ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE YOUNG MUSLIM AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Arts in Sociology

Middle Tennessee State University
August 2016

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To my father and my biggest supporter. He taught me importance of getting an education, and that it is something no one can ever take away from me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to gain a better understanding of how young Muslim Americans describe their cross-cultural experiences with Islamophobia, and how their experiences shape their social identities and coping strategies. The study extends the pilot study and taxonomy of Nadal et al. (2012) using a phenomenological research design and focus group interviews to describe the subjective perceptions and lived experiences of young adult Muslim Americans. The study provides detailed descriptions of the experiences, perceptions, and sense of belonging of young Muslim Americans coming of age within a changing historical and social context. Confirming and extending earlier research findings reveal how participants describe distinctive aspects of the Muslim identity, perceptions of lack of public awareness of the Islamic culture, and experiences of negative repercussions from the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States.

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INTRODUCTION

More than ten years have passed since the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States (US). Despite the passage of time many Muslim Americans report experiencing discrimination and suspicion, and many admit to struggling to find their identity when facing verbal attacks for their religious and ethnic persuasion.   In this study I use a phenomenological design to describe the meaning of the lived experiences of Muslim Americans in the "post 9/11 era." Utilizing focus groups in three states in the southern region of the US I investigated the lived experiences of young adult Muslim Americans allowing them to share their subjective experiences and tell their stories in their own voices. The objective of this research was to gain a better understanding of perceptions of cross-cultural experiences with Islamophobia, and how these experiences shape social identities and coping strategies.   In particular, this study replicates and extends the pilot study of Nadal et al. (2012) giving voice to Muslim American participants by providing detailed descriptions of the sense of belonging and experiences shared in common within a changing historical and social context since September 11, 2001.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND MUSLIM AMERICAN EXPERIENCE POST-911

Anti-Muslim sentiment in the global West has sometimes been described as a growing sense of fear popularly labeled "Islamophobia," particularly relative to the widely publicized terrorist acts of extremist radical groups in the Middle East. Policy makers and researchers define the term differently, but its overall meaning is described as an embellished fear, abhorrence, and hostility towards Islam and its followers.

Islamophobia is spread through negative stereotypes that result in prejudicial perceptions, discriminatory behaviors, and often ostracism and exclusion of Muslims from full participation in political, social, and civic life (Ali et al. 2011).

According to Gallup reports (2010) one-half of a national sample of US Protestants, Mormons, Muslims, Jews, and Catholics agreed that Americans are prejudiced towards Muslim Americans. Further, 66% of Muslims and Jews polled indicated that Americans are generally prejudiced towards Muslims living in the US. Muslims polled were 48% more likely to say that they had experienced "racial or religious discrimination in the past" than Americans of other religious groups. Muslims were more than twice as likely as US Catholics, Jews, and Protestants to state they had experienced discrimination in the last year. Symptoms of Islamophobia included seeing Muslims as not loyal to the US, avoiding Muslims as neighbors, and voicing prejudice towards Muslims.

Feelings of anti-Muslim sentiment do not only affect Americans who self-identify as Muslims (Gallup 2015). Globally, a substantial proportion of Muslims report not feeling welcomed or respected by people in the West. To look further into the relevance of Islamophobia, Gallup analyses provide an examination of prejudice against Islam and Muslims in several different countries around the world. In the US and Canada, Gallup (2015) reported that 48% of Canadians and 52% of Americans polled agreed, "Western societies do not respect Muslim societies." Many Muslims attribute this lack of respect to differing religious and political interests.

Although Islamophobia existed prior to September 11, the phenomenon gained momentum and notoriety since the attacks. Gallup (2015) reported that the news media

often sensationalized Muslim-oriented terrorism, making it appear much more commonplace than it really is, and that contrary to this perception Muslim Americans are the largest single source of primary information to authorities in exposing and preventing potential terrorist plots (Kurzman 2011).

The book *Homeland Insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American Experience after 9/11* details an ethnographic study of Arab Muslim Americans' experiences in metropolitan Chicago. Through in-depth oral history interviewing this study provides a thought provoking account of the feelings of insecurity Muslim Americans express post September 11, 2001. "Interviewees' sentiments about homeland insecurity referred to a collective status and were expressed to an equal degree by the American-born and foreign-born Arab Muslims interviewed in this study: whether the United States was a native or adopted homeland, it has ceased to be a place where members of these communities felt safe and protected" (Cainkar 2009: 3). Of Muslims interviewed, 46% admitted to living in a climate of harassment (including verbal harassment); 53% reported experiencing discrimination; and 39% spoke of workplace discrimination." An interesting claim made by the study participants was that there were two positive social changes after the September 11 attacks including, "a growing desire for knowledge among the American public and a wake-up call for Arab and Muslim Americans" (p. 14). The feeling of being judged because of their Islamic faith and ethnic background created a feeling of insecurity among participants in the study in Chicago. The participants also admitted to altering some daily life behaviors and sharing accounts of the violent public responses experienced after September 11. Cainkar (2009:189) notes that, "in a social context replete with stereotypes, negative representation, and the

cultivation of hate, safety lies in being known and in having relationships with persons outside the groups, while isolation brings on greater vulnerability." Cainkar concludes that the road ahead will not be smooth for Muslim Americans as long as arguments that Muslims and Arabs are profoundly different than "us" are tolerated socially and continue to be upheld in the American culture.

The real experiences of American Muslims defy oversimplified generalizations and stereotypical typifications. Moezzi (2007) notes, for instance, that contrary to stereotypes, living as a Muslim is a personal experience that comes with tremendous individual responsibility. He argues that it is inappropriate to lump all Muslims into a negative and constricted stereotype or to generalize the actions of a select few Muslims to Islam as a whole. He points out that the actions of a few extremists cannot be blamed on a religion as a whole because individuals are accountable for their own actions. Such accountability cannot and should not be relocated to the entire community of believers.

The Effects of Stigma

Research on Islamophobic sentiments has focused on the effects of religious stigma on Muslims living in Western countries (Major and O'Brien 2005). Stigma is a characteristic that widely discredits an individual, reducing her or him from a complete and typical person to a tainted one (Goffman 1963). This definition implies that when individuals are stigmatized they are believed to possess attributes that make them different and this leads them to be devalued by others. What is most important to know about stigma is that it does not just affect a particular individual—it is context-specific and relationship-specific (Major and O'Brien 2005).

Major and O'Brien (2005) examined the relationship between the ensuing responses of Muslim Americans and perceptions of stigma. A major finding revealed how stigma-related threats create negative understandings and sentiments; these may lead to members of the group misidentifying or disguising their group identity. According to a research report by Khan (2014) on perceptions of stigma as a predictor of Muslim American responses to September 11, "responses to self-consciousness and feelings of threat reflect a collective awareness of how the group is seen by others" (p. 112). Participants in the study reported low rates of identity concealment or shame, but reported awareness of how they are perceived as a stigmatized group. Most participants did not adopt the outsider perceptions of their group nor did they attempt to distance themselves from the stigmatized group despite awareness of being discredited (Kahn 2014).

Refutations of Racism in the Muslim Community

A common notion is that the racism Muslim minorities face is not taken as seriously and do not receive the same amount of sympathy as that of other religious minorities such as the Jewish community in Europe. Meer and Modood (2009) assert that while Muslims continue to be on the receiving end of discrimination, their status as victims of racism is often challenged or rejected. The article explores possible reasons for the lack of sympathy that Muslims are subject to and the prejudicial treatment by others. One possible explanation is the assumption that gendered, sexual, and racial identities are ascribed, but being Muslim is a choice. Therefore, Muslims do not require the same kind of legal protections that are granted to other kinds of identities (Meer and Modood 2009). Of course such views fail to appreciate that cultural and religious beliefs are inherited by

children and are not made as a direct choice. In Western societies, diversity of ethnic identity is more accepted than religious diversity, particularly non-Christian based religions. Finally, Islamophobia can be viewed as operative when individuals struggle to sympathize with a minority group that is believed to be disloyal because of their association with terrorism. When racism is filtered through views of disloyalty it is more likely to lead to an assessment of Muslims as a threat rather than as a marginalized group subjected to increasingly malicious discourses of racialization (Meer and Modood 2009). Each of the previously mentioned findings invites additional study and accentuates the need for a more profound analysis of anti-Muslim discourse.

Patricia Hill Collins' idea of the outsider-within as classically applied to black feminist thought (1990, 2004) can also be used to describe the experiences of other minorities like Muslim Americans in contemporary times. The participants in Nadal's (2012) study for instance reported feeling like an alien in their own land or what may be called an "outsider within." The term outsider-within "describes the social locations or border spaces occupied by groups of unequal power" (1998:5). These locations are comprised of many contradictions for the individuals who occupy them. On the surface it appears that individuals in these distinctive locations are members of the dominant group sharing basic qualifications for, and apparent rights of, member standing such as being American-born. Yet, members existing simultaneously in the social borders of multiple cultures may not experience the benefits that are offered to the dominant group members (Ryan 2007). While Muslim Americans born and raised in the US are allotted the same rights as other Americans, they are nonetheless often treated like foreigners. An individual's experience of disempowerment can intersect with race and gender as well.

Being an outsider-within does not solely stem from being a member of a religious minority. The intersectionality that goes into the identity of a Muslim American led me to believe that even though many Muslim Americans report having felt like an "outsider within" at some point in their lives it does not mean Muslim Americans as a group necessarily occupy a collective social location.

While no one experience for a Muslim American is exactly the same there are nonetheless some recurring themes in the literature. A dual identity is often cited by a plurality of participants in research on Muslim Americans, which means they are simultaneously identifying with two cultures (Kabir 2012). W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of "double consciousness" can be utilized to elaborate on the recurring theme of the dual identity in previous literature. Double consciousness is described as the struggle to have one unified identity due to the perception of feeling as though one's identity is divided into multiple parts (Du Bois 1903). This concept was initially used to describe race relations in the US. Du Bois explained that African Americans live in a society that has in the past devalued and repressed them; so to unify their American identity with their black (African) identity is no simple task. Double Consciousness makes African Americans view themselves from their own distinct perspective, and it also forces them to see themselves as they might be observed and judged by the outside or the dominant group. This is what Du Bois described as the sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of others: "It is an unusual sensation, the double-consciousness, this sense of constantly looking at one's self through another's eyes, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in pity and contempt" (p.351). The sense of double consciousness a Muslim American feels is similar to the dual identity struggle African Americans have

experienced, and as a result, Muslim Americans can suffer from a damaged self-image and a sense of not belonging. The attempt to merge cultures can be unsuccessful, and some Muslim Americans find themselves in a tug of war over whether they should assimilate fully into the American culture or hold on to the cultural practices of their parent's upbringing that have been passed down to them. Some argue that the US is now a post-racial society, but the concept of double consciousness is still relevant. The internalization of anti-Muslim sentiment from Western societies shapes the Muslim American experience. There are stereotypes perpetuated by the mainstream media that shape perceptions Americans have of Muslims, and the perceptions Muslims have of themselves. Inequalities based on religion and race make it difficult for Muslim Americans to reconcile their identities as American and Muslim (Kabir 2012).

Muslim Americans are also frequently the targets of various forms of microaggressions. The term "racial microaggressions" refers to "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put downs' (Pierce et al. 1978:66). Microaggressions are typically delivered unconsciously in the form of dismissive glances, subtle snubs, tones, and gestures. While the exchanges can be subtle they send harmful and demeaning messages to members of marginalized racial groups (Nadal 2011; Sue 2010). Microaggressions often leave targets feeling confused, angry, and contemplating whether race was involved in the interaction. Some targets also struggle with the decision regarding whether or not to confront the perpetrator. Previous research on racial microaggressions has found that being on the receiving end of racial microaggressions can be physically and psychologically wearing, usually resulting in increased levels of stress and poor mental health (Nadal et al. 2011). Despite the increase

in the literature on microaggressions and their impact on people of color, women, LGBT individuals, and disabled individuals, it remains unknown whether Muslim Americans experiencing microaggressions have comparable reactions and experiences.

Among the relatively few empirical studies on the Muslim community's experience post September 11, the study of Nadal and colleagues (2012) was particularly useful for operationalizing the forms of microaggressions that shape social interactions that reveal Islomaphobia. Few studies specifically examined the subjective perspectives and experiences of Muslim Americans and the Nadal et al. study (2012) was based on a limited sample of two focus groups and only 10 participants. To identify the types of microaggressions that are experienced by religious minority groups Nadal et al. (2010) developed a theoretical taxonomy that includes a number of examples focusing on Islamophobic microaggressions toward Muslims. These authors state that while there are many types of microaggressions based on religion, it is challenging to absolutely attribute certain discriminatory behavior to religious prejudice because there is always the chance that ethnic or racial prejudice is also involved. Thus, the taxonomy provides key categories of microaggressions that are primarily based on religion and are likely independent of gender, race, ethnicity, or other variables. A substantial literature on microaggressions towards other groups utilizes similar taxonomies. However, Nadal and colleagues' taxonomy of religious microaggressions has not yet been fully examined empirically (Nadal et al. 2012). This work replicates and extends the earlier study by Nadal and colleagues and provides additional qualitative evidence for the validity of the taxonomy developed to further illuminate the social interactions based in a context of

Islomaphobia. This work also seeks to extend understanding of the coping strategies used to address Islomaphobia in daily interactions.

Muslim American Responses to Islamophobia

When a Muslim American is confronted with Islamophobia there are various ways they have responded to the negative experiences. Religious practices have increased following the September 11 attacks such as reading religious texts, more frequent attendance of mosques, fasting, and praying (Abu-Raiya et al. 2011). Muslims have reported a deepening of faith and forgiveness of others as well as forging a greater tolerance as forms of coping with the rise of Islamophobia (Abu-Ras and Abu-Bader 2008). Others report initiating and participating in interfaith dialogues, utilizing the media to improve understanding of Islam to the public, or getting more involved politically (Barkdull et al. 2011).

Recently, theories have pointed to a relationship between the reactions of Muslims after September 11 and their wellbeing. Abu-Raiya et al. (2011) states that Muslims carry out religious and non-religious coping strategies, including both increasing isolation or contrarily reaching out to others. Muslims who opt to isolate themselves experienced depression and anger at a higher level than individuals who reached out to others for support. In contrast to those choosing isolation, Muslims choosing to reach out and educate others about Islam, joining support groups, and participating in interfaith conversations were more likely to show signs of post-traumatic growth after the terror attacks in 2001 (Abu-Raiya et al. 2011).

Abu-Raiya et al. (2011) contend that religious coping strategies such as forming a spiritual connection with others, strengthening one's relationship with God, and a deepening of beliefs in a transcendent meaning were linked to post-traumatic growth. Overall, these studies imply that coping strategies have a significant impact on the wellbeing of Muslim Americans. Fischer et al. (2010) make an important point, however, stating that while previous research has concentrated on individual coping methods, little is known about collective-based strategies. Their research revealed that Muslims typically choose interpersonal, collective coping strategies. The importance of being involved in the Muslim community and having a strong Islamic influence in life contributes greatly to a religious identity among Muslim Americans, and as a result has shaped the way Muslims cope with sorrow and stress. Fischer et al. (2010) also found that coping strategies that are individually oriented tend to neglect the importance of religious community and family decision-making as well social ties.

Muslim Americans have experienced judgment, shame, microaggressions, and they have struggled to merge their Muslim and American identities. It is my objective that through my research I will be able to share the experiences of young Muslim Americans as well as the issues and challenges they have had to face as a result of living in the US as a Muslim in a "post-September 11" society. It is my goal to add to greater awareness of this struggle in hopes of aiding in social processes that help break down some of the stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslim Americans. The objective of this research is to gain a better understanding of cross-cultural interactions and how Muslim Americans describe their struggles, coping strategies, and social and personal identities. This research adds to other studies I reviewed by including the experiences of

Muslim American youth. It is similar to previous research in that the participants in this study also experienced the religious microaggressions that were commonly experienced by participants in previous studies.

<center>METHODOLOGY</center>

Research Design

I employed a phenomenological research design for this study. Creswell (1998) states that a phenomenological design "describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon" (p. 51).   This approach is used in order to describe the lived experiences for young adult Muslim Americans who have come of age in the post September 11 era. The study explores 1) the experiences of Muslim Americans in a time of constant negativity towards their ethnic beliefs, 2) how Muslim Americans cope with misconceptions and prejudicial treatment, and 3) how they think about their personal and social identities. Using a phenomenological research method has many benefits. One major benefit is it provides a thorough and detailed description of human experiences. Another benefit is that research findings are grounded in the qualitative accounts and lived experiences of research participants thus strengthening the validity of the results.

I chose to conduct focus group interviews with participants in the southern region of Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. I conducted research in the Middle Tennessee region because I am based in Murfreesboro, and I thought it was crucial to include the experiences of young Muslims in the state in which I was residing. In 2010, the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro revealed plans to expand and build a larger mosque on a15-acre

field, not far from a Baptist church. A sign was placed on the property that read, "Future Site of the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro." Days after the sign was put up the property was vandalized and the sign was destroyed. A new sign was put up only to be vandalized again, but this time the sign was painted with the words "not welcome" across it. As the mosque was being built anti-Muslim sentiments heightened and the vandalism went from petty to felonious. Gasoline was poured around the property and a fire was set to construction equipment and the land. Since this display of Islamophobia occurred where I currently live, I wanted to hear the views of young Muslims who lived through this experience. Although I was not able to conduct research in Murfreesboro, I was granted access to communities in Nashville. Hence, I was able to hear from individuals who lived close by when this incident took place. Research conducted in the neighboring states of Georgia occurred in the Atlanta area and in Alabama near the local mosque of my childhood.

I used informal word-of-mouth recruitment having participants I initially met through focus groups set me up with new contacts at various mosques in the areas. I was particularly interested in gathering information among young Muslim Americans in the Southern region of the US, both because it was convenient, and due to the lack of previous literature on the experiences of Muslim Americans in the South.

Recruitment and Data Collection

To recruit participants for this study, first, I addressed a large group of Muslims at the Southeast Region of the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) at the 21st Annual Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. Once I explained to them the nature of my research study, I was able to recruit several participants. Second, I contacted various Imams

(leaders of Islamic centers) with the help of my father who has many contacts at mosques in the Southeast region. The Imams provided me with the contact information of individuals they believed could help me recruit participants and help organize focus groups at their mosques. If the individuals I spoke with showed interest in participating in my study, I emailed the relevant documents (request/recruitment letter, list of questions, and informed consent forms). Finally, I employed a snowball sample technique, which involves study subjects recruiting future participants from among their acquaintances.

Participation in this study was voluntary. All the participants signed inform consent forms. I let participants know the information I obtained in the focus group would be used in a thesis project, but that they would not be personally identified. I told them that for ethical reasons I needed to maintain confidentiality and give them pseudonyms. As a fellow Muslim American I am an insider member of this community. I feel privileged to have conducted research and to have been welcomed by the various Muslim communities with whom I conducted focus groups. As an outsider (a researcher), I aimed for objectivity and to move beyond my biases regarding the issues discussed in this study. Hence, I had a dual role as a researcher: on the one hand my critical and theoretical interest as a researcher positioned me as an outsider; on the other hand, as a Muslim studying Muslims I was an insider who feels passionately about these issues.

Participants are mostly comprised of second-generation Muslims whose identities may be in transition. For these reasons, I thought it would be important to study the second generation's views on their sense of belonging and identity. Ultimately I hope that this work can contribute to the research literature and impact public perceptions.

I conducted 6 focus groups with a total of 26 participants, including 13 males and 13 females, who self-identify as Muslim Americans. Focus groups ranged in size from 3 to 10 participants. Because focus groups are meticulously planned in a way to yield perceptions on an area of interest in a non-threatening setting, they share a specific type of composition, size, purpose, and procedures. In particular, the participants were selected because they shared characteristics that relate to the topic of the focus group (Krueger 1994). The participants for the focus groups I conducted were selected based on their relationship and relevance to the study—American born, between the ages of 18 and 30, and who classified themselves as a practicing Muslim. I recruited participants by word of mouth snowball sampling. I obtained signed written consent from each participant for the purpose of allowing me to use data collected in the audio recorded focus groups for my thesis. Appendix A provides a summary of the focus group interview questions that guided the discussions. The focus groups were recorded using an audio tape recording device. The duration of each individual focus group lasted anywhere from approximately sixty to ninety minutes. When transcribing the data, names were not recorded to ensure anonymity. I checked the transcripts for accuracy prior to data analysis. To qualitatively analyze the data I reviewed transcripts for major themes. I identified what I believed to be key concepts or themes as the initial coding categories. After carefully reviewing the transcripts I was able to pull out several themes that revealed 5 of the 6 religious microaggressions from the Nadal et al. (2010, 2012) taxonomy as experienced by the participants. Major themes as reflected in the Nadal et al. taxonomy included: Endorsing Religious Stereotypes of Muslims as Terrorists, Pathology of the Muslim Religion, Assumption of Religious Homogeneity, Islamophobic

Language, and Alien in One's Own Land. In response to the microaggression experiences, I also observed that the participants carried out a variety of coping strategies that varied from behavioral changes to defending Islam. I will discuss the various types of coping strategies that were employed by participants in further detail in my findings portion in this study. Direct quotes illustrating the themes and coping strategies are provided.

FINDINGS

Respondents from each of the focus groups reported experiencing both covert and overt discrimination at some point in their lives. The discriminatory and prejudicial treatment illustrated through the stories shared with their focus group peers resonated with the themes identified in the Nadal et al. (2010) taxonomy.

Endorsing Religious Stereotypes of Muslims as Terrorists

When individuals who are not Muslims make assumptions that all Muslims are associated with terrorism, it sends a message that followers of Islam are violent individuals that cannot be trusted. When this overt discrimination takes place it can be harmful to Muslims because it is spreading the wrong idea about the religion of Islam. Participants overwhelmingly shared personal experiences that validated this theme, with many sharing experiences that were clearly Islamophobic. For example, a participant described an incident she had with a customer while working at the Apple store: "The customer says to me, 'You're Muslim aren't you?' I said, 'Yes.' And he said, 'How are you still alive?' I said, 'Excuse me?' He said, 'Your people strap bombs to their bodies and kill my people.'"

An example of covert discrimination that relates to this theme occurred while a participant was at the airport. He recalls his experience when travelling,

> I remember being at JFK airport coming from a soccer tournament, and I had a bulky backpack. You know, it had my ball, cleats, and shin guards in it. The security man stopped and asked 'what's in the backpack? Why is it so heavy?' I asked, 'why?' And he yelled out for assistance, 'Hah, we got a Mohammad with a backpack over here!'

The security guard at the airport did not mention the participant's background during that interaction or his stereotypes of Muslims as terrorists, but he was stopped because his features deviate from Caucasian or typical American features. While the first example was overt, the second example can be recognized as a microaggression because of its lack of mentioning anything related to the participant's religion. Participants stated that this stereotyping has been around for a long time, but that after September 11 it has become more obvious. The following story similarly supports the experience of aggressive treatment.

> So before 9/11 happened, like a month before, school hadn't started yet. So my family went to visit family in Pakistan.   When we came back home after it happened my dad took my mom's car to get fixed at the mechanic. When he dropped it off the man working said, 'it's funny how you leave the country right before the attacks.' As if my dad had something to do with it.

Another participant reported a similar experience of being held responsible for the actions of extremists, and becoming the brunt of joking among his peers. He explains,

> I didn't go to school or work the day of the Boston Marathon bombing. When I went to school the next day a kid asked where I was yesterday. Another said, 'oh he was in Boston,' and the class laughed.

This overt form of discrimination communicates the false and denigrating messages about Muslims and how they cannot be trusted and may be associated with terrorism.

Abnormality of the Muslim Religion

This theme describes the conscious and at times unconscious belief that

something is not right or abnormal with someone who practices a different religion,

preceding behaviors that convey maltreatment, punishment, or judgment (Nada et al.

2010). For female participants, this theme came up when they discussed the judgmental

treatment they experienced when they wore their hijab. For example, a participant

described a time her boss at work made her feel uncomfortable about her appearance:

> A boss I had at an optometrist's office a few years ago and the doctor told me that
> if I would take off my head cover I would have a lot more opportunities within the
> business and this country.

The comments made to this participant allude to the belief that traditional Muslim

garments are abnormal. Participants described how they believe that they are often

treated differently and as a result have altered parts of their Muslim identity or outer

appearance. For example, a participant shared that she no longer wears a hijab because

she did not like the way she was being treated:

> I actually wore a hijab for 4-5 years, and I recently stopped wearing it. Doing that
> was irritating. I have to continuously defend who I am, and I just got tired of it.
> When I'm not wearing a hijab and talking to people I feel like I can talk to them
> on the same level, and they are not looking at me as an 'other' and it's more of an
> effective conversation.

Because the participant felt that in the past she was mistreated and made to feel as if she

is not normal, she chose to prevent microaggressions by no longer wearing a hijab even

though she found having to change her practices unfair. Some participants also admitted

to not using their given name as a way to blend in:

> I used to put my name on applications, and it seemed like I rarely got called in for
> an interview. I started putting my middle name, which is Adam on them, and then
> I would get more callbacks.

Behavioral changes such as no longer wearing religious garments and not using their Arabic name in class or at work were common strategies employed by participants to avoid microaggressions.

Islamophobic Language

This theme involves interactions where individuals using derogatory and hurtful language make fun of or criticize a religion. This type of discriminatory microaggression can vary based on an individual's "foreign" look, skin color, and gender. Statements pertaining to this theme were represented in several focus groups. For instance, one participant recounted,

> I remember showing someone a device at work, and we were talking about its features and the customer makes the comment, 'I don't think it's cool that this device can track location considering your people can track down and kill my people.' I have had about 4 or 5 incidences happen to me like that.

In a similar vein, another participant recalled, "My mom and I have been followed in Costco by a man throughout the store. He was coming up behind us and saying mean things like, 'what are you doing here? Go back to your country.'" And another participant remembers aloud, "In school kids would call us 'Mohammad' or 'Aladdin' and say things like, 'where's your magic carpet?' or 'Did you forget your turban?'"

A participant who shared an experience with a classmate when she was an adolescent depicted another example stating, "When Osama Bin Laden was finally caught someone asked me if I was sad about it. I asked him 'why would I be sad?' He said, 'because he was your uncle and he's been captured.'"

Participants admitted to feeling hurt and offended by incidences that involved Islamophobic language, and almost every participant shared incidences of experiencing

Islamophobia at some point in their lives. For example, a common belief was that the death of Osama Bin Laden would hinder the growth of Islamophobia, and change the public's image of Muslims, but that hasn't been the case. Many Muslims including the participants in this study have experienced these types of microaggressions in the years following the capture of Al Qaeda's leader. In fact, two months after his death the Religious News Service stated that anti-Muslim sentiment had grown. Additionally, a report by CNN stated that fifty percent of Americans would not be comfortable with a woman wearing a hijab, a Muslim praying in public, or a mosque being built in their neighborhood (Lean 2012). This could stem from the belief that all Muslims are the same, and at their core are "bad people."

Assumption of Religious Homogeneity

When individuals assume that all Muslims share the same religious practices, personal beliefs, and experiences, they are making the judgment that there are no differences between members of certain groups and that an entire religious population is inherently homogeneous. Assuming religious uniformity is distinct from stereotyping in that an individual may be informed of a particular religious practice, but presumes: (a) there is no room for change to the tradition or practice, or (b) every single member of the group engages in a behavior (Nadal et al. 2012). Several participants shared this type of experience. One woman stated, for example:

> In college I had an experience with a woman who had spent some time in Afghanistan. She was surprised my parents let me leave the city to go away to university. She said my parents must be very liberal. I said, 'No my parents actually follow religious teachings, and education is an important aspect. Children are encouraged to seek education.' She said, 'What about the girl who got shot for standing up for the educational rights on girls?' It's frustrating that they don't

understand that those cases are rare and the individuals that commit those heinous acts are not good representations of Islam.

Regarding education, another participant chimed in,

Girls not being able to go to school is more of a cultural thing than a religious thing. A lot of Pakistani, Indian, and South Asian cultures do that. Those places purposely create gender differences, which is not what Islam promotes. People mix culture and religion together, and when you do that people think that's what Islam is.

In this interaction, the woman made the assumption that all Muslims are strict when it comes to how they raise their daughters and that they do not support the schooling of girls. Such a statement also reiterates the stereotype that all Muslims are the same, while also upholding the idea that their practices are not acceptable in American society.

Alien in Own Country

A number of participants in this study discussed how on several occasions they experienced being treated like a foreigner, despite being born and raised in the US. This can be described as a microaggression that symbolizes the assumption that all Muslims are foreign-born and do not belong in America. Examples of this theme occurred in every focus group I facilitated. Participants were often asked questions like "What are you?" or "Where are you from?" and "Where were you born?" Others described remarks made about their English speaking abilities when meeting someone new. Participants shared that they were often confused as to whether the comments were made with good intentions that were meant to express interest in them, or perceptions that they were not American. Typically, the meaning interpreted by recipients was that they felt "less than," "different," or as not "real" Americans. One participant shared an experience he

had while trying to get his driver's license stating, "the man that worked at the DMV said, 'You need to go to Birmingham because we don't process internationals in Jacksonville,' even after I told him I was an American." Another participant reflects on an incident she had at work, stating "at my previous job I was the only Muslim and I wore the hijab. I felt like they thought I was an immigrant. They didn't believe I was an American, so I felt like I got treated like I was 'the other.' It was really frustrating for me sometimes."

Another participant discussed her experiences growing up as a black female Muslim:

> I moved to a school where there were no African-Americans. It was just different and the kids and teachers either couldn't or wouldn't say my name right. When I was 13 I started wearing the hijab and then it became, 'I can't say your name and you look different.' 'You're an alien, you don't belong here' [was] how I felt I was being treated. I remember my mother telling me 'when you are older and in the real world you are going to have to work twice as hard because you already have three strikes against you. You are black, Muslim, and a female.' That always stuck with me. I thought to myself 'why can I not just be seen as human and live like everyone else?'

These incidences occur quite frequently according to participants, and when I asked them why they believe Muslim Americans are seen as outsiders within their own country an overwhelming majority of participants place blame on the media.

The Media's Role in Islamophobia

Prior to the September 11, media coverage of Muslim countries and Muslims was mostly negative (Ali and Khalid 2008). Tenor (2010) examined the US media coverage of Islam and Muslims from January to August 2010. The study concluded that major networks aired virtually no positive stories for Muslims outside or within the US. Top issues that were discussed on the news about Muslims involved domestic security,

international conflicts, and terrorism. Anti-Muslim sentiment was highly prevalent in 2010 during the controversy that surrounded the building of a mosque in New York City just blocks from Ground Zero (Hernandez 2010). Conservative politicians who publicly share their contempt for Muslims have intensified negative attitudes. For example, in 2010, Juan Williams who at the time worked for National Public Radio (NPR) did a guest spot on Fox News' The Bill O'Reilly show. On the show he said, "When I get on a plane, I got to tell you, if I see people who are in Muslim garb and I think, you know, they are identifying themselves first and foremost as Muslims. I get worried. I get nervous" (Los Angeles Times 2010). Such remarks perpetuate and confirm preexisting, deeply anti-Muslim media bias. In fact, Fox news correspondents used the phrases "extremist Islam" or "radical Islam" 107 times in three months during broadcasts (Seitz-Wald 2011).

When I asked participants what they believe is responsible for the perpetuation of Islamophobia the vast majority claim the media is in part responsible. One participant noted, "At my previous job co-workers would bring up news stories when I was around knowing I am a Muslim and give me a certain look. It made me uncomfortable as if they associate me with that behavior." Another participant stated, "The way ISIS is portrayed in the media isn't good. Yes those groups are bad, and I want people to know they are bad, but don't say they are Muslims." Other participants were struck with how narrow the media images are of the Middle East, one stating: "I think the media portrays the Middle East as kind of backwards and oppressive. Also any show or movie that has scenes in it from a Muslim country makes the area look poor and uncivilized."

Other participants indicated that they could sympathize with non-Muslim Americans who have narrow viewpoints, blaming their ignorance on the misrepresentations by the media. One woman explains,

> I had a friend who didn't know I was a Muslim, and she was telling me about something she saw online about all Muslims being jihadists and that they commit suicide for God. She said, 'Islam is a violent religion.' I tried to explain to her that they are crazy and that is not true. They don't represent what we believe. She then said, 'what do you mean we?' I told her 'I am a Muslim,' and she was just like 'Oh!' I don't think she meant to be prejudiced. She was just saying what she read on the Internet.

The participants in this study are aware of the media's role in representing current Islamophobic society, but they do not blame individuals for believing the news. Many participants understand that a majority of Americans are more likely to believe the media if they have never personally known or interacted with a Muslim. The stereotypes that are perpetuated in the media may not have malicious intent, but they are demeaning to Muslims and may lead to covert and overt discrimination on interpersonal levels. To help understand how Muslim Americans deal with the types of microaggressions previously mentioned I will discuss the coping strategies that were discussed by the participants of this study.

Coping Strategies

The experiences of the participants in this study who experienced religious microaggressions and other forms of Islamophobia indicated that they developed certain strategies to cope with an unfriendly environment.

Maintaining Faith and Cultural Identity

One strategy employed by many participants was to maintain a positive religious and cultural identity. They indicated that having faith in their religion and knowing their

cultural beliefs helped protect them against the dehumanizing effects of Islamophobia.

For example, when asked if news reports on terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda

influence how non-Muslim Americans feel about Muslim Americans a few participants

shared their thoughts. Coping entailed setting a good example, adhering to one's faith,

and taking pride in one's heritage. One participant stated, "I think the best thing to do is

just be a good example. Be a good person, and no one can really say anything negative

about you. If the way I look and the God I worship keeps someone from accepting me, I

don't accept them. I like people based on their character and not how they look."

Another participant addressed the importance of taking pride in one's ethnic

diversity, stating, "We were raised in a very proud household. Our parents are very proud

individuals, and they always tell us to walk with our heads held high. So I think our

personalities and demeanor steer people from acting in an aggressive way towards us."

Others emphasized the importance of knowing one's self, having peace with one's

beliefs, and being willing to stand-alone. One participant said, "In my household I'm

currently the only Muslim, so at an early age I knew I was comfortable with my faith and

what I believe and that's that." Finally, it was clear that participants were aware that their

transitional status as first generation Muslim Americans also meant that coping required

embracing two worlds. One participant put it well, revealing the competing cultures that

must be negotiated and adapted in the border statuses occupied, stating:

> We have to make the best of our life. We aren't going to fit in 100 percent in
> America. But since we have been socialized here if we moved to where our
> parents are from we wouldn't fit in there either and we wouldn't be happy. I know
> that I have internal peace with it. I'm happy in my own skin and I'm proud to be a
> Muslim and I'm proud to be an American.

Reprehend Extremist Groups and Defend Islam

Since the September 11 attacks and the more recent attacks influenced by ISIS ideology in Paris, France, San Bernardino, California, Fort Hood, Texas, and Orlando, Florida people are associating the dreadful acts of terrorism with the beliefs of the entire Muslim faith. The participants in this study were very aware of the public's perception of Muslims. In an attempt to disassociate themselves and their religion from terrorism another coping strategy involved defending Islam and reprehending extremist terrorist groups. The strong emotional reaction of one participant and his efforts to educate others provides a typical reflection of this strategy. He stated,

> Everything they do is so contradicting to Islam. It's so stupid! I don't know who taught them to believe what they believe or where they went wrong in their upbringing, but that's not Islam. I've had to have conversations with people about Bin Laden and explain to them that [Islam does not condone what he does]. It's so stupid! How dare he call himself a Muslim! Another guy with us said 'how can you say someone who identifies as a Muslim isn't a Muslim?' I told them 'it's the same as someone claiming to be a Christian who isn't following the principles of Christianity.' So when a terrorist is killing people they are not following Islam guidelines that are in the Quran. They are acting on their own volition, and it shouldn't be categorized as Islam.

Participants in every focus group I facilitated shared similar experiences. Young Muslim Americans emphasized the importance of educating others about the true meaning of Islam with the hope that Islamophobia will end. Other participants shared incidences where people confuse Islam with other religions, and make invalid assumptions. One participant noted, for example: "Sometimes people will say to me 'don't you worship the Sun God' or something. It's ridiculous, and when I tell them the truth it still seems like they don't believe me." Another stated, "I've had people tell me I don't believe in Jesus. I'll tell them 'I do,' but they still say 'no, you don't.' It's like people sometimes think

they know more about Islam than I do." The task of educating people in the face of widespread ignorance about Islam seemed one that while aiding with coping, was in many ways frustrating and insurmountable in the face of social forces that feed Islamophobia and ignorance, such as the media representations and the overtly vocal and biased views of politicians.

Self-awareness and Monitoring Behavior

The Muslim Americans that participated in this study often discussed feeling like an alien in their own land. As a result of experiencing microaggressions some participants shared they feel a collective scrutiny is put on Muslims, creating a feeling of self-consciousness. To cope with this, many discussed their awareness of the negative perceptions people have about Muslims, and how they must carefully monitor their behavior so that they are not seen in a negative light. One participant describing this strategy also reflected on the importance of making connections with outsiders rather than retreating, stating "Whenever we move to a new neighborhood my parents make an effort to meet the neighbors, so that they will know we are nice people and no one gets the wrong impression." Another person described managing how others perceive him, noting, "The possibility of being judged has kept me from praying in public. I have to plan my day around praying. If I have to pray on campus I will find somewhere private like a staircase. It's awkward having to pray alone in public." A female participant described her heightened awareness, stating, "For me I am a little more aware and cautious of my surroundings. I feel like my peripheral vision is more open to seeing certain behaviors. I see that I may be a target. I'm more visible. I know wearing the hijab gets me attention, but I don't want it from the wrong people." Another participant

described the importance of carefully monitoring behaviors that may be misunderstood as too much resistance to the dominant culture. Perhaps in an implicit reference to reactions to the Black Lives Matter movement, he stated: "We have to be careful and you know be good. Act appropriate. Oftentimes when we see a victim of police brutality it's not necessarily because they were acting out, but that they were standing their ground. You have to be careful and easy to deal with."

Passing

Passing is an important concept when understanding religious microaggressions. Passing can be a type of coping strategy because participants capitalize on the fact that they don't dress or look like a traditional Muslim. They may not experience the same level of microaggressions as people who are easily identified as Muslims. The idea of "passing" was presented in literature on multiracial microaggressions (Johnston and Nadal 2010), referring to when an individual "passes" as a member of the dominant group, he or she may be given more privilege than individuals who cannot pass. Discrimination may not be solely based on religion, but also gender, race, ethnicity or a combination. The Muslim community is diverse in the US in terms of race, so identifying an individual, as a Muslim based on their appearance is not always accurate. The participants in this study discussed ways in which they avoid experiencing microaggressions because they can "pass" as a non-Muslim American. One woman noted, "I've never experienced racial discrimination, and that may be because I live in Atlanta. This is a very black city, so I've always worked with a lot of black people. Since I don't wear a hijab they don't think I'm Muslim. I blend in like any other black woman." Another man described the way he sometimes relies on guarding his Arabic background

in order to ease the tensions that arise in situations of cultural incompetence, stating "When I introduce myself to new people I don't give them my real name. I tell them my name is Adam to avoid weird looks and pronunciation tutorials. I want to avoid focusing on things as trivial as my name and get to the point of the conversation." Another person knew that she sometimes benefited from her physical features, noting, "I can pass as a [non-Muslim] American I think. I have blue eyes and light skin."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Although the experiences of the participants in this study are unique, and no Muslim American has lived the same life as another it is clear that there is a commonality of experience as well. I examined the experience of religious microaggressions and the strategies that were employed to help cope with experiences. Being a victim of such forms of discrimination on a regular basis can prompt identity issues. The struggle of combining and assimilating two different cultures can often feel like a game of tug of war for young Muslim Americans. Many participants in this study discussed their dual identities, which means they are identifying with two cultures simultaneously, but noted that the centrality of self is primarily a Muslim self, defined relative to one's religious identity. Du Bois wrote, "It is an unusual sensation, the double-consciousness, this sense of constantly looking at one's self through another's eyes, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in pity and contempt" (Du Bois 1903: 351).

While Du Bois was writing about the American Negro experience and the merging of the "double self" represented by two cultures, the concept is appropriately applied to understanding the American Muslim experience. The American Muslim also

does not wish to lose either ethnic identities, one's American identity or one's Muslim identity, but rather struggles to merge the two. The process is particularly fraught with complexity, not simply because of balancing multiple cultural traditions but because of the negative stigma associated with a religious identity during a specific historical context. The participants in this study discussed the act of balancing life as a Muslim living in America. One participant stated,

> We tend to get closer as Muslims and individuals because of the Muslim identity rather than the ethnic and cultural identity. I feel like the message we should share to Muslims in other parts of the country is 'yeah, America is the land of the free and the land of temptation.' It's not that way in Muslim countries, but just because we assimilate into the American culture that does not mean we aren't good Muslims. We may have different challenges, and it's not always easy being a Muslim in America, but we can be both American and Muslim without leaving our morals behind.

> When I asked one focus group how they would describe their experience as a

Muslim American the answer given by one participant specifically addressed the concept of dual consciousness,

> I think it was W.E.B. Du Bois' [idea of] the dual consciousness people have being a Muslim American. When something happens to us we wonder 'is it because we are Muslim or because of us personally?' I don't think that is something Caucasian Americans have to deal with. That would be the best way to describe it. I'm black, Muslim, and a female. It feels like I have a triple consciousness.

Another participant shares that she feels judgment from both her Muslim peers and other Americans:

> I forget that I am wearing the scarf, and when I see people looking at me I wonder why. It's natural. I've had Muslims judge me for my jeans being "too tight". I'm trying to find middle ground. In other countries there's a limit to what you can do and how you can behave whereas here there are so many diverse cultures all around one another. I need to fulfill my needs as an American, but I have to make sure they don't conflict with my religious beliefs. I have to make an effort to make the right choice all the time. Other people don't have to do that or they choose not to.

This participant and others in this study were accepting of two cultures, and they were amenable in negotiating every situation, thereby placing their culture in somewhat of a third space. The participants observed the Muslim way of life by fasting during Ramadan, praying, eating halal food, and many other ways, but because they were raised in the US many associate themselves more closely to mainstream American culture or "half and half." Apart from experiencing racial microaggressions, in this study I found that the longing to fit in within the broader community of Americans was a common aspect of young Muslim Americans. When speaking about multiple identities the participants discussed belonging to several different groups that were not solely based on religion, class, or gender. Participants also saw themselves belonging to certain groups based on country of origin, citizenship, and profession. In this study, when participants discussed their multiple identities, they spoke of particular issues from their lived experience as a Muslim American such as experiences at educational institutions or the workplace.

This research provides support for the taxonomy developed by Nadal and colleagues (2010, 2012) for qualitatively illustrating the cross cultural interactions and microaggressions experienced by young Muslim Americans in the "post 9/11 era." Like the earlier studies I found support for five of the six microaggressions suggesting the possibility of developing quantitative measures for the study of race and ethnic discrimination on large survey samples. This study extended the earlier work by including a larger base of focus group participants that goes beyond small colleague samples. Limitations of this study are the small number of focus groups conducted, but

having an equal number of male and female participants helped to get a balanced

perspective. The area I conducted research in was limited to the southeast region

including rural communities. Experiences in greater populated areas may differ. Another

limitation is that in focus group settings participants may be reluctant to share their

experiences. The group setting can influence the responses of individuals, which was

problematic when a dominant member in a focus group I conducted monopolized the

conversation throughout the entirety of the focus group. One possible limitation of this

study is that in places of worship and sometimes social settings Islam is a sex-segregated

religion, so it is likely that conducting focus groups with mixed gender participants could

affect responses. I would like to compare these findings in my future research by

conducting female and male focus groups separately to compare participant responses.

Even though Islam is the second largest religion in the world and up to seven

million Muslims live in the U.S., few studies have been done on Muslim Americans and

the impact of stigma of September 11. Very few groups of people in the U.S. have

developed a stigma as quickly and dramatically as Muslim Americans. Findings from my

study are consistent with previous research regarding the negative effect of one's

awareness of outsider perceptions on a Muslim American's psyche.   Attempts to negate

negative stereotypes about one's group are a necessary strategy to protect the well being

of the group and its members (Abrams 2007).   Although a heightened awareness of the

stigma associated with Muslim Americans takes a personal toll on the individual,

participants in this study remain committed to Islam. There have been a number of

studies on marginalized groups such as US slaves, Jews in the Holocaust, and Japanese

American citizens after World War II. The purpose of research on marginalized groups

who have experienced traumatic events is to show the significance and implications of historical events, even when the events do not affect participants directly. September 11, 2001 cannot be compared to the significance of the Holocaust or slavery but nonetheless trauma was still experienced by Muslim Americans post 9/11. Muslims are portrayed in the media as villains and victims. While there have been educational stories about Islam, the stereotypical images of Muslims as terrorists and Islam as a violent religion remain prevalent. Muslims have been the targets of hate crimes and discriminated against in every day settings. Few non-Muslim people fully comprehend the lives and struggles of Muslim Americans. Muslims in the United States can have what Erving Goffman identified as a shared "tribal stigma" which is a type of collective stigma of religion, nation, and race (1963:4-5). To possess tribal stigma one must be a member of a racial minority and possess a stigmatizing trait. Those free of stigmatizing traits expect to interact with people freely, and when they encounter a tribally stigmatized individual it goes against their expectations, making social interactions awkward and difficult (Goode 2015). Stigma of tribe, ethnicities, religions, nationalities, and races are branded communally. Members of the ethnic majority degrade members of the selected minority as a whole. To the bigoted person all members of the entire group are dehumanized, and each individual is looked down on because of his or her association to said group. Levels of prejudice and discrimination vary from mild to extreme, covert to overt, but no matter the degree Islamophobia is as prevalent as ever, and the September 11 attacks left painful memories for Muslim Americans. Further the mistreatment felt by many as a result has deeply impacted Muslim American identity. The collective stories of Muslim Americans are a shared experience that needs to be told. Stereotypes must be deconstructed and

hopefully eliminated through educating the masses on the true meaning of Islam. Despite having negative experiences, whether getting teased at school, not getting hired at a job, receiving judgmental stares, or getting awkward pat downs at airports, participants in the study are proud Muslims and more than willing to share their experiences.

Given the qualitative nature of the present study with a small sample, findings do not represent the experiences of all Muslim Americans. Yet the common thread of discrimination from this group suggests Islamophobia is indeed widespread among young adult Muslim Americans. To cope with Islamophobia participants developed certain strategies such as altering their behavior, reprehending extremist groups, defending Islam, being aware of one's actions, monitoring one's behavior, and passing as "American." While the narratives shared are specific to the individuals in this study, the commonality of their experiences is testament to the need for greater education and social change in the US. Only by building alliances among subcultures can this historical moment be transformed and social equality become fully realized.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

Have you ever experienced racial discrimination in the workplace?

Does your religion influence your work or studies? In what ways?

Do your peers at work treat you differently because of your religion or ethnic background?

Do you believe Western societies respect Muslim Societies? Elaborate.

Do you feel like members of other religious groups are prejudiced towards Muslim Americans? Please explain.

Are you able to remember an experience when you felt mistreated because of your religion and/or ethnic background?

How did you respond to the experience?

When you see news reports on Al-Qaeda and ISIS does it worry you about how Americans will feel about Muslim Americans?

How does it make you feel when you see all the chaos going on the Middle East terrorists who justify their actions by saying it is for Islam?

How have you coped with feelings that others may not accept you because of your ethnicity or religion?

Please discuss any of the following that pertain to you. In your day-to-day life, how often do any of the following things happen to you?
1.   You are treated with less courtesy than other people.
2.   You are treated with less respect than other people.
3.   You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores.
4.   People act as if they think you are not smart.
5.   People act as if they are afraid of you.
6.   People act as if they think you are dishonest.
7.   People act as if they are better than you.
8.   You are called names or insulted.
9.   You are threatened or harassed.

Please read through the following questions. I am interested in the way other people have treated you or your beliefs about how other people have treated you. Can you tell me if any of the following has ever happened to you?

1. At any time in your life, have you ever been unfairly fired?
2. For unfair reasons, have you ever not been hired for a job?
3. Have you ever been unfairly denied a promotion?
4. Have you ever been unfairly stopped, searched, questioned, physically threatened or abused by the police?
5. Have you ever been unfairly discouraged by a teacher or advisor from continuing your education?
6. Have you ever been unfairly prevented from moving into a neighborhood because the landlord or a realtor refused to sell or rent you a house or apartment?
7. Have you ever moved into a neighborhood where neighbors made life difficult for you or your family?
9. Have you ever received service from someone such as a plumber or car mechanic that was worse than what other people get?

10. Has your boss or co-workers or peers ever use racial or ethnic slurs?

11. Have you ever had an experience where you did not feel welcome in this country?

12. Does the possibility of being judged keep you from say praying in public? Or wearing a hijab?

13. Have you ever been UNFAIRLY stopped, searched, or questioned by the police?

14. Have you ever been UNFAIRLY physically threatened or abused by the police?

15. Have you ever been UNFAIRLY suspected or accused of doing something illegal by the authorities?

16. In addition to what we have talked about, have you ever been treated UNFAIRLY, prevented from doing something, or been hassled or made to feel inferior by the police or the courts?

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

4/1/2015

Investigator(s): Yaasameen Al-Hamdan and Vicky MacLean
Department: Socialogy
Investigator(s) Email: ysa2c@mtmail.mtsu.edu; vicky.maclean@mtsu.edu

Protocol Title: "The experiences of young adult Muslim Americans in the US post 9/11"

Protocol Number: 15-207

Dear Investigator(s),

The MTSU Institutional Review Board, or a representative of the IRB, has reviewed the research proposal identified above. The MTSU IRB or its representative has determined that the study poses minimal risk to participants and qualifies for an expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110, and you have satisfactorily addressed all of the points brought up during the review.

Approval is granted for one (1) year from the date of this le tter for 60 (SIXTY) participants.

Please note that any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918. Any change to the protocol must be submitted to the IRB before implementing this change.

You will need to submit an end-of-project form to the Office of Compliance upon completion of your research located on the IRB website. Complete research means that you have finished collecting and analyzing data. **Should you not finish your research within the one (1) year period, you must submit a Progress Report and request a continuation prior to the expiration date.** Please allow time for review and requested revisions. Failure to submit a Progress Report and request for continuation will automatically result in cancellation of your research study. Therefore, you will not be able to use any data and/or collect any data. Your study expires 4/4/2016.

According to MTSU Policy, a researcher is defined as anyone who works with data or has contact with participants. Anyone meeting this definition needs to be listed on the protocol and needs to complete the required training. **If you add researchers to an approved project, please forward an updated list of researchers to the Office of Compliance before the y begin to work on the project.**

All research materials must be retained by the PI or faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) for at least three (3) years after study completion and then destroyed in a manner that maintains confident iality and anonymity.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
Middle Tennessee State University