess it was kind of, as you get older you start having a boy friend, you start drinking and things like that. I just could not relate to them on that level and I just start hanging out more with my Muslim friends who are kind of dealing with the same things.

Alma insisted on sharing another incident that impacted her interactions with non-Muslims. She explained that this incident was one of the first ones that happened to her when she decided to start wearing hijab. However, it made a huge impact on her decision to opt for making Muslim friends. She recounted:

I remember that same friend [who gave her the look of disgust when she saw Alma wearing hijab], her and her mom went out to lunch with me, I remember after September 11 they asked me like: Oh, are you sure that Osama Bin Laden isn’t your uncle or something? You know, when you are a teenager that’s damaging, you know, I remember feeling so sad, so depressed. I think what kept me sane and survived that whole September eleven thing was that I had a good minority Muslim students that went to my school… we stuck together, we had our own lunch table where we sat together Umm, we had Jumuua on Friday as we would attend jumuua prayer and do dawah events … because of that psychological piece from high school I would just go to class and leave I would not talk to anybody… I did not feel safe with non-Muslims you know…. There is also so many stories where people would bully you or like would think you are a criminal.

Alma reported that these experiences influenced her personality and made her feel a stronger sense of belonging with Muslim friends rather than non-Muslims. Her identity was
scarred with those comments that made her anti-social outside the Muslim community on campus.

Yasmin, however, explained: “My closest friends were not Muslim, They all happen to be Hindu, but that’s just a consequence of the people that were in my class…it would not have mattered what they were”. She added that her friends were respectful to her religious practices and that’s “what really mattered” to her. On the same vein, Nabil, who mentioned prior to the interview that he is moderately religious, mentioned that he had more non-Muslim friends and that “it did not make a difference” to him.

**Summary.** The accounts from Jamal, Alma and Amin of their interactions with their friends shaped their experience in college. They explained how their interactions were limited to Muslim students since they felt a sense of belonging and integrity within their small community of Muslim friends. It seemed that the participants sought refuge in their Muslim friends through MSA’s and other organizations where they connected with other students and share the same religious values. However, it was obvious that Alma, Amin and Jamal were open to socialize with other students while attending a diverse institute in the northeast. The point they make is that, as students, they don’t feel the need to have a circle of non-Muslim friends especially that it was very easy for them as graduate Muslim students to connect and recognize each other through the MSA in their schools. However, Yasmin and Nabil expressed that they are open to making friendships with non-Muslim students from different backgrounds as long as they respected each other’s religious practices and thoughts. The participants felt very comfortable and had no issues integrating with their non-Muslim peers.
The second sub theme that emerged from the interviews is Faculty. All participants reported that interactions with their faculty shaped their experiences in college. Participants reported that interactions with faculty was “limited to getting information”, and “academic questions” if need be. They all reported a very formal communication system with their professors, Jamal explained: “they are on a busy schedule and I never felt the need to ask any questions”. Alma described the interactions and relationships with her faculty as “friendly.” She said:

I maintained a friendly relationship with my professors, especially when I needed them to write me a recommendation letter, I mean, there were some professors that I got so close to and some I had no relationship with whatsoever other than taking their course.

She mentioned that one time when she felt offended by a professor:

They were talking about how women are oppressed and mistreated in some cultures… the teacher looked at me and said: So, how do you feel about this, what are your thoughts? Just because I was the only Muslim in class, the question was directed to me C’mon!

Alma felt offended because her professor did not respect her when he assumed that she could represent oppressed and mistreated women just because she is Muslim. These kinds of interactions offended Alma and made her feel embarrassed. However, Alma expressed her satisfaction with faculty who knew little about Islam and showed respect to Islam and Muslims, she clarified:
After the Boston bombings, my professor sent me an e-mail and asked me if I was ok, it felt good to see that some faculty were taking time off their busy schedule to accommodate me.

Limited or absent interactions with faculty were reported by one participant. Amin explained:

I never had a good or bad relationship with my professors, I respect their views and I don’t like to talk about religion and politics in class.

Amin and Yasmin expressed that they avoided talking about politics and religion especially in class with the faculty because that could affect their grade if their professors took it the wrong way or if they expressed opposing points of view.

Summary. Based on the participants’ narratives the researcher identified a pattern: depending on the way professors interacted with participants; it made them feel either welcomed or estranged and offended. Alma was very happy with one professor who showed respect to Islam and offered comforting through an e-mail made her feel welcomed in class. The other professor who expected her to talk about oppressed women because she was the only Muslim in class made her feel offended. Those feelings are what participants used when they were asked about what shaped their college experience. They described their experiences based on how interactions with their professors impacted them.

The participants’ narratives clearly showed that interactions with faculty shaped the participants’ experiences. Participants felt welcomed and empowered when their professors showed concern and respect. However, when participants felt offended and alienated when there was a lack of interaction or disrespect between professors and the participants.
Muslim Graduate Student Experiences

When asked about their experiences as Muslim graduate students in college, all participants reported feelings of being welcomed on campus and satisfaction with the overall climate on campus. However, the participants reported that anti-Islamic sentiments were both present and manifested on campus. Two themes emerged from the analysis of the interview narratives: Positive experiences and racialized experiences of Muslim graduate college students.

Positive experiences. In college, most participants reported positive experiences. Participants were active in the MSA events in their school. It was common that Muslim students would invite Non-Muslim students to their events, especially in Ramadan. Yasmin explained that she always invited non-Muslim friends to Iftar (breaking fast meal in Ramadan) dinners and “they (MSA hosts) always have a good number of non-Muslim friends”.

Amin, who is very religious, reported that his classmates are very respectful and understanding of his religious practices and he found professors and non-Muslim students open to being educated about Islam when they attended Ramadan Iftars (breaking fast meal in Ramadan) and Islamic awareness events.

Amin explained:

The MSA is not exclusive to only Muslim students, you know, we always invite students on campus and we always welcome non-Muslim students regardless of their religions, we even have some professors attend and enjoy the food with us.

Amin clarified that involving other students in their religious practices was a success, especially in the month of fasting in Ramadan. He said:
We encourage non-Muslim students to try to refrain from eating food and drinking water from sunrise to sunset (fasting in Ramadan) to enjoy a traditional meal at Iftar time.

Amin reported feelings of satisfaction and said that in his college, “diverse minorities and here, everyone accepts and respects everyone else”. Likewise, Yasmin revealed that she found the climate on campus very positive and welcoming, she said:

There are designated rooms for us to pray and there is halal food available at the cafeteria.

She added, “the community here is a very intelligent, very learned people and they understand more than what a layman does”. She noted, the positive climate on campus helped her achieve her academic goals and prepared her to be a better citizen of the world.

In the same vein, Jamal explained that it was never an issue for him being a Muslim student on campus, due to his physical appearance, he explained:

I have never had any issues on campus, Umm, at least, in dental school, I like the overall environment and every body is nice to me here… plus, I can easily pass for someone form Europe because of my fair complexion (laughed).

Nabil confirmed the same point of view; he explained that being a Muslim was never a problem for him, he explained:

No one knows I am Muslim unless someone asks, especially that my name is not a Muslim sounding name.

**Summary.** Participants expressed satisfaction with the overall campus climate. They reported that the community in their college is open minded and very welcoming. The
researcher noted a pattern of participants who did not fit the stereotypical Muslim profile reporting more positive attitudes. As noted, Jamal, and Nabil explained that their skin, hair color or name did not expose them as Muslims. This means that Muslim participants who did not have religious markers (such as hijab or niqab for women or long beard and a kufi hat for men) that identified/exposed them as Muslims reported positive attitudes. Therefore, all three male participants reported positive experiences. One participant can pass for someone from Europe, the other participant is an African American who expressed that he had experienced indirect racialization but he described that the overall climate on campus was positive and welcoming, and the third male participant reported that he is not very religious and his name is not a Muslim sounding name. The one female participant who reported positive experiences in college is not wearing hijab. This raises the question: Would the participants express the same satisfaction with campus climate if they were visible Muslims with religious markers or Muslim sounding names?

The second subtheme that emerged from the interviews is Racialized Experiences. When asked about their experiences in college as Muslim and if they felt they were being treated differently, participants reported conflicted views. Both positive and racialized experiences were noted.

**Racialized experiences.** Not all of the participants reported satisfaction with their experiences as Muslim graduate students in college. Alma wore hijab and dressed more Muslim in the sense that she wears an abaya (long dress). She reported feeling racialized in an indirect manner on several occasions in class and on campus. Alma explained that some of the challenges she faced as a visible Muslim on campus go back to her first year on campus. She
explained that better communication could have solved some of the issues that made her feel racialized. She recounts:

When I first arrived to Boston, I had a non-Muslim roommate, I really didn’t mind at the beginning, but little things started adding up, she would invite her friends over and stay up late, I could not sleep at night, I could not focus in my classes, she started inviting her male friends over knowing that I was not ok with it… I mean, I explained to her that she cannot have her boyfriend come in the house until I make sure I am covered. I use to tell her what bothered me and I really wanted to set my borders… I think it was about two weeks after we talked about her boyfriend, she moved out and asked me to look for another roommate,… she left me a note explaining how she cannot live with someone so uptight and that I am brain-washed and I cannot be normal like other college kids… it was a long note, I felt so humiliated and disrespected but I survived.

Alma clarified that she felt indirectly racialized because of her religion. Alma explained that this “difficult experience” with her roommate influenced her to choose (future) Muslim roommates because they can connect on many different levels. Many experiences made Alma feel that she is treated differently because of her religion. She shared how sometimes administrative staff would comment that she doesn’t have a heavy accent and that she “sounded American.” Alma felt that these comments would not be directed to her if she did not wear hijab.

Alma shared her friend’s experience of being racialized when her teacher asked her to “be quiet” when she defended her religion in a class presentation when the teacher mentioned in the presentation that “Muslim women do not go to the gym”.

This experience has two implications. First, the teacher did not allow the student to express her views because she is Muslim, expecting her to be quiet and submissive. Second, the teacher did not want to accept the fact that a student was correcting them. Either way, it is a racialized behavior that is damaging to the student Muslim identity. Alma commented, “I don’t know what I would have done, I mean… if that happened to me… I will never go back to her class again”. This comment captures the effect of racialization towards Muslim students and how Muslim students make sense of their racialized experiences.

Alma shared incidents when she was laughed at and racialized:

At times, it would come off as a joke, my friends would laugh at me when I say things like, I can eat halal meat (meat slaughtered according to Islamic teaching), or, I can’t have a boyfriend, they don’t say anything but the way they look at each other makes me feel embarrassed.

She recalled being attacked in high school when a classmate tried to pull her hijab off and expressed feeling victimized because no one said anything. The researcher noted a difference in the participant’s facial expressions that changed from smiling to serious and solemn.

Unlike Alma, Nabil reported that his non-Muslim friends nicknamed him, “Ahmed the terrorist”. He explained, “I know we were all laughing about it”. It did not seem to bother Nabil to be called a terrorist but the fact that he mentioned it means that it did, in fact, have an impact. Even if he was called “terrorist” when him and his friends were joking, deep down the researcher noted that the participant was not happy that his friends chose that particular nickname.
Summary. Participants reported an overall satisfaction with the campus climate in the sense that most participants reported positive experiences, however, Alma who wears hijab reported racialized experiences because she can be identified as a Muslim. In addition, one male participants was called a “terrorist “despite that he is not identified as a Muslim because of his physical attributes.

Muslim Graduate students Expectations

All participants expressed that because they are a minority, they faced perceptions they had to face. As a minority, it is almost inevitable to be representatives of the culture and religion of Islam. After the coding process and the analysis of the interviews, one subtheme emerged which is Perceptions.

Perceptions. When asked about how Muslim graduate students make sense of their experiences in college, four participants reported that they were not perceived as Muslims, due to the fact that they “blended-in”. In other words, the participants did not have any religious markers that revealed their Muslim identity. However, Alma, the only participant who had a religious marker (the scarf/hijab) reported “feeling sad” that Muslims are represented negatively in the media and that impacted her as a Muslim graduate student and the way she was perceived.

Sometimes, I feel that the way media represents Islam and Muslims does influence people’s reactions when they see Muslim women wearing a black niqab (a black dress that covers the body head-to-toe) or a Muslim men who has a long beard…. my friend who wears niqab just told me last week that when she was leaving the supermarket, one guy was driving by and told that she should be ashamed of herself because she is dressed that way … he put his hand out of the window and raised the middle finger…. Hate
crimes towards Muslims… the three Muslim students who were killed in North Carolina because a white guy hated Muslims… When I hear this kind of stuff happening I don’t feel safe walking alone anywhere.

Alma expressed how the representation of Islam and Muslims in media affected her. Hate crimes against Muslims are caused because of the negative ways media represents Islam and Muslims according to Alma. This negative representation in the media impacted the way she was perceived and that made her feel unsafe to walk alone on campus. For Alma, she went out of her way to give a positive representation of her faith on campus, explaining:

I make sure that I smile to everyone on campus; I make careful choices in my clothes selections not to wear dark colors…. Also, I make sure that I get good grades in my classes.

As a result of the negative representation of Muslims in the media, Alma felt responsible to take action and change the way Muslims are looked at by modeling good character and be “highlighted for being an excellent student”. Yasmin explained that the way she is perceived depended on how other students expected her to be more conservative, she commented:

People expect Muslim people to be a certain way… especially, it’s more understanding that they know my background is Pakistani… but that doesn’t stop me to go watch a PG-13 romantic comedy, you know, weird things that I didn’t expect people to question me about, but that quickly dissipated when I educated them.

She also reported that she strived to preserve her Muslim identity and excel academically.
Summary. Participants reported the feeling of responsibility to represent their faith through good behavior and academic achievement and that is how they coped with different pejorative perceptions. It is worth mentioning that male participants expressed the importance to be perceived as “academically successful” as well.

Muslim Graduate Student Support

When asked about how students cope with experiences of racialization on campus, participants reported conflicted feelings. Three participants reported feeling supported through their Muslim community of friends, the MSA and Facebook networks. Two participants felt that their college campus did not support their specific needs. Based on interviews’ analysis, two subthemes emerged: Social Support and Religious Support.

Social Support. Muslim community members, social organizations (MSA), Muslim students’ clubs and Muslim faculty, all produced a support system to the participants in this study. Three participants voiced satisfaction with Muslim students’ support. Participants stated that the school administrators supported their MSA events and provided them with space to hold their events. Jamal explained that they were never denied an event, “Muslim students and non-Muslim students attend events and support us on campus.” Yasmin shared the same view when she noted that she made new friends and made new connections through MSA events. Amin expressed that he received support from his Muslim friends and professors. Amin described that one of his professors sent him an e-mail to make sure, “everything was ok after Boston bombings”. Amin said that he felt “very comfortable” being able to talk about how he felt after the Boston marathon bombings to his Muslim friends and classmates. He added that he felt “safe” in class knowing “somebody cared”.

Unlike Amin, Alma voiced her frustration with lack of support from her professors, especially after the assassination of the three Muslim students in North Carolina. She recalled:

He [one of her professors] used to talk about an event from the news each week… that week when the three Muslim students from North Carolina got shot, he talked about something else.

Alma was frustrated because of the way her professor reacted to news that went viral in the media. Three Muslim Americans were killed in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The crime terrorized the victims’ family as well as the Muslim community. The fact that Alma’s teacher (who always discussed a prominent event from the news/media) ignored what happened made her feel that the three young innocent Muslims’ lives did not matter. In other words, there was no emotional support when she expected her professor to discuss the killings and call it a terrorist attack against Muslims and not a hate crime. In addition, Alma expressed her disappointment with her professor’s lack of support that was echoed by the way Media reacted to the killings by describing the events as “hate crimes and not terrorist attacks” towards the three Muslim students who were killed. In addition, Alma expressed her dissatisfaction with the social support when she described that her school could do more when it comes to accommodating Muslim female students in her school. She explained: “It would be nice to have women only gym hours”. Alma explained:

I love to go to the gym every night and work out for a good hour or so, but I feel that I stand out with my hijab in the gym when most girls are in a tank top or bra like top…. Same thing when I go to the pool …imagine how I feel when I am the only one in a burkini (full body swimwear for Muslim women) doing laps.
Summary. Alma explained lack of social support in the sense that her professors did not acknowledge her religion and refused to talk about Islam or comment on news related to Muslims. There was no support when she felt that the school’s policy did not support Muslim female’s needs (gym and swimming privacy). Also, the opportunity to talk about Islam, religious practices and news related issues were not supported in some of her class discussions.

Religious support. All participants explained their satisfaction with the spiritual support they received through the ability to pray together and hold Iftar dinner events (the meal after a day of fasting in Ramadan) and Eid (Islamic holidays) parties. Alma explained that the MSA events created a sense of camaraderie and solidarity among Muslims students and non-Muslims on campus.

Amin clarified that the spiritual support he felt came from religious and spiritual rituals he performed with other Muslim students, as well as the collaboration opportunities among different student populations and clubs. Amin recounted:

We have designated rooms for prayers, there is a Jumuaa prayer on Fridays (Friday prayer: where the Imam (religious leader of the group) gives a lecture before the actual prayer), we hold Halaqas (lectures) almost every Friday, in Ramadan we hold Taraweeh (night time prayers in Ramadan) … and there is a good number of Muslim and non Muslim brothers and sisters who always attend the lectures.

Yasmin reported that she feels supported through the diversity in her school. She explained:

I see many Muslim students on campus… Some of our professors are Muslims. I like it that we have designated rooms for prayer, halal food in the cafeteria, and also MSA
students always organize event to bring us together. So there is a cool sense of community going on here.

**Summary.** Participants reported their satisfaction with the social and religious support in their institute. Most participants seek support from their MSA that provides events and opportunities for graduate Muslim students to celebrate their diversity.

**Conclusion**

In this study, the experiences of five American Muslim students were investigated by interviews, focusing on their racialized experiences as Muslim graduate students. The findings of the study revealed that the participants experienced both positive and racialized behavior as graduate Muslim students. The researcher conducted and coded and analyzed interviews with two research questions as a guide:

1. How do Muslim graduate students make sense of their experiences in college?
2. How do Muslim students experience and cope with incidents of racialization in graduate school?

Four themes emerged: Muslim Graduate Student Interactions, Muslim Graduate Student Experiences and Muslim Graduate Expectations and Muslim Graduate Support. In the context of Muslim Graduate Student Interaction, the researcher identified two sub themes: Friends and Faculty. In the context of Muslim Graduate Students Experiences, the researcher identified two sub themes: Positive Experiences and Racialized Experiences. In the context of Muslim Graduate Student Expectations, the researcher identified one sub theme: Perceptions. In the context of Muslim Graduate Student Support, the researcher identified two sub themes: Social Support and Religious support.
Participants were open in expressing their views on their experiences in the university they attended. Participants shared that interactions with their friends and faculty members shaped their experiences in college. It appeared that participants preferred to be with their Muslim friends since that provided a sense of belonging and a judgment free environment. Other participants expressed flexibility in interactions with their non-Muslim friends as long as there was mutual respect towards each other’s religious and cultural practices. In the context of Faculty (interactions), participants depicted a formal and limited relationship with their professors. Some participants maintained a friendly relationship with their professors while others kept the relationship strictly professional. In the context of Muslim graduate students’ experiences, participants reported positive and racialized experiences as Muslims. The positive experiences elucidated a welcoming campus. Participants reported a positive campus climate in the sense that they felt empowered thorough their involvement in the MSA and religious rituals that fulfilled a sense of belonging. Participants also depicted incidents that indicated a racial campus climate that affected the participants in their college experiences. Participants, who reported racialized experiences asserted that they were misunderstood, antagonized, ridiculed, victimized and sometimes treated differently just because they were Muslims. In the context of Muslim graduate students’ expectations, participants reported that they felt responsible to portray good behavior and represent Islam positively. In the context of Muslim graduate students’ support, participants reported that they felt supported as a Muslim community. Despite all the above challenges, the participants still seek support within their community and they all continue to excel academically.
Chapter 5: Discussion of Research Findings

This study employed Campus Racial Climate as a theoretical framework to explore the lived experiences of American Muslim graduate college students and how they cope with racialization after September 11th, 2001. It is crucial to probe their experiences because after the events of September 11, racialized incidents of Muslims in the United States increased. So has the number of Muslim students in higher education.

The literature offers several studies on Muslim students in primary schools, but little discourse exists on how Muslim graduate students experience campus climate. This study’s findings expand the discourse significantly and facilitate scholars and higher education administrators’ understanding of the experiences of Muslim students and how to better attend to their specific needs.

This study focused on the following research questions:

1. How do Muslim graduate students make sense of their experiences in American colleges?
   a. In what ways do dominant misconceptions shape Muslim students’ experiences?
   b. In what ways can racial behavior be expressed toward Muslim Graduate students?

2. How do Muslim students experience and cope with racialization in graduate schools?

   In this study there were four themes: Muslim Graduate Student Interaction, Muslim Graduate Student Experiences, Muslim Graduate Student Expectations and Muslim Graduate Student Support. In the context of Muslim Graduate Student Interactions, the researcher identified two subthemes: Friends and Faculty. In the context of Muslim Graduate Student Experiences, the researcher identified two subthemes: Positive Experiences and Racialized
experiences. In the context of Muslim Student Expectations, the researcher identified one subtheme: Perceptions. In the context of Muslim Graduate Support, the researcher identified two subthemes: Social Support and Religious Support.

In the following sections, the researcher introduces and discusses four major findings in the context of the literature and Campus Racial Climate framework. The researcher discusses the implications for findings (major themes and subthemes) in relation to the problem of practice, literature and Campus Climate framework. In addition, the researcher discusses limitations of the study, implications for practice and implications for future research.

**Muslim Graduate Students Interaction**

Muslim graduate students are part of the student population across the campuses of the United States. As a minority group, it is reported that they are facing many challenges as they navigate their college campus. This study interviewed five Muslim American graduate students about their lived experiences on campus after September 11. Also, this study examines how Muslim graduate students make sense of their experiences on campus. The study revealed that Muslim graduate students’ experiences in college are shaped by their interaction with their friends and faculty.

**Friends.** Participants reported sense of belonging, isolation and alienation to describe how interactions with their Muslim and non-Muslim friends shaped their experiences in college. First, participants’ revealed feelings of being alienated when they described their interactions with their non-Muslim friends. Muslim students reported that their non-Muslim friends misunderstood them, which resulted in an identity complex that affected Muslim students’ interactions on campus. In other words, some Muslim graduate students were not interested in
spending time with their non-Muslim peers. Second, Muslim graduate students revealed feelings of belonging to their Muslim small community on campus, in fact, Muslim graduate students expressed their satisfaction with their integration in their Muslim Student Association (MSA). However, involvement of Muslim graduate students with students of the same faith could mean that Muslim students seek to isolate themselves from other non-Muslim students on campus to seek refuge in their hassle-free community where no one questioned their religious practices such as wearing hijab, performing religious prayers or fasting on campus. Finally, this study found that interactions shaped Muslim graduate students experiences. Muslim graduate students make sense of their experiences through interactions with their Muslim and non-Muslim friends.

**Faculty.** Participants did not report a close relationship with their professors, in other words, participants expressed that they deal with their professors on a professional level. This professional relationship between Muslim students and their professors can be related to the fact that two of the participants were enrolled in dental school, and because of their (students and professors) busy schedule, they kept interaction to a minimum level. Overall interactions of students and professors did affect the participants in terms of how they viewed the overall class environment. Students who had a friendly relationship with their faculty were academically involved, however, interviews revealed at the same time that other participants who had no relationship with their faculty excelled as well. Therefore, the study revealed that Muslim graduate students’ interaction with their professors has an impact on how students view their campus climate but not necessarily on whether or not they succeed academically.

**Findings related to the literature.** Muslim graduate students’ interactions shaped their experiences in college. In the literature, Speck (1997) focused on Muslim students’ interactions and how it affected their interactions in class before September 11. The study revealed that
Muslim students did not feel integrated even before September 11 (Speck, 1997). This study revealed that Muslim graduate students chose not to be integrated in their non-Muslim circle of friends. Nasir & Al- Amin, (2006) confirm that Muslim graduate students interactions shaped their experiences. At the same time, many studies on Muslim students (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010; Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006; Novera, 2004; Sirin & Fine, 2008) note that a lack of understanding of Muslim students could create challenges for them. Thus, affect their interaction with friends and faculty.

This study found that Muslim graduate student’ interaction with their Muslim friends made them feel a sense of belonging in their small community. In the literature, Cress, (2008) confirms that minority students feel a sense of alienation from an institute where interactions in it are based on prejudice and discrimination. One Muslim graduate student who wears hijab showed less interest in opening up to other students from different faiths because she felt more comfortable interacting with her Muslim student friends than her non-Muslim friends. Loo (1993) confirms that minority students’ representation plays an important role in student’s sense of belonging. The university where this study was conducted provided prayer rooms and accommodated Muslim dietary restrictions such as providing halal meat and opening their campus cafeteria late at night in Ramadan (fasting month). In fact, the findings of several studies on minority students found that minority students are more at ease within their own racial group (Shirin, 2011, Selod, 2015, Sirin et al., 2008; Novera, 2004) and this confirms the findings of this study. It is worth mentioning here that the researcher posits that minority students have similar experiences to Muslim graduate students since studies that focus on racialization of Muslim students are limited. In addition, this study confirms that Muslim students’ interactions with their faculty affect the way they make sense of their experiences. Studies (Jhonson, 2003;
Solorxano et al., 2000; Hausmann et al., 2009; Zumbrann et al., 2014) on minority students confirmed the importance of sense of belonging in affecting students’ interactions, engagements and involvement.

Studies (Cabrera et al., 1999; Edirisooriya & McLean, 2003) indicate that minority students report prejudice, alienation and discrimination from their faculty. Muslim graduate students reported their academic achievement but they had different perspectives on their interactions with their professors. In other words, being alienated or discriminated against in class did not affect participants’ academic achievement. In this study racialized behavior was not reported in the context of faculty, there was one exception though, one participant found that interactions with her professors had an effect on how she viewed the campus climate in her school. As a minority, Muslim students face many stresses: the first one is interracial, which is informed by the interaction of Muslim students with non-Muslim students. The second stress is racialization since participants are discriminated against because of their faith and not because they are from a specific race and this is echoed in several studies on minority students (Castellanos & Cole, 2002; Jandali, 2013; Navarro, 2010; Selod, 2014; Wagner, 2012). In fact, this study helps explain how racial behavior is expressed toward Muslim graduate students by their professors. The researcher can posit that Muslim students have similar experiences as minority students if the researcher considers the exception reported, in the sense that both groups (minority and Muslim students) experience alienation, racialization or discrimination as the literature suggests.

**Findings related to the framework.** In the lens of the campus climate framework established by Hurtado et al., (1999), structural diversity is the proportion where students, faculty and administrators interactions are described. This study reveals that the participants who
experienced racialization, discrimination and alienation in the past had no interaction with their non-Muslim peers. In the research on campus racial climate, Chang (1999) found that structural diversity, defined as the heterogeneity of the student’s body, directly affected the extent of students’ interaction. In other words, the greater the structural diversity, the more students had interracial interactions in some form. In this study, all participants reported being open to interact with non-Muslim students. Moreover, Chang (2009), found that interaction tend to be stronger in institutions with greater structural diversity. In this study, Muslim participants reported stronger interactions with their Muslim friends while their interactions with their professors were limited and kept professional.

In addition to the structural diversity dimension, the behavioral dimension of the framework is useful to better explain how the findings of this study are confirmed by findings in the campus racial climate research. The behavioral dimension of the institutional climate consists of (a) actual reports of general social interaction, (b) interactions among individuals from different ethnic/racial backgrounds and (c) the nature of intergroup relations on campus. Studies within the behavioral dimension (Hurtado et al., 1999) confirm that campus race relations are poor, social interaction is low, and students from different racial/ethnic groups are segregating themselves from other groups. According to campus racial climate framework, the researcher can suggest that Muslim students’ behavior can be interpreted as isolation, but from the participants’ point of view isolation can be interpreted as support in an unsupportive environment.

**Muslim Graduate Students Experiences**

Muslim students in college reported mixed feelings on how they perceive campus climate and how they make sense of their experiences, in this section the themes that emerged from the research are Muslim Graduate Positive Experiences and Muslim Graduate Racialized
Experiences. The researcher will discuss the findings in relation to the literature and the used theoretical framework.

**Muslim graduate students positive experiences.** Muslim graduate students in this study reported a positive environment and a sense of belonging to the Muslim community on campus. Three participants expressed feelings of satisfaction with the campus climate and reported positive experiences highlighted with mutual respect, openness and understanding from students of different faiths. According to the participants’ recounts, male students and female students who are not visible experienced a positive campus climate. When Muslim graduate students blend in, it makes them invisible to other students in terms of their religious background. Two of the participants who reported positive experiences are enrolled in dental school and one is enrolled in the business school. Two participants who were enrolled in dental school expressed that most of the students in their school are minorities and so did the participant enrolled in the business school. He mentioned the diversity of students in his classes. As a result, participants reported positive experiences and they felt similar to everyone else in the sense that the more diverse the campus is, the more positive experiences are reported.

**Findings related to the literature.** In the literature, studies on Muslims and Muslim students report that they face discrimination and prejudice (Cole &Ahmadi, 2010; Shammas, 2009; Nasir &Al-Amin, 2006; Speck, 1997). However, the findings of this study contradict what was found in the literature. Male Muslim students did not report racial behavior. The researcher identifies one possible reason as of why these participants reported positive experiences. The nature of the program at the university where the study was conducted is one of the most diverse. The university is boasting a diverse and global campus community representing every religion, ethnicity and more than 140 countries around the world. For instance, the website picture of
dental school is featuring a Muslim female (wearing hijab), a Chinese and a Caucasian dentist, and this reflects their diverse and inclusive community. Shirin (2010) conducted a study on minority students, which revealed that being in a multicultural space resulted in positive experiences. This implies that participants in diverse campuses report positive experiences. This study expands the discourse significantly by providing more information on how Muslim graduate students reported positive experiences. These new findings can help promote and build positive environments for Muslim graduate students.

**Findings related to the framework.** In the context of campus climate studies, the findings of this study are relevant. A college historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion can determine the prevailing climate (Hurtado, 1992). To be more specific, the campus climate’s history of inclusion/exclusion model explains the results of this study. Rochenbasch and Mayhew (2014) speculated in their study that campus climate is comprised of various phenomena within an organization and more importantly the various perspectives of the individuals of those phenomena. In other words, campus climate aims to evaluate underrepresented student populations and how they experience campus climate. Muslim graduate students in American colleges represent a minority; in this case, the underrepresented student population embodied by Muslim graduate students asserts that campus climate is affecting them positively. Participants in this study reported positive experiences, mutual respect, open-mindedness and understanding as documented in the interviews. The positive experiences that Muslim students report is related to the history of inclusive policies on campus.

**Muslim graduate students racialized experiences.** The main purpose of this study is to examine Muslim graduate students’ racialized experiences in colleges and explain how Muslim
graduate students experience and cope with racialization in higher education. The findings of this study explain how some Muslim graduate students experience racial behavior.

Two of the participants revealed incidents that captured how they were indirectly racialized on campus. One female participant who wears hijab recounted that people on campus (students, faculty and administrators) were impressed when she spoke perfect English with no accent. On the surface, the compliment is a positive behavior/attitude; yet, she realized that there is a prejudiced idea that all Muslim girls have an accent. This implies that racialization can occur implicitly or indirectly when one cannot directly identify a negative attitude. One male participant was indirectly racialized when his friends associated him with the funny puppet ‘Achmed the dead terrorist’ by Jeff Dunham and started calling him “terrorist” for laughs but there is little truth in the joke in the sense that he was being bullied indirectly.

This study revealed that racialized behavior was conveyed through misunderstanding, victimizing, and silencing of Muslim graduate students. First racialized behavior was manifested because of misunderstanding and prejudice of Islamic religious practices and prohibitions. Misunderstanding of Muslim graduate students’ religious practices can lead to name-calling. Second, a participant experienced racial behavior when participants were victimized in high school. The incident of a boy who tried to pull a girls’ hijab off impacted her in a way that she did not feel safe around non-Muslims. Third, one participant recounted her friend’s incident when her teacher silenced her because she wanted to correct the misconception about Muslim women who cannot go to gym that was brought up in a class discussion. The participant expressed her frustration with the situation because she felt that her friend was oppressed. This suggests that wearing hijab makes Muslim female graduate students an easy target for racial behavior.
Findings related to the literature. The literature seems to contain no study directly addressing the racialization of Muslim students in higher education. Few studies capture the challenges Muslims face in their schools, but do not go further to examine there racialized experiences. For instance, Shammas (2009) confirms the findings of this study. Shammas, (2009) reports that racial incidents became a reality for Muslim students because they are becoming more visible and intolerance toward their religious practices became more overt. However, he did not examine the racialized incidents. In his study, there is no explanation of how these incidents are happening. In addition, other studies (Peek, 2003; Harley, 2004; Naser & Al-Amin, 2006; Cole& Ahmadi, 2003; Shahid, 2003) highlighted the feelings of isolation, alienation and discrimination toward Muslim students and Muslim female students who wear hijab in high schools and middle schools. This study intended to explore the experiences of Muslim graduate students in college to discover how they experience and cope with racialization. This study’s findings parallel findings in the literature (Peek, 2003; Harley, 2004; Naser & Al-Amin, 2006; Cole& Ahmadi, 2003; Shahid, 2003). The findings expand the discourse significantly and facilitate scholars and higher education practitioners’ understanding of what contributes to the racialization of Muslim graduate students. Muslim graduate students who are identified as Muslim reported more racial behavior on campus. Studies on the racialization of Muslims (Ayers, 2007; Badr, 2004; Bayoumi, 2006; Cainkar, 2008; Edwaro Bonilla –Silva , 2001; Gotanda, 2011; Haddad & Smith, 2002; Hassan 2002; Jamal, 2008; Naber, 2008; Selod, 2015) confirm the findings of this study. Muslim graduate students, who wear hijab, have a Muslim sounding name or are associated with any physical or cultural aspect of Islam face racial behavior in college.
Findings related to the framework. In the lens of Campus Racial Climate, the racialization of the participants is modeled in the Psychological dimensions of the framework. The psychological dimension of Campus Racial Climate involves individuals’ views of group relations, institutional responses to diversity, perceptions of discrimination or racial conflict, and attitudes toward those from other racial/ethnic backgrounds than one’s own. It is important to note that more recent studies show that racially and ethnically diverse administrators, students, and faculty tend to view the campus climate differently. Thus, an individual’s position and power within the organization and his or her status as “insider” or “outsider” strongly influence attitudes (Hurtado et al., 1998). The findings of this study confirm that Muslim participants who are racialized are looked at derogatorily and are considered “outsiders”. One female participant experienced the brunt of the racial behavior on campus. Thus, wearing hijab intensifies racial behavior according to the interpretations of the findings of this study.

Muslim Graduate Students Expectations

All five participants expressed that they were careful in the way they represented their religion. For Muslims, one individual can effortlessly be expected to represent all Muslims around the world. Living in an era where social media and news are influential, stereotyping all Muslims as terrorists is a reality.

One participant described how media influenced the way Muslims are perceived. Participants are perceived as ‘evil’ and ‘terrorists’ because of the lack of awareness and the negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the media. As a result, participants feel responsible to correct the negative portrayals of Islam and Muslims. One participant who wears hijab expressed that she is very careful to pick bright colors and not wear all black. She challenged the traditional Muslim woman stereotypes by getting involved in academic and cultural events.
Findings related to the literature. In the examined literature, studies report that Muslims are often associated with violence, disloyalty and terrorism (Byng, 2010; Cole & Ahmadi, 2010; Eduardo Bonilla-Silvia, 2001; Selod, 2014). The literature confirm the findings of this study, Muslim graduate students face expectations that influence the way they are perceived. Muslim graduate students feel responsible to represent their religion to correct the image depicted of Islam and Muslims by the media. (Jandali, 2013; Navarro, 2010; Wagner, 2012). The research on the representation of Muslim women in the media affirms that Muslim women are reduced to one type. In the media, it is suggested that Muslim women are depicted as oppressed, look the same and behave the same way. Muslim men are often associated with terrorism and are considered as a threat to national security (Selod, 2014). These are perceptions that influenced how Muslims are perceived. Muslim graduate students feel responsible to represent their religion. They thrive to model good character and excel academically to defy the stereotypes embedded in the media. Moreover, Cole and Ahmadi (2010) confirm that Muslim students feel responsible to represent their religion. In the study, Cole and Ahmadi (2010) suggest that Muslim students are more likely to participate in cultural awareness workshops and accept a roommate of a different racial background. This implies that Muslim students feel the burden to account for their religious identity, practices and outfits (for females). As a result, Muslim students prefer to blend in and be open and accepting toward other minority groups. However, one study (Peek, 2003) suggests that blending in means giving up one’s Muslim identity or quit wearing hijab. This contradicts what this study found since none of the Muslim graduate students gave up the hijab or their Muslim identity.

Findings related to the Framework. In the lens of campus climate, within the behavioral dimension, studies demonstrate that minority students join racial/ student
organizations because they are identity enhancing and that such increased identity comfort may lead to a greater interest in both cultural and cross-cultural activities (Hurtado et al., 1998). In this study Muslim participants felt religious and spiritual support within the MSA. In addition, other studies (Hurtado, et al., 1998) confirm that participation in racially focused cultural activities and support programs are associated with higher social involvement, and higher use of general support services.

**Muslim Graduate Student Support**

Participants coped with racialization and discrimination on campus through seeking support. Supporting Muslim students helped alleviate the brunt of the challenges Muslim graduate students face through social and religious support.

**Social support.** Social support implies that Muslim students seek support from each other, the MSA or through social entities in their school. For instance, during Boston Marathon bombings in 2013, students talked to each other and comforted each other. MSA provided an essential support to Muslim students on campus via connecting them to friends and faculty who shared the same stresses on campus. Participants reported satisfaction with the social support provided in their school. Participants reported that the school and administrators were supportive in the sense that school administrative staff supported all the events proposed by Muslim graduate students. The cafeteria’s policy makers in their school provided halal meat and opened for long hours in Ramadan to accommodate dietary needs of Muslim students. Accommodating the needs of Muslim students established support and acknowledgment of the Muslim students body on campus.
Religious support. It appears that Muslim graduate students feel empowered because MSA provides a sense of community on campus. MSA facilitates Muslim students involvement. For instance, MSA allowed Muslim students to introduce their practices on campus through cultural awareness events, jumua prayers (Friday prayer), Ramadan iftars (the first meal after fasting all day) and henna parties during Eid (Muslim holiday celebration) where Muslim students hosted discussions and workshops encouraging all students to attend. None of the participants mentioned consulting counselors. This might suggest that Muslim graduate students feel better accommodated within their religious community.

Findings related to the literature. In the literature, (Harper, 2006) confirms that peer support plays an important role in students’ sense of belonging and satisfaction among minority students. Studies affirm that support is crucial in the integration of minority students (Stebleton, et al., 2014). Zumbrunn, et al. (2014), reports that students who feel supported by their professors have stronger sense of belonging, which impacts their engagement and academic success. Studies (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010, Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006; Novera, 2004) on Muslim students call for supporting Muslim students via accommodating their needs and making campuses more diverse. 

Findings related to the Framework. Increasing the structural diversity of an institution is key to improve its climate (Hurtado et al., 1998). Student distribution on campus can contribute to the visibility of ethnic students and that can lead to their social stigma on campus (Steelee, 1992). This study finds that Muslim graduate students reported positive feelings and satisfaction with the support provided in their schools. Muslim graduate students feel supported because of the students’ diversity on campus. Campus racial climate studies confirm that adequate racial/ethnic enrollments can give potential recruits the impression that the campus is
hospitable. The racial/ethnic restructuring of student enrollment can trigger conflict and resistance among groups. However, it creates changes such as development of ethnic studies programs, diverse student organizations, specific academic support programs and multicultural programing (Rolison, 1986; Munoz, 1989). Muslim graduate students are seeking support within their social and religious groups, however, some Muslim graduate students see that schools can create better support systems by attending to specific needs of their diverse communities. For example, Muslim women could benefit from private women only hours in the school gym as well as swimming pool.

Conclusion

The major themes regarding Muslim graduate students experiences after September 11 are: Muslim graduate students’ interaction, Muslim graduate students’ experiences, Muslim graduate students ‘expectations and Muslim graduate students’ support. While this study has some parallels with the literature; it does not only expand on the existing bodies of literature, but also create new discourses (for example, interactions with professors, racialization, positive experiences, and support). In chapter 2, the researcher identified several gaps in the literature. First, the examined literature did not address the experiences of Muslim graduate students in higher education in the United States. This study focused on the experiences of Muslim graduate students to understand how they perceive their campus and how they make sense of their experiences in an American higher education institute. Second, the literature reviewed examining the experiences of Muslim graduate students informed the research on the experiences of Muslim international and Muslim children in public schools. This research targeted American Muslim graduate students in higher education after September 11.
Through the lens of Campus Racial Climate, this study both supports and challenges the framework (Hurtado et al., 1998). The participants had positive experiences because the institutional history of inclusion/exclusion of the research site. A university in the northeast allows entrance of students form different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Campus climate studies (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005; Rochenbach & Mayhew, 2014; Hurtado et al., 2008) confirm that the more diverse the student body the more positive the climate. However, the racialized experiences that only one female participant experienced in the study could be related to the structural diversity of her college, in other words, the number of female Muslim students in the university where this study was conducted could be underrepresented. What contributed to the racialization of the participants who reported racial behavior could be their exposure and visibility as Muslims. Note here, only one participant is wearing hijab in this study. This study challenges Campus Racial Climate framework in the sense that most of the studies on campus climate (Hurtado et al., 1998; Hall & Sandler, 1984; Hutchinson et al., 2008; Rankin & Reason, 2008; Rochenbach & Mayhew, 2014; Milem et al., 2005; Suarez-Belcazar et al., 2003) do not consider religious background. If the model incorporated a religious background dimension it may have captured a key problem that helped explain information about religious discrimination in colleges. This study supports the conclusion that Muslim graduate students who are not exposed as Muslims had positive experience. Racial behavior is present in higher education and manifested through racialization, discrimination and victimizing. However, Muslim students cope with these challenges through the support provided by MSA events and individuals of the Muslim community. In addition, Muslim students reported responsibility in correcting dominant misconceptions by modeling good character, respect and openness to diversity.

Implications for Practice
The results of this study offer crucial information for higher education administration to mitigate the problem of racialization. Administrators, educators and campus leaders need to understand several points. First, interaction of students is very crucial to student success. Universities should encourage Muslim students operate with their MSAs to involve students of different backgrounds and religions. Second, female Muslim students who wear hijab reported racial behavior such as discrimination, bullying and victimizing while male students were labeled ‘terrorist’ because of lack of awareness of the religion of Islam. Administrators and campus leaders need to double effort in building greater cultural and religious awareness, initiating campus wide programs targeting Muslim graduate students and train faculty and staff to appreciate Muslim graduate students’ composed identities. Third, supporting Muslim graduate students on campus and accommodating their religious identity will raise religious coexistence on campus. For instance, encouraging interfaith interactions and dialogues will increase awareness and respect of religions. Fourth, supporting Muslim graduate students stresses through hosting discussions and workshops will educate students about how to cope with harmful behavior on and out of campus (images, languages, acts). Finally, campuses need to develop safe zones and increase cultural awareness among faculty and staff. Safe zones will provide an escape from stresses and racialized experiences while navigating the dominant campus culture. In addition, the findings of this research opened the researcher’s eyes on the importance of building strong identities that can absorb and adjust to their campus culture without losing their Muslim identity.

Implications for Future Research

This study’s findings have created opportunities for future research to build a deeper understanding of Muslim graduate students and racialization. Some recommendations are related
to the methodology. Other recommendations are related to the sample and site of the research.

The first recommendation is a quantitative study to explore whether the themes in this study are similar in a larger group of Muslim students in different institutes and in different States. This study uses a qualitative method and interviewed five Muslim graduate students in a university in the northeast. So, the results cannot generate a general statement about the experiences of Muslim students as a whole.

The second recommendation is a comparative study of the experiences of female Muslim students who wear hijab to that of Muslim female students who do not wear hijab. This study’s results elicited more data on the participants that are Muslim but they are not stereotypically Muslims. Three of the participants are males and two are women among them, only one wears hijab. The researcher believes a further study could pay full attention to physical religious markers that have an impact on how students make sense of their experiences and the challenges that face Muslim students while navigating the dominant campus culture. This specific requirement would elicit rich data on what facilitates and challenges visible Muslim students in higher education and what could be done to enhance their academic and social experiences.

The third recommendation is a study that further examines the effect of interactions on academic achievement. This current study finds that Muslim graduate interactions with friends and faculty shape Muslim students experiences. Therefore, A new study is necessary to further examine the effects of interactions on academic achievement and GPA. In addition, a study that interviews faculty who work with /teach Muslim students in higher education may reveal new information on how faculty interactions and perceptions affect students’ academic achievement and attrition rates in higher education.
The fourth recommendation is a new study that interviews non-Muslim American students to identify the misconceptions that non-Muslim students have toward Muslim students, discover what helps form those misconceptions and, learn how misconceptions affect students’ interaction. Lastly, a study should focus on how Muslim students deal with the negative representations of Muslims and Islam and how media and politics affect Muslim students’ social and academic participation as they navigate their college campus. These new studies are necessary to expand the literature in order to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of Muslim students in higher education.

Limitations

Although this study offers valuable data, it has several limitations: First, this study’s five participants are not sufficient to make a general statement about all Muslim graduate students. Muslim students come in a plethora of ethnicities and nationalities. A study that focused on the experiences of only Arabs or only south Asian students might reveal different findings. Second, this study focused mainly on the experiences of Muslim graduate students. In other words, this study is limited and does not represent all Muslims because a study that focuses on the experiences of Muslim faculty would yield different findings. Third, this study did not examine the impact of Muslim graduate students’ experiences on their academic achievement. The study was limited in the sense that it examined the experiences of Muslim graduate students in relation to their campus climate.

Conclusion

This Research examines the experiences of five Muslim graduate students after September 11 to explain how they experience college and how they make sense of their experiences. The research was guided with the following questions:
1. How do Muslim graduate students make sense of their experiences in college?
   a. In what ways do dominant misconceptions shape Muslim students’ experiences?
   b. In what ways can racial behavior be expressed toward Muslim graduate students?
2. How do Muslim students experience and cope with incidents of racialization in graduate school?

The researcher used Campus Racial Climate as a framework. Established by Hurtado et al., (1999), the framework models four interrelated dimensions: historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion, structural diversity, psychological climate, and behavioral dimension. The use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) helps investigate how the participants make sense of the phenomenon that the study is exploring. The examined literature helped to identify gaps in the literature that call for a study that focuses on the experiences of Muslim graduate students. After recruiting and interviewing five participants, data was transcribed, coded and analyzed for themes. Four themes emerged: Muslim Graduate Student Interactions, Muslim Graduate Student Experiences, Muslim Graduate Expectations and Muslim Graduate Support.

In the context of Muslim Graduate Student Interaction, the researcher identified two subthemes: Friends and Faculty. In the context of Muslim Graduate Students Experiences, the researcher identified two subthemes: Positive Experiences and Racialized Experiences. In the context of Muslim Graduate Student Expectations, the researcher identified one subtheme: Perceptions. In the context of Muslim Graduate Student Support, the researcher identified two subthemes: Social Support and Religious support. Some findings of the study were expected and some unforeseen.

The research found that Muslim graduate students interactions with their Muslim and Non-Muslim friends shape their experiences in college. Muslim graduate students who are not exposed/identifiable as Muslim reported positive experiences while others who were identified
as Muslim (who wore hijab) reported racial behavior on campus. In addition, Muslim graduate students reported being perceived according to misconceptions shaped by the media. To cope with racial behavior on campus and misconceptions of Islam and Muslims, graduate students seek support within their social and religious networks.
Appendix A

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

First Name:
Last Name:
Birthday:  Age:  Gender:  Email Address:
Race/Ethnicity:
Country of Birth:
Academic Major/School:
Graduation Date:
High School Attended and City/State:
Generational Status:
Do you also identify as a Muslim Student?  YES  NO
Interviewee: Date and Time of Interview:

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I will be asking you questions about how your college experiences are influenced by your religious background. I anticipate the interview will take approximately one hour or two. Although this interview will be recorded, the information I gather will be kept confidential. You may review these audio files and request that all or any portion of the tapes that includes your participation be destroyed. Your participation is totally voluntary. You may choose to change your mind about your participation in this interview and you may refuse to answer any particular question during the interview with no adverse effects.

Interview Questions:

Part One

1. Tell me a little about yourself.
   a. What was your high school experience like?
   b. Tell me about your friends and peer groups previous to college?
   c. How did you decide you wanted to attend college?
d. Why did you choose this college? What other colleges and universities did you apply to?

2. What is like being a college student?
   a. Tell me about your classes?
   b. What is the student life like at your college?
   c. What are you involved in? How did you get involved? Why did you get involved?

3. What attracted you about the college?
   a. How has your experience been since you have come to campus?
   b. What is it like living in the residence halls?

4. Tell me about your experiences with different people, offices, and organizations on campus.
   a. In what ways do you feel connected on campus? How do you define your community?
   b. How is your relationship with faculty?
      i. What do you feel are some expectations that faculty have from you?
   c. What about other students on campus?
      i. How has your experience been with classmates?
   d. What about administrators at school? (Ex: Academic Advisors)

Part Two:

5. What is it like being a Muslim on campus?
   a. Tell me about being a Muslim student on campus.
   b. Have you ever felt that you were treated differently because of your religious background?
      i. Is this the first time you have been a minority in a classroom or school? What is that like for you?

6. What do you think is the general campus attitude is toward Muslim students?
   a. How is this conveyed or communicated?
   b. How did these impressions impact the way you interacted with other students? Faculty? Staff?
c. How does this affect your academic and goals as a student?
   i. How about your social goals and satisfaction?

7. Has there ever been a time where you felt uncomfortable as a Muslim student on campus? In a class? In a social setting on campus?

8. Can you describe a time where you felt that you were unwelcome on campus?
   a. Are there times when you felt misunderstood? How was that?

9. What kinds of expectations do you have for yourself? Any personal goals?
   a. What areas of school do you feel you are excelling in?
   b. What are your plans for next year?

10. What things are you looking forward to while you are in college?
Appendix B

Template 1  Format for Signed Informed Consent Document
Please modify the following information as necessary.

Northeastern University, Doctor of Education Program
Name of Investigator: Dr. Ron Brown Student Researcher: Imane Naji Amrani
Title of Project: Racialization: The experiences of Graduate Muslim Students after September 11

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to be in this study because you:
1. Are An American born Muslim graduate student
2. You are enrolled in graduate school for more than one year
3. Experienced being treated differently because of your religious background
4. Experiences incidents of being treated differently because you are Muslim

Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of this research is to better understand the racialized experiences of students in higher education. If you decide to take part in this study, we ask you to participate in two separate interviews and answer questions about your life background and experience as a Muslim college student. The second interview seeks to understand what meanings your experience holds for you.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to participate in two separate interviews and answer questions about your lived experience as a college student. The first interview focuses on your life background and experience as a Muslim student. The second interview seeks to understand what meanings your experience holds for you.
Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?

You will be interviewed at a time and place that is convenient for you. The first interview will take 1 hour and 30 minutes and the second interview will be 45 minutes long.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part of this study.

Will I benefit by being in this research?

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, your answers may help us learn more about racialization in college/higher education and Muslim students’ experiences.

Who will see the information about me?

Your identity as a participant in this study will not be shared with anyone.

Your identity will be changed and coded immediately when the researcher starts to transcribe the interview. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the data. Your contact information sheet, informed consent form, and audio files will be stored in a secured place to guard against your identity being revealed.

The data collected from this study will be stored on the researcher’s password-protected personal computer. The data will be destroyed when the data analysis is complete.

If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?

The participant’s option is to not participate if they decide not to.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?

The interview will be suspended immediately and you may inform the researcher that you do not want to continue your participation anymore.

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as a student.
**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**

Please feel free to call Imane Naji Amrani at 603-264-4063 or e-mail at Najiamrani,i@husky.neu.edu. Imane Naji Amrani is mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact the Principal Investigator Dr. Ron Brown at 617-435-8166 or ron.brown1@neu.edu.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**

There will be no payments.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**

You may need to pay for your transportation and parking.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**

You must be at least 18 years old to participate unless your parent or guardian gives written permission.

**I agree to [have my child] take part in this research.**

-------------------------------------------------  
Signature of person [parent] agreeing to take part  Date

-------------------------------------------------  
Printed name of person above

-------------------------------------------------  
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent  Date

-------------------------------------------------  
Printed name of person above
Depending upon the nature of your research, you may also be required to provide information about one or more of the following if it is applicable:

1. A statement that the particular treatment or procedure may involve risks to the subject (or to the embryo or fetus, if the subject is or may become pregnant) which are currently unforeseeable.
2. Anticipated circumstances under which the subject’s participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the subject’s consent.
3. Any additional costs to the subject that may result from participation in the research.
4. The consequences of a subject’s decision to withdraw from the research and procedures for orderly termination of participation by the subject.
5. A statement that significant new finding(s) developed during the course of the research which may be related to the subject’s willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject.
6. The approximate number of subjects involved in the study.
Appendix C

Recruiting e-mail

To interested participants:

My Name is Imane Naji Amrani and I am a doctoral student in the Doctor of Education program at Northeastern University.

I would like to invite you to take part in my doctoral study. The purpose of the study is to gain insights into your college experience as a Muslim graduate student. I am inviting you because I am looking for someone like you who is American born, self identifies as Muslim, attends college in the U.S. for more than one year and feels being treated differently because you are Muslim.

If you fit the criteria and are interested, you will be asked to participate in two separate interviews. The first interview will be 1 hour and 30 minutes long and the second interview will be 45 minutes long. The second interview will be conducted approximately two weeks after the first interview. The first interview focuses on your background and your lived experiences as a Muslim student and the second interview focuses on meanings your experiences hold for you. All interviews will be recorded with your permission.

The decision to participate in the study is up to you. You do not have to participate if you do not want to.

Note: Your identity and name will be masked in the study.

If you agree to participate, you may e-mail me at Najiamrani.i@husky.neu.edu or call me at 603-264-4063. Thank you for your consideration to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Imane Naji Amrani
References

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