Muslim Populations in a Western Context: Lived Experience of Stigma and

Marginalization

Jeni A. Groot-Begnaud

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in International Psychology

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Dedication

In memory of Penelopie Dru Begnaud who is loved always and immeasurably.

Abstract

This research examined the lived experiences of Muslim populations in Western societies with a focus on stigma and marginalization. The objective was to gain insight on how the impact of stigma and marginalization may potentially influence an individual's trajectory toward radicalization. Inquiry was accomplished through phenomenological reflection on data elicited through semistructured interviews focusing on the perceptions of Muslim individuals in Denver, Colorado regarding stigma and marginalization and the impact of those influences on psychological outcomes. Data analysis was conducted via methodology that maintained prioritization of participants' voices, and results are presented primarily using their own words. The objective was to respect the contributions and perspectives of participants by developing a revelatory and cohesive narrative through an orderly but dynamic approach to best facilitate meaning-making by the reader. Results of data analysis yielded five overarching themes related to global trauma and foundational international psychology principles and reinforcing the relevance of that field. Those themes were nuanced existence, frustrating representation, complexity of interaction, vulnerability, and resilience factors. Numerous superordinate themes within participant narratives were also identified.

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Chapter 1: Nature of the Study

Background

Twenty years after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the initiation of military and political action pursuant to the "War on Terror," the Western world finds itself confronted with a new incarnation of terrorism in the form of members of its own population radicalized and motivated to take part in violence in the name of Islam (Chrisafis, 2015; Nougayrede, 2015; Evans, 2015; Kalish, 2016; Schmidt & Pena, 2015; Barrett, 2015; Yukhananov & Dunham, 2015). Events in France captured the world's attention in early 2015 as young adults who were born in France and raised near Paris demonstrated their radicalized ideology in deadly attacks on the Charlie Hebdo publication's office and a Kosher supermarket (Chrisafis, 2015). France saw even greater carnage during November 2015 when individuals aligned with the Islamic State committed the worst attack in that nation since the end of World War II (Nougayrede, 2015). In February 2015, authorities in the United Kingdom were scrambling to find three missing teenage girls feared to have traveled to Turkey to enter Syria and join the terror group known as the Islamic State (Evans, 2015).

This phenomenon is not limited to European nations. In June 2016, Omar Mateen committed one of the deadliest mass shootings in the history of the United States when he killed 49 people and injured dozens at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida (Kalish, 2016). Mateen was born in New York City to Afghan immigrants (Kalish, 2016). As he committed the shooting in the Pulse Nightclub, Mateen pledged his allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS) and declared his act of violence was an act of vengeance in that group's name (Kalish, 2016). Prior to that event, the attack by married couple Tafsheen Malik and Syed Rizwan Farook that killed 14 and wounded 21 in San Bernandino, California, had been described as the most deadly attack in

America inspired by the Islamic State (Shmidt & Pena, 2015). The spouses were of Palestinian descent and were raising their infant daughter at the time of the killing (Shmidt & Pena, 2015).

The United States has also recently seen young citizens such as 20-year-old Christopher Lee Cornell convert to Islam, declare their allegiance to terrorist groups like the Islamic State, and plot attacks on American soil (Barrett, 2015). America's Department of Homeland Security expressed concern in February 2015, regarding potential threats to Minnesota's Mall of America issued by the terror group al Shabaab (Yukhananov & Dunham, 2015). The large Somali-American presence in Minneapolis and the attempted and successful travel since 2007 of members of that population to overseas locations in support of al Shabaab and the Islamic State (Yukhananov & Dunham, 2015) make these threats particularly troubling. Canada has also seen threats posed by radicalized citizens, including an incident in October 2014, when a Canadian who converted to Islam attacked that country's parliament building (Yukhananov & Dunham, 2015).

According to Horgan (2014), who has studied the psychology of terrorism extensively, there is no singular pathway that explains why people decide to become involved in terrorism. Many different people become involved in terrorism for very divergent reasons and engage in terrorism in various ways (Horgan, 2014). Horgan (2014) also referred to terrorism as a phenomenon that is highly heterogeneous in terms of motivation and demographics and one that is continuously changing. One of the recent developments in this changing phenomenon is the presence of radical Imams on the internet who Atran (2010) likened to stereotypical American evangelicals who appear on television and distill complicated social and political issues down to basic binary choices where action must be taken by good against evil or in terms of other absolute conflict.

The form of Muslim purism advocated by these Imams envisions Muslim power through virulent and violent means (Atran, 2010). This type of interpretation of Islam's foundational scripture, the Quran, has occurred throughout history, and scholars have concluded the Quran has a lack of context in its content that requires those who interpret it to encode meaning (Nickel, 2011). Over time, Muslim scripture has become inextricably intertwined with themes of conquest, military domination, and spiritual superiority as a result of certain interpretations (Nickel, 2011), and this sort of interpretation is evident in the teachings of those who presently seek to recruit others to involvement in violent extremism.

In recent years, those who have been recruited or radicalized to engage in violence associated with al-Qaida or other such extremist ideology are overwhelmingly young adults. Some studies have concluded there is increased prevalence of radicalization among young adults and adolescents and that vulnerability to radicalization is influenced by the developmental tasks inherent to these age groups that include development of social, personal, and political identities as well as relationship formation (Pels & de Ruyter, 2012). They point to research indicating radicalization takes place at the intersection of personal trajectory and an enabling environment. As Borum explained in his foundational "Psychology of Terrorism," drive theory focused on the correlation between frustration and aggression has been cited as a potential "master explanation" (2004, p. 12) for human violence and applied to analysis of terrorist behavior. Theories focused on narcissism-aggression and psychodynamic accounts have also been presented to explain involvement in terrorism (Horgan, 2014). However, Horgan (2014) asserted that there are many challenges to understanding terrorists' motivation and behavior, and that an integrative analysis based on a more sophisticated identity model taking into account how terrorist identity develops in response to global trends and external changes could be beneficial.

Figure 1

Radicalization Intersection
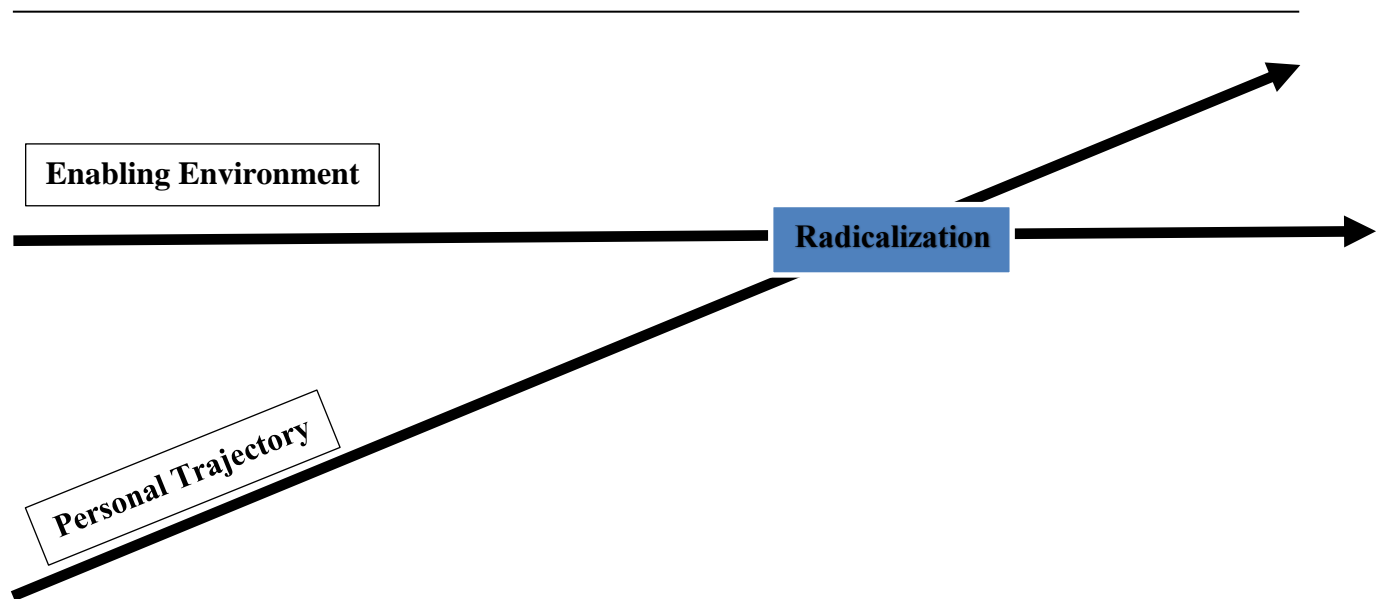
Note. Figure adapted from Pels and Ruyter, 2012.

There is compelling evidence pointing to stigma and marginalization of Muslims in Western nations, those Vaughn (2019) described as oriented more toward individualism versus collectivism, as a global trend. Muslims in many Western nations have experienced increased discrimination and stigmatization following the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 (Barkdull et al., 2011). Anti-Muslim prejudice that has drastically risen over the past decade has caused Muslim immigrants in Europe to change their surnames to sound more neutral (Khosravi, 2012). A general sentiment of discrimination toward Muslims in the United States has resulted in resistance to the construction of mosques across the country (Hummel, 2012). In Spain, Muslim school-age children report being overtly discriminated against by non-Muslim fellow students (Murshed & Pavan, 2011). For many Muslims in Western societies, these and numerous other examples of stigma and marginalization make up

the "human subjective experience" (Valsiner, 2009, p. 2). Valsiner indicated modern international psychology can examine to find solutions to basic human problems.

Research regarding the potential relationship between stigma and marginalization of Muslims in Western societies and vulnerability to radicalization from the perspective of that population is not extensive. Foundational literature in the international psychology field reinforces the need for such research. In discussing the need for critical psychology to address global challenges, Teo (2015) urged members of the field to promote wellbeing of communities, organizations, and individuals through focus on the nexus between the wellbeing of individuals and the social structures in which they exist. In doing so, Teo stated, those who apply critical psychology to improve the reality of human lives can have an impact on struggles for social justice.

Pawlik and d'Ydewalle (1996) pointed to the fact such struggles will present growing demands for the psychology field in their article on international psychology. They cited predictions that diverse pressures serving as catalysts for migration would present challenges in the form of global adjustment, interethnic rivalry, cruelty, and hatred. It seems those predictions have become the world's new reality with radicalization presenting a form of conflict that urgently needs to be addressed. Pawlik and d'Ydewalle (1996) called upon psychologists to focus skill and expertise to develop an increased understanding of underlying mechanisms of conflict and the means through which that conflict can be avoided, managed, and mitigated. This is consistent with the mission of international psychology to foster goodwill and understanding among people on an international level (Stevens & Wedding, 2004).

Problem Statement

Societies and cultures around the world are increasingly connected. Unfortunately, intergroup conflict continues to manifest itself in acts of terrorism committed by radicalized individuals who reject the legitimate tenets of Islam in favor of an extreme and violent worldview. In recent years, these attacks have targeted individuals and entities in Western societies and have been committed by young members of Muslim populations within those societies (Barrett, 2015; Chrisafis, 2015; Evans, 2015; Yukhananov & Dunham, 2015). Literature indicates Muslims in Western societies experience stigma and marginalization that may contribute to their vulnerability to radicalization (Murshed & Pavan, 2011).

Terrorist acts in Western nations by extremists from within those societies threaten to exacerbate intergroup conflict due to resultant increased stigma such as that documented by Barkdull et al. (2011) following the attacks of September 11, 2001, unless the phenomenon of stigma and marginalization and its potential relationship to radicalization is better understood. There is ample academic literature indicating Muslims in Western societies experience stigma and marginalization and that stigma and marginalization can be one of a number of mechanisms for radicalization (Karagiannis, 2012). However, a lack of available data exists regarding the relationship between stigma, marginalization, and vulnerability to radicalization from the perspective of Muslim populations in Western societies.

This study sought to answer the call of Pawlik and d'Ydewallle (1996) and contribute to the mission of international psychology (Stevens & Wedding, 2004) by exploring the global problem of stigma and marginalization experienced by Muslims living in Western societies, associated intergroup conflict, and trauma resultant from both. This was accomplished through a phenomenological approach that emphasized the perspectives of participant experience,

perspective, and words. This approach aligns with international psychology principles of equality, social justice, and building cultures of peace and tolerance outlined by Stevens & Wedding (2004) through prioritization of voices of a population living as an out-group in dominant Western culture.

Purpose of the Study

In the absence of this data, several perspectives have become evident in Western societies. It has been observed by some research that blame for encouraging the radicalization of Muslims in America has been placed heavily on Islamic organizations (Saghaye-Biria, 2012). Religious practices such as wear of headscarves by Muslim women are perceived as speaking to a "societal tension that goes together with a vocal and politicized Islam" (Fleischmann et al., 2011, p. 629). There is sentiment in European societies that multiculturalism is a failed concept (Kim, 2013).

Horgan's (2014) discussion of the needs and challenges associated with further research regarding terrorism and radicalization includes a focus on integration of analysis that looks, for example, at the manner in which broader structural or social problems relate to individual issues. In the case of this study, the broader social and structural issues examined are stigma and marginalization. The smaller, individual issue is the susceptibility to radicalization of Muslim members of Western societies, particularly young people.

Review of available literature exposes a lack of data regarding the potential relationship between stigma, marginalization, and psychological outcomes including those contributing to vulnerability to radicalization from the perspective of Muslim populations in Western societies. This study endeavored to explore that phenomenon from the perspective of Muslim immigrants living in Western societies as well as individuals born in Western societies, including those who

have converted to Islam, to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of relevant intergroup and interpersonal aspects. This was accomplished by focusing on the perceptions of Muslim individuals in Denver, Colorado regarding stigma and marginalization and the impact of those influences on psychological outcomes.

There is ample evidence stigma and marginalization are significant influences on the human subjective experience of Muslims in Western societies. International psychology-related literature indicates Muslims living in Western societies experience stigma and marginalization based on their religion that can lead to a number of detrimental psychological outcomes including frustration, social disconnection, alienation, and vulnerability to radicalization. Drive theory focused on the correlation between frustration and aggression has been cited as a potential explanation for terrorism. This phenomenological study sought to explore how frustration associated with stigma and marginalization may potentially influence an individual's trajectory toward radicalization. This was accomplished through gathering participant perspective based on their own experiences as well as their opinions formed through lived experiences. The method of inquiry for this research was phenomenological reflection on data elicited through semistructured interviews of members of the Muslim population in a Western society.

Research Questions

The questions guiding this research were:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of stigma and marginalization on the part of Muslim populations in Western contexts?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of the impact of stigma and marginalization on the part of Muslim populations in Western contexts?

Conceptual Framework

Acculturation as a phenomenon involving contact between individual members of cultural groups (Sam & Berry, 2016) is a critical component of the conceptual framework for this research. This contact results in both cultural and psychological changes that occur across multiple domains including biological, physical, economic, political, and cultural (Sam & Berry, 2016). Sam and Berry (2016) and Vaughn (2019) outlined how groups generally adopt one of four strategies for acculturation: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization). Changes associated with acculturation can be problematic and present challenges that lead to acculturation stress that may manifest in depression, anxiety, and uncertainty (Sam & Berry, 2016). Within these broad concepts associated with acculturation is an understanding that this process has nuances in American society given how the "metaphor of the 'melting pot' has dominated US immigrant experience" (Sam & Berry, 2016, p. 399) as well as appreciation for the diversity that exists within the experience of immigrants to the United States.

Adaptation is a key aspect of acculturation that may be sociological, psychological, or intercultural (Sam & Berry, 2016). Sociological adaptation refers to competently carrying out routine living in an intercultural context while psychological adaptation entails internal or psychological aspects of existence such as self-esteem or well-being (Sam & Berry, 2016). Sam and Berry (2016) described intercultural adaptation as "the extent to which individuals are able to establish harmonious intercultural relations, with low levels of prejudice and discrimination" (p. 15). Sam and Berry (2016) also discussed cultural competence among children who are not part of majority culture as a task associated with acculturation and adaptation at various stages of development.

Sam and Berry (2016) explained that a change in self-definition and group membership is not inherent to acquiring new cultural skills through acculturation as contact with different ethnic groups frequently lead to greater ethnic awareness. With regard to religious identity, research has shown that second-generation immigrants may find religion appealing for its potential to provide respite from marginalization as well as empowerment and a positive sense of group identity (Sam & Berry, 2016). There are also theories that "assumed increase in perceived intergroup conflict or group threat" (Sam & Berry, 2016, p. 36) may mobilize second-generation immigrants toward embracing religion.

Multiculturalism is a concept intertwined with that of acculturation. While Vaughn (2019) defined multiculturalism as all groups being recognized as equal yet unique, questions arise regarding the incorporation of multicultural principles in society given struggles for cultural dominance (Kim, 2013). For multiculturalism to exist in a society, minority groups must accept the general values of greater society, and dominant groups must be amenable to adaptation that allows for meeting the needs of all groups coexisting within a plural population (Sam & Berry, 2006). Both dominant and nondominant groups must recognize "the right of all groups to live as culturally different peoples within the same society" (Sam & Berry, 2016, p. 23).

The second component of the conceptual framework for this research is social conflict in the context of intergroup threat theory as explored by Stephan et al. (2009) who explained an intergroup threat is experienced by one group when that group perceives a different group has the potential to cause harm to them in either a realistic or symbolic context. Cultural differences can play a key role in perception of symbolic threat where immigrant populations exist whose cultures vary from that of their host nation (Stephan et al., 2009). Host nation groups may perceive immigrant populations who maintain their own values as threatening to their values

(Stephan et al., 2009). Conversely, Stephan et al. (2009) explained, immigrant populations who seek to maintain their culture may feel threatened by pressure to assume host culture values that conflict with their own.

Figure 2

Social Conflict
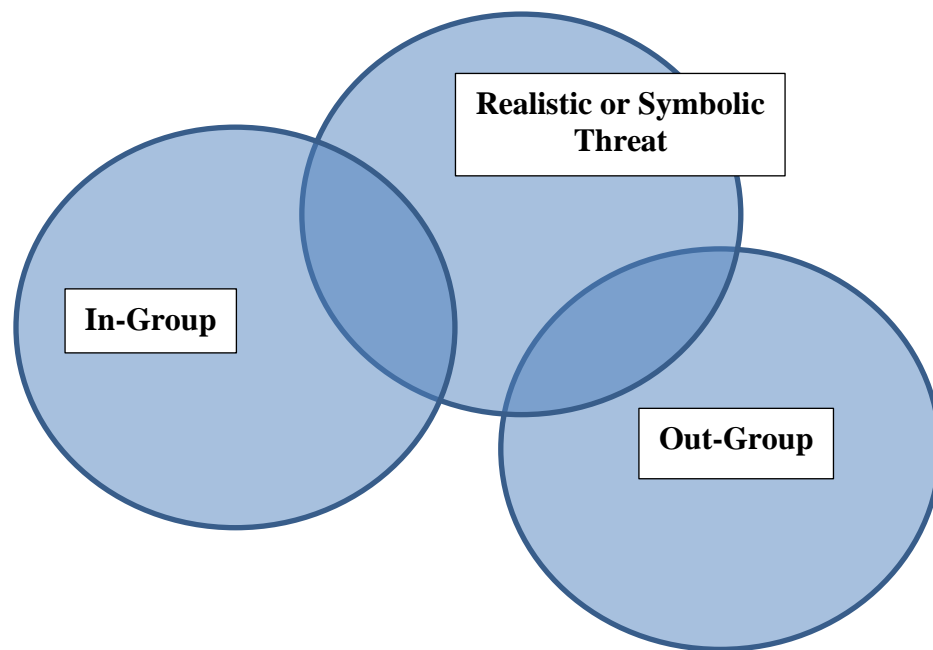
Note. Figure adapted from Stephan et al., 2009.

This social conflict between in-groups and out-groups is evident in the previously discussed stereotyping of Muslims in Western societies, resistance to construction of mosques, recoil at the wear of headscarves, and bias against surnames that sound Muslim. It is also evident in the labeling of Christians described by Nickel (2011) with terms meaning corrupt, depraved, wicked, and perverted in certain interpretations of Islamic scripture. Some research indicates strong in-group association is explained by unconscious preference for things an individual associates with themselves (Plous, 2003). Laboratory research has shown when the self-concept

of individuals with high self-esteem experiences a blow, those individuals show a heightened

preference for numbers included in their birth date and letters in their own name (Plous, 2003).

Such return to the self could provide a plausible explanation for increased stigma toward

Muslims following the attacks on September 11, 2001, as well as insight into the attraction of

violent extremism for Muslims who experience stigma and marginalization in their Western

homes.

It is also appropriate to include discussion regarding whether an individual needs to feel

they have directly experienced stigma and marginalization to be influenced by these constructs.

There are accounts of individuals who became radicalized to terrorist action because of what

they have perceived as the victimization of others rather than their own experiences. For

example, one French terrorist shared how viewing footage of the Chechen conflict and war in

Bosnia was highly instrumental in his eventual involvement in extremist jihadi causes

(Karagiannis, 2012). Also, an on-going study found over 90% of participants in a sample of

Pakistani militants cited American drone strikes as the catalyst for their involvement though

none of them had experienced those strikes or even had a family member impacted by such

activity (Horgan, 2014). Those militants did, however, feel a strong communal identification

with the individuals they felt were victimized during drone strikes conducted by the United

States (Horgan, 2014).

A final but foundational component of the conceptual framework for this research is

examination of stigma and marginalization in the context of cognitive principles associated with

prejudice and discrimination and how those constructs relate to social conflict. One of the long-

standing theories on the cognition behind prejudice was developed largely by Henri Tajfel and

asserts that stereotyping and prejudice are products of rationality and represent cognitive

shortcuts (Billig, 2002). Tajfel theorized prejudice is literally prejudgment humans use to

organize their continuously changing social world into categories and preserve self-image

(Billig, 2002). However, even as prejudice allows for making meaning of the social world, it also

distorts it (Billig, 2002).

An in-group is considered the group to which an individual belongs while an out-group is

a group to which they do not (Plous, 2003). Prejudiced thinking makes judgments regarding

members of other groups, out-groups, that do not take into consideration their individual

characteristics, and there is a tendency to judge individuals negatively simply based on their out-

group status (Billig, 2002). Tajfel attributed this to the need for preservation of integrity or self-

image and incorporated this concept in social identity theory (as cited in Billig, 2002). Research

indicates that, in addition to that negative judgment, out-group members are perceived as more

homogenous than the group to which an individual belongs, and this leads to a risk of being

considered expendable or interchangeable (Plous, 2003). Also, it is more likely out-group

members will be stereotyped (Plous, 2003).

Scope of the Study

This study did not aim to establish any causation or correlation between the phenomenon

examined and radicalization to extremism. The qualitative, phenomenological methodology

employed was designed specifically to elicit perspective from participants. While this research

did seek perspective on the experience of Muslim populations in Western societies regarding

media depiction of Islam and Muslims, it was not concerned fundamentally with the role of

social media as a tool for recruiting or radicalization.

Participants were recruited from Muslim populations in the Denver, Colorado area. There

was no screening of participants regarding whether they had directly experienced stigma or

marginalization. This research did not seek to recruit participants actively or previously involved in any sort of extremist activity.

Definitions of Key Terms

Marginalization. For purposes of this study, marginalization was defined as keeping an individual or group in a position within society lacking power or importance. Examples of marginalization include social disconnection and alienation as described by Ganor (2012).

Stigma. In this research, stigma was generally defined as negative and frequently unfair beliefs held by a group or society, with examples including stereotyping and negative portrayal (Imbo, 2010).

Stereotypes. This research uses Vaughn's (2019) definition of stereotypes as beliefs about people from social groups that are as over-generalized in nature as well as Charles Stangor's description of stereotypes in Nelson's *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination* as, "the traits that we view as characteristic of social groups, or of individual members of those groups, and particularly those that differentiate groups from each other…the traits that come to mind quickly when we think about the groups" (2009, p.3).

Acculturation. Acculturation in an individual context entails changes resulting from contact with people, groups, and influences within society that are culturally different from that individual (Schwartz et al., 2010). Berry et al. defined psychological acculturation as "changes that an individual experiences as a result of being in contact with other cultures, and as a result of participating in the process of acculturation that his or her cultural or ethnic group is undergoing" (2002, p. 350).

Multiculturalism. Vaughn (2019) defined multiculturalism as "the notion that all cultural groups should be recognized as equal and that each cultural group is unique with its own set of shared values, norms, and customs" (p. 14).

Radicalization. Radicalization has been defined generally by leading terrorism researchers as a precursor to terrorism and the process through which individuals develop extremist beliefs and ideologies (Horgan, 2014). The operational definition of radicalization used by Karagiannis (2012) was applied for purposes of this research. That definition identifies radicalization as when an "individual commits personal resources (e.g., time, effort, money) to wage a jihadi campaign, either alone or as member of a group" (Karagiannis, 2012, p. 105).

Significance of the Study

Acts of extremism directed or inspired by al-Qaida, the Islamic State, and other such groups continue to dominate news cycles, impact political decisions, and inculcate fear around the globe (Chrisafis, 2015; Nougayrede, 2015; Evans, 2015; Kalish, 2016; Schmidt & Pena, 2015; Barrett, 2015; Yukhananov & Dunham, 2015). The current incarnation of the phenomenon of terrorism has shifted to include acts of violence perpetrated by often-young individuals raised in Western societies who have become radicalized to adopt extremist views. The hope is that this study generated meaningful perspective from the experiences of Muslim populations in Western nations regarding their interaction with the societal influences of stigma and marginalization that may aid in mitigating against vulnerability to radicalization and serve as a foundation for further research. Data gathered through this research has the potential to provide insight useful in initiatives to counter extremism at national and community levels in the United States and across the world.

This research was conducted through exploration of the experiences of Muslims living in Western societies, individuals whom the literature indicates are the targets of stigma and marginalization. Previous literature reviewed on radicalization does not include research honoring the perspective of participants to the same extent as this study. This focus on the perspective of a targeted population is a practice that only began in the 1990s (Plous, 2003), but has some inherent benefits. Approaching this research from the perspective of the targeted population allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the intergroup and interpersonal aspects of the phenomenon examined (Plous, 2003). Also, this approach facilitated insight into ways in which discrimination and other actions associated with stigma and marginalization can be addressed (Plous, 2003).

Vaughn (2019) stated that, "global (or international psychology)…eliminates boundaries and emphasizes the principles of free market and democracy on the political side and tolerance, and openness on the cultural and psychological side" (p. 10). International psychology has also been defined independent from global psychology in the context of its mission to promote goodwill and understanding internationally and to apply psychology to urgent global problems (Stevens & Wedding, 2004). This research endeavored to provide understanding derived directly from a population impacted by marginalization and stigma that can be instrumental in eliminating barriers to their well-being and the well-being of society as a whole.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

Inter-group conflict manifested in radicalization of members of Muslim populations in Western societies to extremism presents a global concern. Some point to this phenomenon as proof of the failure of multiculturalism, and continued radicalization and associated violence threaten to exacerbate this intergroup clash. Much examination has been accomplished regarding

the motivation and catalysts through which individuals turn to terrorism, and yet a great deal

remains unknown about this important subject matter. Leading scholars in the study of terrorism

call for research that entails integration of analysis regarding the manner in which broader

structural or social problems relate to smaller, individual issues (Horgan, 2014).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of stigma and marginalization of Muslims in Western societies and that population's perception of how this influences vulnerability to radicalization. This was accomplished through phenomenological reflection on data elicited through semistructured interviews. This inquiry sought to address the global problem of stigma and marginalization experienced by Muslims living in Western societies, associated intergroup conflict, as well as the trauma inherent to both. The theoretical framework of this study revolves around cognitive principles associated with prejudice and discrimination and how those constructs relate to social conflict as well as the foundational international psychology concept of acculturation. This literature review aims to comprehensively investigate existing material regarding stigma and marginalization faced by Muslims in Western societies. Additionally, it summarizes literature pertaining to foundational psychological principles associated with that experience as well as discrimination and prejudice.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section concerns the experiences of Muslims living in Western Societies. The second section expands on this discussion with specific focus on stigma in Western societies. The third section delves into factors contributing to radicalization including education and socialization; conversion; and the experiences of others. The fourth section examines literature pertaining to organizational influences on radicalization. The fifth section explores literature regarding the psychology of terrorism including discourse on multiculturalism as well as the fundamentals of stigma and prejudice. This chapter culminates with discussion on what this study will add to existing literature relating to social conflict in the

form of radicalized Muslims in Western societies and how it pertains to foundational literature in the field of international psychology.

Research Strategy

The researcher employed diverse sources to accomplish the literature review. Fundamental publications on prejudice, radicalization, and international psychology were referenced. Key terms were queried in various databases including PsycInfo, EBSCO, ProQuest, and SAGE to retrieve and review peer reviewed literature. Key terms used in those queries included: "Muslim experience," "Muslims Western Society," "Muslims United States," "Muslims Europe," "Muslims stigma," "Muslims," "marginalization," "Muslims discrimination," "Muslims education," "Muslims society," "Muslims organization," "Muslims acculturation," "radicalization." Additionally, journalistic periodicals were reviewed for articles referencing events relevant to the background of this study.

This research strategy was designed to review foundational information available regarding the lived experiences of Muslims in Western societies as well as the phenomenon of stigma, marginalization, and prejudice. This strategy employed mapping of core ideas as discussed by Machi and McEvoy (2012) to determine what information existed regarding the lived experiences of Muslims in Western societies, particularly in the context of stigma and marginalization. Inclusion of core publications on stigma, marginalization, prejudice, radicalization, and international psychology provided overarching conceptual framework for examination of the lived experiences at the heart of this research.

Muslim Experience in Western Societies

Scholarly literature includes discussion focused on stigma and marginalization followers of Islam may experience in Western society and how that may make them vulnerable to

radicalization. Some cited examples of this stigma are stereotyping and negative portrayals of Muslims in the media in Western societies (Imbo, 2010). Also, existing research suggests Muslims in Europe who face stigma and discrimination based on their religious identification are influenced by those factors to either politicize or depoliticize regarding their support for Islam (Fleischmann et al., 2011). Compelling evidence exists that Muslims in many Western nations have experienced increased discrimination and stigmatization following the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 (Barkdull et al., 2011). The following five articles examine concepts related to stigma, identity, and religion.

Bail (2012) presented the results of mixed-method research focused on the messages communicated by civil society organizations regarding Muslims and the influence of those organizations in media depiction of that population. The core of Bail's research was qualitative coding of press releases from civil society organizations over three discursive periods. Bail also measured the financial and social resources of each organization and looked at the networking amongst the organizations over time.

One of the chief findings of Bail's (2012) research was that civil society organizations portraying Muslims as enemies tended to be out of the mainstream, with only ten of 50 organizations analyzed doing so during the first time period, 2001 through 2003, studied. However, his analysis also showed those fringe organizations to be among the most influential in the discursive field after the attacks on September 11, 2001. Another finding Bail considered remarkable was that his analysis showed civil society depiction of Muslims as enemies almost doubled from the first period of analysis to the second, from 2004 through 2006, suggesting the fringe civil society organizations influenced media over time through their routinely displayed

anger and fear. This influence expanded even more in the final period of analysis from 2007 through 2008.

Bail (2012) outlined many implications of his research findings, including some that speak to the collective nature of behavior and institutions. However, there are some that have particular application to the concepts of stigma toward Muslims and marginalization of this population. Specifically, Bail indicated the results of his research reinforce that the divide between Muslims and non-Muslims may be increased by this media influence as the emotional impact of fringe organizations can be a particularly powerful factor in public opinion given emotional bias that exists in individual and collective memory since the terrorist attacks in September 2001.

Barkdull et al. (2011) involved a more direct examination of the experiences of Muslims in Western societies with regard to discrimination and prejudice. This qualitative 2011 research was based on semi structured interviews with Muslims living in Australia, Argentina, Canada, and the United States (Barkdull et al., 2011). One of the challenges to this research was identifying Muslim participants willing to speak freely regarding the negative impact of the September 2001 attacks on their lives.

The research team found Muslims living in Australia, Canada, and the United States reported their lives prior to the 2001 terrorist acts were generally "less stressful and devoid of public scrutiny" (Barkdull et al., 2011, p. 143). The participants in these societies felt the non-Muslim individuals in their lives were typically unaware of Islam or Muslim diversity prior to September 2001. Barkdull et al. (2011) quoted participants' insights into their lives pre- and post-2001. Participants in North America, for example, recall identifying as North American and adopting the culture in which they found themselves immersed while at the same time retaining

their Muslim identity without feeling scrutiny or the need to restrict display of their religious

identity prior to the 2001 attacks. Participants reported they felt noticeably stigmatized following

those attacks and indicated rejection of non-Muslim friends following that tragedy was

particularly hurtful. Interestingly, participants in Argentina reported very little discrimination

following the attacks in 2001 and were more concerned with the economic implications of that

event in their lives.

Barkdull et al. (2011) outlined some of the social implications of their findings. They

discussed the role of the Western media in perpetuating misunderstanding of individuals who

follow Islam and the need for reform in that area. Also discussed is the need for governmental

entities to be more accountable regarding civil rights issues and equal and fair treatment.

Stigma in Western Societies

Another article published in 2011 examined how politicization by individuals who follow

Islam may be related to common predictors associated with social identity (Fleischmann et al.).

This research applies reasoning from social identity theory that asserts perceived experienced

discrimination induces identity threat to the politicization of Muslims in European societies.

There were multiple competing hypotheses associated with this article, some of which indicated

perceived discrimination would elevate religious identification while others indicated perceived

stigma would result in less political mobility among Muslims.

The study utilized survey data to measure various components related to political support

for Islam, religious identification, and perceived discrimination (Fleischmann et al., 2011).

Researchers found a support for political Islam was strongly influenced by religious

identification with those who highly identified more likely to be supportive of assertion of their

faith in European politics and society. In a number of cities where research was conducted,

Muslims who had themselves experienced unfair treatment or hostility identified as Muslims to a greater degree than those who reported experiencing less discrimination. However, those who experienced discrimination and felt their religion was stigmatized were less inclined to support Islam politically but may have tended to embrace protest activity perceived as more effective than conventional political activity. In summary, the nature and extent of the participants experienced discrimination and stigma was found to have an influence on the nature of their political activity.

Khosravi (2012) discussed qualitative research regarding outcomes for individuals who changed their surnames from those associated with a stigmatized religious and ethnic group, in this case Muslim immigrants, to more neutral or Swedish-sounding surnames. The qualitative analysis associated with this article followed quantitative analysis based on data from application forms submitted for name changes to the Swedish Patent and Registration Office. This initial quantitative research generated questions regarding motivation for name changes for which qualitative analysis was determined to be an appropriate approach.

Khosravi (2012) cited anti-Muslim prejudice that has drastically risen over the past decade as a backdrop for consideration in this research. The study found Muslim immigrants had several reasons for changing their names. Only 13% of participants cited reasons for changing their names that did not relate indirectly or directly to the host society in which they lived. Some of the respondents gave specific examples of how the discrimination they faced prior to their name change was not as significant a factor after changing their name. One male participant born in Lebanon had repeatedly failed to secure job interviews prior to his name change but was offered multiple jobs after changing his surname to one that sounded less Muslim.

A scholarly work published in 2003 examines Muslim identity from a very different perspective. Nilufer Gole (2003) examined the motivations of Muslims who adopt a stronger alignment with that stigmatized identity. In particular, Gole discussed the phenomenon of movement from identification as Muslim to embracing what he describes as a more radical Islamism.

Gole's (2003) identified actions he saw as representing "forms of religiosity offensively visible in the public sphere" (p. 815). One of those actions is the wear of the Islamic headscarf by Muslim women, something Gole described as a controversial and visible adoption of a symbol of stigma. Gole went further in this discussion of a fairly common and benign practice of Muslim women to state that wearing the veil "informs the public of a radical transformation from the concealment of Muslimness and its cultural attributes to the collective and public disclosure of Islam" (p. 816). He described wear of the veil as an example of Muslims taking something potentially considered a symbol of stigma and transforming it into a symbol of dignity to counteract perception of spoiled identity.

Gole (2003) focused on how the adoption of these symbols of stigma impacts interaction in the public sphere. In particular, he discussed how the challenges of balancing inclusionary politics with apprehension regarding incursion of Islamic religiosity in societal institutions. Gole's article closed with questions on how to address various challenges regarding those who adopt symbols of stigma. One of the main challenges he references is how the political inclination in some Western societies to contain the Islamic public presence may undermine principles of equality and openness those societies purport to uphold.

Factors in Radicalization

Education and Socialization

Education and socialization are two important influences in society. Pels and de Ruyter (2012) examined the influence education and socialization have on radicalization. One of the principles articulated by the authors is that there is increased prevalence of radicalization among young adults and adolescents and that vulnerability to radicalization is influenced by the developmental tasks inherent to these age groups that include development of social, personal, and political identities as well as relationship formation. They pointed to research indicating radicalization takes place at the intersection of personal trajectory and an enabling environment to reinforce their theory that the content and style of education provided by schools and families have a strong effect on whether youth become radicalized.

Pels and de Ruyter (2012) concluded there is insufficient literature to completely support their presumptions and that there is a general gap in literature regarding the impact of education and socialization on the radicalization process. This does not dampen their belief, however, that educational entities and families serve as "underappreciated sources of informal social control and social capitol that may constrain Islamic radicalism and right-wing extremism" (Pels & de Ruyter, 2012, p. 321). While this article focused on very specific societal influences rather than overall experience, it does reflect some of the social influence observed by Fleischmann et al. (2011) who found the particular experiences of Muslims with stigma and discrimination influenced the nature of their political involvement.

A comparative evidence analysis by Murshed and Pavan (2011) also indicated that radicalization does not occur in a vacuum but is connected to societal influences. The authors argued political factors and socioeconomic disadvantage as well as particular historical

grievances all contribute to radicalization. After providing background information on fundamentalism and individual identity, the article presents evidence of political, cultural, and socioeconomic disadvantage of Muslim minority populations in Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, and the Netherlands.

Another important component of the Murshed and Pavan's (2011) article is its examination of interaction between fear and hatred. In that examination, the authors discussed how some politicians and political parties in the West work toward advancement of self by preaching of the dangers Islam in general poses, particularly in the form of Muslim immigrants (Murshed & Pavan). They stated that, in the face of certain acts of violent extremism, hate may manifest itself in the form of Islamophobia that "acquires the nature of public good" (Murshed & Pavan, 2011, p. 268). As Bail (2012) indicated, the divide between Muslims and non-Muslims can be exacerbated by this type of Islamophobic fringe influence considering the emotional bias that may exist following acts of extremist violence.

Overall, evidence presented by Murshed and Pavan (2011) spoke to the need articulated by Barkdull et al. (2011) for governmental entities to have more accountability regarding civil rights issues and equal and fair treatment of members of Muslim minorities in Western societies. The unfair treatment documented includes such things as difficulty finding employment, educational disadvantage, disproportionate imprisonment, housing discrimination, political underrepresentation, and lack of religious freedom (Murshed & Pavan, 2011). Among the evidence presented is information regarding the experiences of Muslim children in Western European societies. For example, in Spain Muslims complained of their school-age children experiencing stigma and being overtly discriminated against by non-Muslim fellow students

(Murshed & Pavan, 2011) at a developmental stage in their lives and in a setting Pels and de

Ruyter (2012) would argue can be extremely important in the radicalization process.

Ganor (2012) examined how the particular mechanism of social disconnection and

alienation factors into the radicalization process of Muslim immigrants in Europe as well as how

it impacted Palestinians in the West Bank during popular uprising that occurred there in 1987.

While Ganor acknowledged differences in these two groups, he discussed many similarities.

Ganor's emphasized the concepts of inclusion, integration, identity, and prevention in countering

radicalization that he believed applies to both groups.

Ganor (2012) posited that for both Muslim immigrants in Europe and Palestinians in the

West Bank, frustration and alienation are connected to heightened susceptibility to radicalization

through incitement, indoctrination, education, and propaganda. He also indicates both groups

share an experience of alienation and search for identity, which can be addressed by voices of

radical Islam and jihadism that are present and ready to provide "tempting and simple magic

solutions" (Ganor, 2012, p. 594). Among Ganor's (2012) recommendations to address

radicalization is a call to encourage integration of children from Muslim communities within the

education systems of nations in which they live. This is a recommendation consistent with the

assertions Pels and de Ruyter (2012) made regarding the influence of education and

socialization in countering radicalization.

A critical discourse analysis by Hakimeh Saghaye-Biria (2012) of the University of

Tehran, Iran examines a particular event to study perception of Muslims and radicalization in the

United States. The event examined is the congressional hearing held in March of 2011 to discuss

"The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and That Community's

Response." The author studied the hearing in the context of what various groups refer to as an

"Islamophobic infrastructure" (p. 509) in the United States that propagates exaggerated threats of Islam and seeks to examine what the author describes as reproduced racism against Muslims in the United States.

Saghaye-Biria (2012) did this by comparing the input of two sides whose voices were heard during the hearing. He identified one side as defining radicalization as a problem unique to a Muslim community that fails to cooperate with law enforcement and stand up against extremists with the other side seeing the hearing as an attempt to scapegoat the Muslim community as a whole versus accurately viewing extremists as outliers. Saghaye-Biria examined the discourse between the two groups in detail with specific quotes from various speakers.

Saghaye-Biria's (2012) frustration with the discourse and the outcome of the hearing was evident in the article. Fleischmann et al. (2011) discussed how some Muslims in Western societies find protest and other such activities more effective than conventional political involvement, and Saghaye-Biria's (2012) provided some additional insight as to why that may be the case. Despite the varying viewpoints represented during the hearing by the two sides, Saghaye-Biria (2012) concluded the outcome is less than ideal. While individual Muslims were defended during the hearing and described as cooperative, loyal, and peaceful citizens, blame for encouraging the radicalization of Muslims in America was placed on heavily Islamic organizations (Saghaye-Biria, 2012). Saghaye-Biria (2012) concluded his discourse analysis by indicating that such blame limits opportunities for Muslim Americans to participate meaningfully in American politics.

Converts

Karagiannis (2012) examined factors related to radicalization of European converts to Islam, individuals who have adopted the faith as a change in religion or later in life not having

been raised as Muslims. Discrimination, abuse, and political grievance are cited specifically as factors in radicalization of European converts to Islam (Karagiannis, 2012). Karagiannis (2012) explained exploring the phenomenon of European converts to Islam becoming radicalized that the majority of converts to Islam adopt a liberal interpretation of that religion. However, law enforcement entities have concluded converts play prominent roles in many terrorist case studies and are often among the most zealous individuals in terrorist groups. Also, Karagiannis spoke to how emotional attachment to leaders of extreme jihadi movements or members within those movements may lead converts to radicalization.

One of the overarching themes of the Karagiannis (2012) article was that the majority of European converts to Islam do not radicalize. The author encouraged the "destigmatization of converts" (Karagiannis, 2012, p. 113) as a means by which the mechanisms of radicalization can be mitigated. Also, he states Muslims must be able to enjoy fully their liberties and civil rights along with all citizens (Karagiannis, 2012). Karagiannis advocated for interreligious dialogue and action to work against Islamophobia as well as legislation that facilitates non-discrimination and equality much as do Fleischmann et al. (2011) and Pels and de Ruyter (2012).

Experiences of Others

While the Karagiannis (2012) discussed how experienced discrimination and hardship can be an influence on a convert's radicalization, it also includes delves into other mechanisms for radicalization. Karagiannis included reference to the first-person account of a convert radicalized to extremism due to his observation of the experiences of others. In that account, obtained from memoirs posted on extremist websites, a French terrorist shared how viewing footage of the Chechen conflict and war in Bosnia was extremely instrumental in his eventual involvement in extremist jihadi causes.

Organizational Influences on Radicalization

Pena (2007) described a number of Muslim organizations in the United States including the Islamic Supreme Council of America, Council on American-Islamic Relations, and Muslim Public Affairs Council. Many of these organizations seek to address difficulties Muslims in America encounter in the areas of racial and religious profiling along with hate and bias crimes. Pena states organizations in the United States that advocate for Muslims seek to ensure their freedom of travel, press, communication, assembly, and religion are all respected. Additionally, they engage in education of law enforcement agencies, governmental entities, and educational institutions and foster understanding and communication between Muslim people and law enforcement.

Pena (2007) asserted Muslim organizations in the United States provide resources to assist Muslims in blending in more with society, enhance their knowledge of the country in which they reside and facilitate greater active involvement of Muslims in American society. Pena also stated the American public will eventually conclude that Muslims in the nation wish to promote peace through political involvement. Pena's promoted Muslim involvement in political coalitions or lobbies and opines failure to do so leaves Muslims in a state of culpability due to causes that do not represent the majority of those who follow Islam in the United States.

This runs counter to Saghaye-Biria's (2012) discourse analysis observation that American political actors place heavy blame on Islamic organizations for encouraging the radicalization of Muslims in America. This American tendency to place blame on Islamic organizations may be due to their perception of historical activity of organizations representing various Islamic and Islamist causes around the globe. One such organization that has established a presence in various European countries is the Muslim Brotherhood. Samir Amghar (2008) characterized the

Muslim Brotherhood as Islamist and describes the history of the organization and others in

France, Belgium, and Switzerland. This history includes Amghar's (2008) perspective on the

evolution of Islamist organizations toward a fundamentalism that has been associated with

radicalization and the Muslim Brotherhood's eventual shift in a different direction.

Amghar (2008) defined Islamism as a "politicized reading of Islam….continue inscribing

the Islamic reverent outside the strict religious framework" (p. 63). Islamism has been described

as representing a large fringe group who consider it symbolic of social protest against the

Western arrogance and hegemonism. Amgar (2008) explained how the Muslim Brotherhood and

other Islamist organizations initially struggled to establish a presence in the West, particularly

Europe, when Islamist refugees fled political oppression in their home countries. Their ability to

establish a presence was due largely to their focus on the political situation in their home

countries and their eventual acquisition of power in those nations and the understanding of

Western host countries that this was the case.

Amghar (2008) described how members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist

organizations eventually developed different objectives centered on re-Islamization of Muslims

living in the West and a neo-fundamentalism less preoccupied with traditional political processes

than what he describes as "political messianism" (p. 67) and militancy. These organizations did

not want to have a presence in Europe other than to prepare for re-acquisition of power in their

home countries, and this was reflected in their discourse. Ultimately, this type of discourse only

weakened the influence of these organizations, and they began to engage in discourse in a much

different socio-political dimension, one that encourages Muslims in Europe to be true to their

faith and also exemplary citizens of Europe and civically involved. In particular, the Muslim

Brotherhood has made specific efforts to integrate Muslim youth into European society as part of

its overarching efforts to promote application of the Koranic text in the context of European

society. Amghar described this an Islamist trend toward effecting change in the world without

taking power.

Similar adaptation can be seen in Yanasmayan's (2010) examination of Turkish Islamic

organizations operating in Belgium. Yanasmayan (2010) provided information regarding the

strategic evolution of *Diyanet,* the Turkish Islamic Foundation of Belgium (TIBF), and *Milli*

Gorus, the Islamic Federation of Belgium (IFB). Yanasmayan relied on two types of

information; secondary data from literature and qualitative data collected through interviews of

and discussions with leaders of the organizations (Yanasmayan, 2010). The same theme of

movement toward integration observed by Amghar (2008) was present in Yanasmayan's (2010)

article. While the organizations may consider themselves to have an "imagined community"

(Yanasmayan, 2010, p. 156) rooted in Turkey, the concerns they seek to address are local to the

Muslim population in Belgium, and they are both working hard to integrate into political

processes civic involvement (Yanasmayan, 2010).

Yukleyen (2009) spoke to the same phenomenon observed by Yanasmayan (2010) and

discourse discussed by Amghar (2008). Yukleyen (2009) also looked at Turkish Islamic

organizations in Europe but focuses on their activity in the Netherlands. Yukleyen (2009)

asserted, based on his examination of these organizations and other data, there is no singular

Muslim experience in Europe, but that there is a diversity of experience. He further posited that

Muslim organizations do not bring extremism from their home countries or, conversely, conform

completely to European societal norms (Yukleyen, 2009). Rather, they serve as intermediaries

working to negotiate between the religious and social needs of Muslims and governmental

policies that impact them (Yukleyen, 2009).

One component of the Yukleyen (2009) article was the author's focus on the opportunities for leadership inherent in Islamic organizations in Western societies. Yukleyen stated these leaders can have an important role not just in assisting Muslims in their religious and social lives but can also be key in developing Islamic interpretations that subvert stereotypes associated with Islam that paint the faith as intolerant, oppressive of women, and violent. While current events of violence on the part of radicalized individuals may cause it to appear otherwise, Yukleyen believed his analysis of Islamic organizations in the Netherlands points to Islam that is adapting in Europe and localizing.

Gamal Mostafa (2007) published a research article addressing the stereotyping mentioned by Yukleyen (2009) and the manner in which Islamic universities and organizations can work to counter them. Mostafa's (2007) study used a two-pronged questionnaire gathering information on the image of Muslims and Islam in Western Media as well as suggestions for the roles Islamic organizations and universities can play in correcting images of Muslims living in the West and their faith. The questionnaire was administered to Muslims residing in the West who were contacted through Muslim Student Associations and Islamic centers in the United States and Canada and was used to answer questions related to the nature of the relationship between Islam and the West; the main components of distorted images of Muslims and Islam in Western media; and proposed ways in which Islamic organizations and universities can correct those distorted images (Mostafa, 2007).

Mostafa's findings reinforced literature he included in his 2007 article indicating Muslims and Islam are negatively portrayed by media in the West. In addition to bias, lack of knowledge, and negative portrayal, some of Mostafa's (2007) participants indicated Muslims living in the West are vulnerable to hate crimes. Participants made recommendations for

countering these societal influences that included leveraging technology through multiple media formats to provide information such as inaccurate history and misinformation about Muslims and Islam. They also recommended collaboration between universities and organizations with non-governmental organizations to establish information centers and organize conferences and other events to correct misconceptions about Muslims and Islam.

The phenomenon of groupthink related to rational and irrational radicalization is the subject of examination by Tsintsadze-Maass and Maass (2014). The authors observed that groupthink is not an absolution of an individual's responsibility for involvement in violent extremism, rather it reflects an individual's choice to adhere to irrational logic that results in counterproductive activity (Tsintsadze-Maass & Maass, 2014). However, they also assert that external influences can reduce factors such as isolation that may lead to radicalized groupthink (Tsintsadze-Maass & Maass, 2014). Groups that adhere to radicalized groupthink may present a threat within society (Tsintsadze-Maass & Maass, 2014). Conversant, responsive government can perform a dual function of providing a forum for group to air grievances and reduce the likelihood those groups will evolve into a societal threat (Tsintsadze-Maass & Maass, 2014).

Psychology of Terrorism

While modern terrorism is an ill-defined concept, it has deep historical roots (Bongar et al., 2007). As Bongar et al. (2007) explained, the word terrorism in English originates from the "regime de al terreur" (p. 3) conducted by French revolutionaries including Maximillian Robespierre who declared that "Terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue" (p. 3). Experts who study the concept explain terrorism is fundamentally about psychology as it entails acts of political violence strategically designed to cause fear in civilian populations (Bongar et al., 2007). Contemporarily, terrorism is generally

"associated with political violence perpetrated by groups without the power of the state" (Bongar et al., 2007, p. 13). Radicalization is a related concept that has been defined by leading researchers on the subject of terrorism as a precursor to terrorism and the process through which individuals develop extremist beliefs and ideologies (Horgan, 2014).

Borum (2004) examined the psychology of terrorism in his capacity as the Director of the Psychology of Terrorism Initiative. That publication explores multiple aspects of terrorism to include individual and group concepts related to terrorist ideology and functioning. Also included is discussion on the state of research regarding terrorism. One of the sections of Borum's publication was dedicated to outlining psychological approaches to understanding violence. In that section, Borum included drive theory as it pertains to frustration and aggression. Borum discussed how the link between frustration and aggression has been cited as a "master explanation" (p. 12) for understanding why humans engage in violence. While this may at first seem a highly simplistic way to view violence, Borum referred to more nuanced aspects of this theory that have developed over time and indicate the existence of cues to aggression are an important component that prompt aggression facilitated but not directly caused by frustration.

Borum (2004) also stated there are individual factors that contribute to a person's involvement in terrorist that in include identity, injustice, and belonging. Similar to Karagiannis (2012), Borum (2004) posited there is no single explanation for why an individual becomes a terrorist, but that some apparent common vulnerabilities do exist. He opined promising areas of research appear to focus on stages and processes associated with adoption of extremist ideologies (Borum, 2004).

The need for additional research was also highlighted by Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010). These authors used two case studies to demonstrate their opinion regarding what could

be considered conventional wisdom on radicalization. They indicated that conventional wisdom may hold that more vocal political engagement could be an indication of potential for radical action and present a case study demonstration this is not always the case (Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010). However, one could argue with the correctness of their identified conventional wisdom. There is empirical evidence for this contrarian argument presented in the research by Fleischmann et al. (2011), which found discrimination might actually prompt disengagement from established political action.

This diversity of opinion serves to support the assertions of Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) that "simplicity is not a word that can be associated with understanding (violent) radicalization" (p. 900). One of the complexities discussed by the authors in their article is how the term radicalization itself has created problems in Europe. They indicated that term facilitates labeling used to stigmatize certain Muslim individuals and groups and exclude them from political processes. Githens-Mazer and Lambert asserted this is done by governmental entities that use the label to distinguish between those they consider "'good Muslims' from 'bad Muslims'" (p. 901), the difference between the two often hinging upon which of the two is supportive of particular governmental policies.

Canter et al. (2014) addressed the complexity discussed by Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) through study of differences in personal constructs of terrorists. The article concerns a study where a total of 49 individuals convicted in India of high-profile crimes of terrorism consented to provide narrative accounts of their life story (Canter et al., 2014). Repertory grids were used to facilitate rating of various elements of the participants' life stories by the participants themselves (Canter et al., 2014). The article focused in depth on the results regarding

participants who had very different roles within a terrorist organization, from leader to bomb-carrier (Canter et al., 2014).

The study found personal constructs varied greatly depending on the role of an individual within a terrorist organization (Canter et al., 2014). Specifically, Canter et al. (2014) found participants in leadership roles within the organizations were more inclined to maintain belief in the ideals embraced by their organization even after imprisonment, while lower-ranking individuals continued to feel less convinced of the validity of the ideology they once espoused. One interesting aspect of this story is that it did not necessarily examine the personal construct of an individual acting alone, a so-called "lone-wolf" or "self-radicalized" individual. Canter et al. conclude their article by cautioning against over-generalization in developing an understanding the radicalization process.

Valsiner (2009) also encouraged innovative thinking in his discussion of concepts associated with developing international psychology. He stated early psychology moved in the direction of examining the psyche through mechanistic means rather than "making sense of human subjective experience" (p. 2) in order to find solutions to basic human problems. Valsiner argued psychology is moving in the direction of developmental science that includes a holistic approach. That holistic approach includes examination of total functioning of an individual through complete study of structures and processes such as cognitions, plans, conduct, perceptions, values, motives, goals, biological factors, and other aspects.

Valsiner (2009) also spoke to his belief in the emerging importance of abductive synthesis in methodology in future research. He feels synthesis goes beyond what is known and deductively assumed and allows for the creation of new ideas. Specifically, Valsiner asserted this approach openly studies phenomena rather than takes positions. This principle espoused by

Valsiner is evident in the research, discussions, and recommendations of multiple individuals who have studied individual and societal factors relating to the radicalization process and found complications associated with reliance on conventional wisdom or a single explanation.

McGilloway et al. (2015) undertook a systematic review of literature on processes associated with extremism and radicalization of Muslims in Western societies. As with much other research, they found the evidence indicates no singular route or cause can be identified as responsible for an individual's radicalization or involvement in extremist activity (McGilloway et al., 2015). They describe radicalization as process whereby an individual experiences change, with some individuals being more vulnerable if they have certain experience or if precipitating factors exist (McGilloway et al., 2015).

Interestingly, McGilloway et al. (2015) found the only common characteristic of radicalized individuals in their research was they tend to be considered normal and well-integrated. Also, males in their twenties are typically identified as the probable group to commit acts of violent extremism (McGilloway et al., 2015). The review conducted by McGilloway et al. (2015) found research indicating some second-generation Muslims in Western societies may experience challenges in balancing cultural expectations with the Western culture in which they live. As in other literature, McGilloway et al. (2015) identified grievances and social circumstances appeared to be factors leading those radicalized to take part in acts of violence. The authors conclude that, while it is evident an individual's radicalization is influenced by wide-ranging local, external, and personal factors, there is a lack of empirical research regarding specifically what drives individuals to violent extremism (McGilloway et al., 2015).

Terrorism was once popularly viewed as a clinical disorder, later to be considered more of a result of individual personality traits (Leistedt, 2016). According to Leistedt (2016), these

theories are largely discounted by contemporary scholars in favor of various other assertions.
Among those are that individual psychopathology is not sufficient for understanding the reason
people become involved in terrorism; personality traits alone cannot explain why some
individuals become terrorists while others do not; and that conceptual, theoretical, and
methodological difficulties exist with regard to personality traits as an explanation for
involvement in terrorism (Leistedt, 2016).

Leistedt (2016) offered alternative approaches to understanding the radicalization
process. For example, when developing profiles of terrorists, behavioral analysis may be more
productive than using demographic or psychological descriptions (Leisteidt, 2016). Leisteidt
(2016) explained evidence indicates individuals in Europe who have become radicalized tend to
share common characteristics or experiences and expresses a preference to discuss the
radicalization process in terms of risk factors instead of terrorist personality.

Acculturation and Multiculturalism

Foundational international psychology literature discusses the complexity of
acculturation. While acculturation in an individual context entails changes resulting from contact
with people, groups, and influences within society that are culturally different from that
individual (Schwartz et al., 2010), psychological acculturation involves "changes that an
individual experiences as a result of being in contact with other cultures and as a result of
participating in the process of acculturation that his or her cultural or ethnic group is undergoing"
(Berry et al., 2002, p. 350). Vaughn (2019) explained the process of acculturation is multifaceted
and includes internalizing a new culture, switching frames, continuous negotiation of identity in
a multicultural context, and determining cultural construct availability.

Groups generally adopt one of four strategies for acculturation: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization (Vaughn, 2019). Vaugh (2019) explained that integration involves individuals having routine interaction with a dominant culture while maintaining their own, and separation occurs when individuals maintain their original cultural identity and eschew interaction with a dominant culture. Assimilation entails individuals interacting with a dominant culture while abandoning their own while marginalization in the context of acculturation occurs when individuals abandon their original cultural identity but have minimal interaction with a dominant culture (Vaughn, 2019).

Individuals in the process of acculturation may experience acculturation stress that can affect them psychologically and with negative impact to their health and self-esteem (Vaughn, 2019). Vaughn (2019) also discussed strategies for negotiating identity during the acculturation process. When individuals blend two or more identities into a single identity that is multicultural in nature, they engage in integration while alternation occurs when individuals situationally switch their cultural identity (Vaughn, 2019). Vaugh (2019) explained that synergy happens if individuals develop an original multicultural identity that is not the sum of other identities, and compartmentalization occurs when separation of cultural identities is maintained due to an individual's conflict with meshing multiple identities or feeling those identities are in conflict.

The theme of complexity is again present in an article by Kim (2013). Kim spoke to the ideal of a new world order where a better quality of life exists for people and dangers associated with dehumanization are limited but also delves into the complicated nature of multiculturalism. Included in this discussion are instances where specific societies have concluded multiculturalism was a failure. Germany and Great Britain are presented as examples; with both nations' leaders stating immigrants had failed to assimilate into their host nation's culture.

Kim (2013) posed questions regarding what multiculturalism should resemble that include a focus on inter-group struggles for cultural dominance as well as discussion of provocative opinion on acculturation into democratic societies. Kim cited Claude Levi-Strauss' skepticism of the possibility of a global culture and his feelings that people would always discover ways of producing differences. There is no true conclusion in Kim's article except that globalization has its limits with respect to culture and that multiculturalism, globalization, and development of ethics to address these phenomena is a continuous process that may slow or accelerate but is always ongoing.

Lynch (2013) acknowledged how assumptions regarding Muslim youth in the United Kingdom have changed since the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001. Specifically, this population has transitioned from one viewed as multifaceted regarding characteristics and concerns to being considered a societal threat that must be managed through political interventions (Lynch, 2013). Lynch (2013) described how these youth are subject to suspicion regarding their loyalties to the country in which they reside and debates regarding cultural assimilation, with some arguing there is a need for these young people to totally assimilate as a means to prove their loyalty.

Lynch (2013) argued that evidence indicates this total assimilation is not constructive, as the Muslim youth in question do not find being Muslim incompatible with being British. In fact, Lynch (2013) pointed to research finding that individual and communal expressions of faith on the part of Muslim youth increasingly incorporate elements of British identity. Likewise, increases in religiosity and religious symbol use by British Muslim youth is not a rejection of Britishness, but manifests greater security in their identity and confidence they can incorporate multiple elements in that identity (Lynch, 2013). While Lynch (2013) explained this research is

an important contribution in addressing assumptions regarding Muslim youth in Western

societies, the author explains there is a general lack of research focusing on the perspectives

derived from the lived experiences of Muslim youth in Western societies.

Prejudice, Discrimination, and Stigma

Intergroup Threat Theory

Intergroup threat theory is explored by Stephan et al. (2009) in a manner that sheds light

on Kim's (2013) multiculturalism discussion. Stephan et al. (2009) explained an intergroup

threat experienced by one group when that group perceives a different group has the potential to

cause harm to them in either a realistic or symbolic context. An example of a realistic threat

would be lost resources where a symbolic threat may present potential harm to the validity of a

group's meaning system (Stephan et al., 2009). It is important to note these threats are not

necessarily true threats but rather are those perceived by an ingroup as being posed by an

outgroup (Stephan et al., 2009).

Stephan et al. (2009) presented how these perceived threats have an impact on intergroup

relations in a manner that is impacted significantly by which groups possess power in society.

The authors discuss how groups with lower power are at the mercy of more powerful groups and

are therefore more susceptible to perceiving threats. Groups with higher levels of power, on the

other hand, may be less susceptible to perceiving threats but are more likely to act as a group in

response to threats as they have the resources with which to do so.

Culture also plays a role in perception of threat that can be observed in populations where

there are immigrant populations whose cultures differ from that of their host nation (Stephan et

al., 2009). The host nation group may perceive the immigrant population as a threat to its values

if that immigrant population persists in maintaining their own culture versus adopting that of the

host. The immigrant population group seeking to maintain their culture may feel threatened by

pressure to assume host culture values that conflict with their own. Research regarding this type

of intergroup conflict has shown that a group who read about another group with values differing

from their own perceived an increased level of symbolic threat from that group. They did not

however, experience a change in perceived realistic threat.

Stephan et al. (2009) concluded their discussion on intergroup threat theory by discussing

the impact of behavior on intergroup relations with regard to responses and perceptions. They

indicate that if a group responds to a perceived threat with aggression, they are likely to force a

response from the other group. Over time, this can lead to increased group identification on the

part of both ingroups and outgroups and social dominance orientation. Stephan et al. indicated

additional understanding of the problems posed by perceived threat will be instrumental in

reducing those threats and their harmful consequences.

Stereotyping

The empirical study of stereotyping is a new and evolving area of inquiry (Nelson, 2009).

Stereotyping is described as beliefs about people from social groups that are over-generalized in

nature (Vaughn, 2019) and "the traits that we view as characteristic of social groups, or of

individual members of those groups, and particularly those that differentiate groups from each

other…the traits that come to mind quickly when we think about the groups" (Nelson, 2009,

p.3). Stereotypes are present in individuals' cognitive structures including schemas and are a

function of cognition through social categorization, driven be a human desire for simplicity

(Nelson, 2009).

The categorization associated with stereotyping involves "differentiating ingroup from

outgroup members under concerns of maintaining one's social identity in the presence of

competing groups" (Nelson, 2009, p. 3). Stereotypes may be positive; however, they are more

prevalently negative and problematic in their tendency to be inaccurate (Nelson, 2009).

Additionally, the use of stereotypes is inherently unfair as it facilitates judgment of people

through dubious categorization rather than their individual characteristics and actions (Nelson,

2009).

Social identity threat, described as "a state of psychological discomfort that people

experience when confronted by an unflattering group of individual reputation" (Nelson, 2009, p.

154), is associated with stereotyping. There is often an additional mental burden experienced by

individuals with a social identity outside the dominant culture (Nelson, 2009). Significant

evidence indicates that there is anxiety associated with attempting to disprove negative

stereotypes, long-term impact to individual achievement, and disidentification "which involves

detaching self-esteem from outcomes" (Nelson, 2009, p. 164) to avoid vulnerability.

Prejudice

Plous (2003) asserted prejudice is connected closely to the way ingroup and outgroup

members explain behavior of the other group and that prejudice can serve as a means by which

people maintain their self-esteem. Research supports that people have implicit preference for

things that support their identity and self-concept and that ingroup biases allow people a

mechanism to bolster their feelings about themselves. This principle is captured in social identity

theory, which holds that one component of maintaining self-esteem is group identification to

include a belief that one's own group is superior to other groups.

While prejudice and discrimination have traditionally been studied with a focus on

behavior and attitudes of those who are members of a majority group, Plous (2003) asserted the

field of psychology is enriched when the experiences of those who experience prejudice and

discrimination are explored. Plous identified several benefits to research from this perspective. Those include the fact that a more comprehensive understanding of intergroup and interpersonal aspects of discrimination and prejudice can be obtained. Also, greater information regarding health and psychological ramifications of being exposed to discrimination and prejudice are yielded. Finally, research from this perspective can illuminate effective ways in which discrimination and prejudice can be decreased.

Summary

The suggestion by Plous (2003) that research regarding prejudice and discrimination be conducted from the perspective of those by whom it is experienced supports the approach utilized for this study. While there has been ample inquiry regarding many related topics, research regarding the potential relationship between stigma and marginalization of Muslims in Western societies and vulnerability to radicalization from the perspective of that population is not extensive. Exploration of this nature has the potential to shed light on the experiences of a population whose members have been involved in violent intergroup conflict and possibly suggest ways in which that conflict can be mitigated.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Method

Chapter Overview

This phenomenological study was designed to explore the phenomenon of stigma and marginalization of Muslims in Western societies and their perception of how this impacts vulnerability to radicalization. This chapter identifies research questions along with the design and rationale for the selected designs. Population, sampling, and procedures are discussed with an emphasis on incorporating reciprocity in the research process. Validity considerations particular to the qualitative, phenomenological approach are identified as are instrumentation, data analysis steps, assumptions, and limitations. The chapter concludes with consideration of ethical assurances.

Research Questions

This research applied phenomenological reflection on data elicited through semistructured interviews of Muslims in Western society to delve into the shared experiences of that population. The questions this research sought to answer were:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of stigma and marginalization on the part of Muslim populations in Western contexts?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of the impact of stigma and marginalization on the part of Muslim populations in Western contexts?

These questions were designed to elicit participant responses that can provide valuable information regarding how factors associated with intergroup conflict may manifest in acts of terrorism committed by radicalized individuals who chose an extreme and violent worldview over the legitimate tenets of Islam. This approach is consistent with Plous's (2003) assertion that research exploring the perspective of those who experience prejudice presents several benefits.

Plous (2003) identified those benefits as obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of intergroup and interpersonal aspects of discrimination and prejudice; yielding greater information regarding health and psychological ramifications of being exposed to discrimination and prejudice; and illuminating effective ways in which discrimination and prejudice can be decreased.

Research Design

This research utilized phenomenological design Creswell (2013) described as study of the common meaning of the lived experiences of multiple individuals pertaining to a phenomenon. According to Creswell (2013), the essential objective of this design is to distill the experiences of multiple individuals to describe "the universal essence" (p. 76) of that phenomenon to include what was experienced and how it was experienced. Some of the philosophical perspectives associated with a phenomenological approach were particularly appropriate for this research. Creswell (2013) explained phenomenological research represents a traditional philosophical search for wisdom that suspends judgment. Also, Creswell (2013) discussed how phenomenological research recognizes consciousness is not necessarily directed toward a tangible object, but rather an individual's consciousness of something. This aspect of phenomenology is applicable to the perception of symbolic threat as discussed by Stephan et al. (2009) and fundamental to this research's conceptual framework regarding cognitive principles associated with prejudice and discrimination and how those constructs relate to social conflict.

Population and Sample

Participants for this research consisted of adult members of Muslim populations recruited from communities in the Denver, Colorado area. Participants were individuals from within diverse Muslim communities, to include immigrant and convert populations. Participants from

were not screened to determine whether they had directly experienced stigma or marginalization, and this research did not seek to recruit participants actively or previously involved in any sort of extremist activity. These participants were selected through purposeful maximum variation sampling as described by Seidman (2013). Specifically, variation was sought with regard to age, gender, education level, and professional background.

Muslim participants were recruited through outreach with individuals associated with Muslim leaders involved in initiatives within their communities to counter violent extremism. These individuals were representative of the formal and informal gatekeepers described by (Seidman, 2013). A contemporary *U.S. News and World Report* (Welsh, 2015) article on efforts to counter terrorist recruitment in American cities provides examples of appropriate individuals including leaders of organizations such as the Somali American Task Force in Minnesota or city council members in those cities involved in efforts to build community resilience against radicalization. Prioritization was given to ensuring that an emphasis on truly voluntary participation was maintained (Seidman, 2013). Every care was given during recruitment to engage with participants in a manner that fostered trust, respect, and a spirit of reciprocity.

In total, eight participants were enrolled in this study. The number of participants was balanced to ensure sufficiency of information while avoiding saturation of information, criteria discussed by Seidman (2013). As Seidman explained, in-depth interviewing through a phenomenological lens "gives enormous power to the stories of a relatively few participants" (p. 59). Creswell (2013) reinforced the weight of individuals stories and appropriateness of a limited number of participants in many qualitative studies as the purpose of such research is to elucidate the specific and particular rather than general information. While Creswell (2013) cited

successful narrative qualitative research including only one or two participants, the eight

participants included in this study allowed for important diversity of participant background.

Procedures

This research began with gatekeeper outreach to potential participants using a script

provided by the researcher. The purpose of this study and research questions were shared with

potential participants along with an explanation of the need for adult individuals to participate in

the research through the sharing of their lived experiences as Muslims in Western society. The

concept of reciprocity as discussed by Creswell (2009) was central to this outreach, and this

research was collaborative with leaders in Muslim communities. Specifically, these leaders and

the communities they represent understood the benefits of the research to those communities and

the human condition overall as Creswell (2009) indicated is appropriate.

Participants recruited through this outreach were encouraged to share their lived

experiences through semistructured interviews designed to comprehensively address the

questions associated with this research. This recognized the need for flexibility given the

context-bound nature of effective questioning (Seidman, 2013). Questions were open-ended in

structure as this format, "establishes the territory to be explored while allowing the participant to

take any direction he or she wants" (Seidman, 2013, p. 87). Written and audio-recorded

documentation of these interviews was accomplished based on the informed consent of the

participant. This informed consent included the following components outlined by Creswell

(2009): researcher identification; sponsoring institution identification; information on method of

participant selection; research purpose; participation benefits; type and level of participant

involvement; potential risks associated with participation; assurance of ability to withdraw from

participation at any time; and points of contact who could answer questions.

Validity

Credibility of this research was established through a focus on gathering evidence that presents the "compelling whole" (Creswell, 2013, p. 246) compiled of evidence bits and pieces. This research was mindful of the need for construct validation that focuses on recognition of existing constructs rather than imposing any theories or constructs on participants. This was particularly important given the research sought to gather information on the lived experiences of Muslims in Western society rather than impose any presuppositions regarding stigma or marginalization encountered.

Creswell (2013) discussed clarification of bias held by the researcher as a validation strategy in qualitative research that seems applicable to the proposed research. This includes contemplation of prejudices, past experience, biases, and orientations that may shape interpretation and study approach (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) also provided information on the significance of transferability in qualitative research, relating this allows for the potential findings to be applied in other contexts. The universal nature of prejudice, discrimination, and stigma in relation to social conflict as discussed by Plous (2003) and Stephan et al. (2009) indicated this could be possible in the case of this research. Attention was paid to including the "rich, thick description" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252) Creswell said contribute to transferability.

Validity of this research was also addressed through bracketing incorporated in the data analysis as described by Adu (2019) to increase the credibility of this study's findings. This step taken to intensify the researcher's engagement with the data allowed for addressing preconceptions and perspectives regarding the phenomenon examined along with their sources. Bracketing bolstered the validity of common themes, categories, and patterns identified through the analysis process by curtailing the influence of preconceived ideas during coding. Bracketing

was particularly important to the researcher given their experience interacting personally and professionally with members of the Muslim faith who had shared their lived experiences, positive and negative, in Western contexts.

Instrumentation

This research utilized a semistructured interview protocol for data collection. Interview protocol included an icebreaker question at the beginning as encouraged by Creswell (2009). Nine core questions related to the research questions followed including a wrap-up query to the participant as suggested by Creswell (2009). Two additional questions elicited suggestions and asked if the participant had any questions for the researcher. The researcher served as the interviewer during data collection and controlled for personal bias by following Creswell's (2013) guidance and, prior to conducting interviews, addressed their personal experience with Muslims in Western society as well as prejudice, stigma, and marginalization directed toward that population. This allowed for a focus on the lived experiences of participants versus influence of researcher bias.

Data Processing

Data was processed as outlined by Creswell's (2013) description of phenomenological analysis and representation. This was done in a mindful manner strategized to place ultimate value on the experiences and perspective of participants. The process included developing a list of significant statements obtained during interviews to compile a collection of non-overlapping, non-repetitive statements. Significant statements were then grouped into larger information units or themes, also referred to as "meaning units" (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). These statements and themes were used to generate a description of what participants in the research had experienced related to the examined phenomenon, what Creswell also refers to as "textural description"

(2013, p. 193). This was followed by drafting of a "structural description" (2013, p. 193)

documenting how participants experienced the phenomenon. The final step was to combine these

two descriptions into a composite providing the essence of the examined experience.

Coding structure was developed via a purely inductive grounded method as described by

Jeong (2009) to allow participant experience to drive analysis. The overarching coding structure

related to understanding the experience of Muslims in Western societies with subsequent

elements of coding structure developed from interview transcripts as perspective gathered related

to the research question. A structured process was followed whereby data was coded, sorted, and

synthesized with the ultimate objective of developing theories regarding what participant

experience reflected regarding the research questions posed.

Reading and memoing were critical in forming initial categories within the data and

identifying perspectives within those categories as Creswell (2013) describes. During this state

of the data analysis spiral, the researcher was mindful of how initial categories presented related

to the research question. The memoing aspect of this stage included reference to these questions

as the researcher completed an initial read of interview transcripts. The researcher utilized

reflective journaling as outlined by Creswell (2009) during the initial read to identify feelings

and facilitate self-assessment.

The researcher used in vivo and concept coding as first cycle coding methods for specific

reasons. Saldana (2016) explained that In Vivo Coding is particularly appropriate for beginning

qualitative researchers. The researcher also values that in vivo coding is appropriate for "studies

that prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (Saldana, 2016, p. 106). Concept Coding was

used in conjunction with in vivo coding as it provides a more macro view of data collected

(Saldana, 2016).

Creswell (2013) identified some advantages associated with use of computer programs in qualitative data analysis. Among those advantages is the manner in which a computer program allows for information to be organized for ease of reference according to topic or theme (Creswell, 2013). The researcher chose to utilize the NVivo 12 program to facilitate first cycle coding in the data analysis process based on Adu's (2019) description of the system as friendly to the user and possessing a number of unique functions. As Schoenfelder (2011) noted, the NVivo program provides various options for querying, coding, display, and exporting to support qualitative analysis.

All interview transcripts were imported into the NVivo program with each participant's interview assigned a case number. Anchor codes and nodes were identified associated with the research questions and participant responses. Significant statements from each case obtained during interviews were grouped under nodes appropriate for that specific empirical indicator. This strategy provided a sorted foundation from which units of meaning could be derived.

Use of the NVivo program was critical in distilling the large quantity of data obtained during participant interviews to more manageable units of meaning. Once coding was accomplished in this fashion utilizing the NVivo program, the researcher transitioned to a manual coding approach to facilitate greater interaction with the actual words of participants in a more comprehensive manner. Theoretical coding through cross case analysis was the researcher's choice as a second cycle coding method.

Saldana (2016) described theoretical coding as a means to systematically integrate categories and concepts in a manner that indicates a phenomenon's theoretical explanation. Saldana (2016) describes different types of analytical memos associated with the coding process. Throughout this process, the researcher accomplished analytical memos that focused on

emergent categories, patterns, concepts, and themes. These reflected on how the researcher personally related to the participants interviewed and the phenomenon examined; emerging theories; and considerations regarding the study's future directions.

The researcher incorporated aspects of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), described by Nizza et al. (2021) as, at its best, striking a balance between the commonalities and individualities present in participant accounts. Structured cross case analysis was utilized to analyze the patterns of connection within unique participant experiences as outlined by the IPA approach. The researcher documented meaning units in individual transcripts using references within transcripts associated with codes. These references included rich statements of perspective from specific participants. Emerging themes present across transcripts were noted. Superordinate themes were then identified from within those emerging themes.

Use of IPA principles allowed for a sense of coherence across participant perspectives that ensured emerging themes, superordinate themes, and overarching themes were identified in a manner that ensured each theme contributed in an interconnected manner to the overall findings as Nizza et al. (2021) indicated is in a marker of quality analysis. The objective was to respect the contributions and perspectives of participants by developing a revelatory and cohesive narrative through an orderly but dynamic approach to best facilitate meaning-making on the part of the reader this study. Cross case analysis provided the structure for this orderly approach. Upon completion of that analysis, five common master themes emerged. These themes were nuanced existence, frustrating representation, complexity of interaction, vulnerability, and resilience factors.

Figure 3

Data Analysis Steps
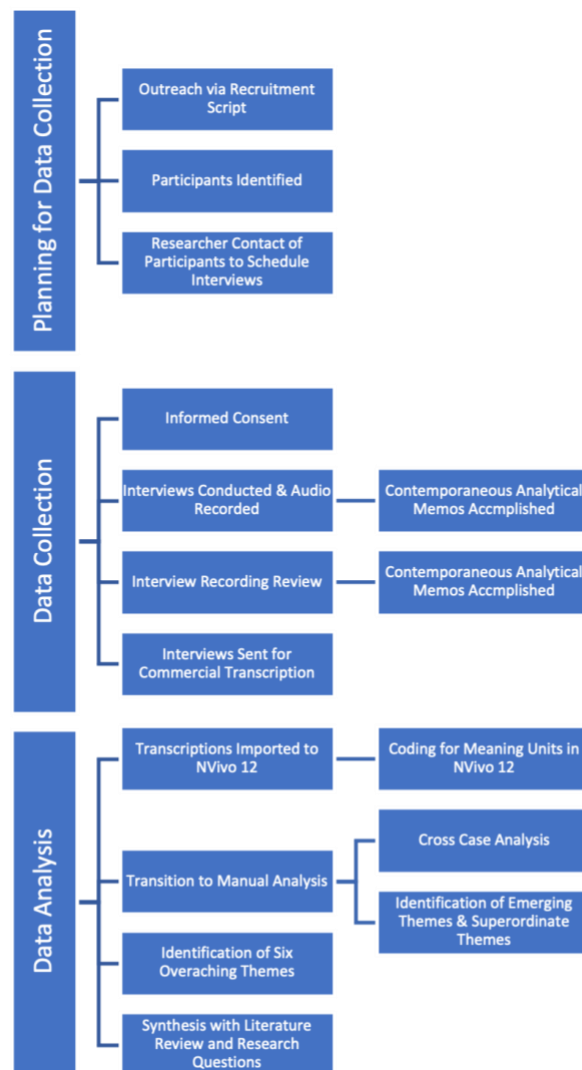
Assumptions

The success of this proposed phenomenological research was based on several key assumptions. First, this research proposal assumed leaders within Muslim communities in American cities possessed significant influence necessary to collaborate in recruitment of participants. Secondly, it was assumed recruited participants would be willing to share their lived experiences as Muslims in Western society and would do so candidly. A final key assumption of

this research was that the researcher would remain objective and avoid allowing personal

experience to interfere with appropriate analysis of data obtained.

Limitations

While the current societal and political environments drove the relevance and need for

the proposed research, they were also outside the researcher's control. It was possible current

events, government policy, or political climate might have influenced the willingness of

individuals to participate in this research. The researcher worked to overcome this potential

challenge by fostering the collaborative relationship of reciprocity described by Creswell (2009)

with Muslim leaders in the Denver area.

While the participants interviewed possessed diverse backgrounds, the number of

participants and specific geographical area in which they were located represent an additional

limitation of this research. The participants interviewed were from different economic means, but

all lived secure with shelter and life's necessities. The perspectives of participants in a different

economic situation, for example from refugee populations within the United States, would likely

yield data reflective of that specific context. Additionally, all participants included in this study

were adults. The perspectives of adolescents would likely include nuance inherent to that

population.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of this research is that the participants were all

individuals comfortable with freely discussing their sincere perspectives regarding their lived

experiences as Muslims living in Western society. Participants in this study generously shared

information regarding their personal beliefs and experiences with an individual, the researcher,

with whom they had not previously interacted. It would be logical to infer that the perspectives

of individuals whose background might make them hesitant to do so could vary significantly from that provided by the participants in this research.

Ethical Assurances

Cone and Foster (2010) distilled evidence considerations down to a list that focuses on protection of participants. The first consideration they list is evaluation of the ethical acceptability of the research. This was addressed by submission of the researcher's proposal for this study through The Chicago School of Professional Psychology Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements and processes. Participants in this research were confidential versus anonymous, and activity associated with this research posed minimal risk to participants. All participants were involved in research based on fair, clear, informed, voluntary agreement. There was no need for deception or concealment in this research, and it was clearly communicated to participants that they could withdraw or decline participation at any time.

Participants were protected from any emotional harm associated with this research which Cone and Foster (2010) stated is an ethical obligation. The research presented no threat of physical harm, discomfort, or danger. Participants were debriefed following data collection, so that any undesirable consequences associated with this research could be corrected. No such consequences occurred during the interviews, and strict confidentiality was maintained.

Summary

This study was approached with a foundation in ethical conduct, particularly with regard to participants. The research was structured around sound data collection with a focus on mindful collection and analysis of data that facilitated credibility and transferability. The concept of reciprocity was carried through this study with recognition that key assumptions in this research

rested in the willingness and ability of members of the Muslim community to support this

research and communicate openly regarding their lived experiences.

Chapter 4: Results

As stated previously, this research endeavored to explore the perspective of Muslim immigrants living in Western societies as well as Muslim individuals born in Western societies to develop a more comprehensive understanding of relevant intergroup and interpersonal aspects of their lived experiences regarding stigma and marginalization. Specifically, this study sought perspective on how the impact of stigma and marginalization may potentially influence an individual's trajectory toward radicalization. The method of inquiry for this research was phenomenological reflection on data elicited through semistructured interviews focusing on the perceptions of Muslim individuals in Denver, Colorado regarding stigma and marginalization and the impact of those influences on psychological outcomes.

The questions central to this research were:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of stigma and marginalization on the part of Muslim populations in Western contexts?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of the impact of stigma and marginalization on the part of Muslim populations in Western contexts?

Setting

All interviews associated with this research were conducted in the metropolitan area of Denver, Colorado. Participants were provided the opportunity to select the locations of their interviews. Male participants all requested to be interviewed in public places, three selecting coffeeshops and one electing to be interviewed in a community room of the mosque he attended. That participant's wife and young children were also present during the interview. Two of the female participants invited the researcher to their homes. One of the female participants requested to be interviewed in her office at her place of work. The other female participant

arranged for a private meeting room within a public library. Only one participant, Participant 3, wished not to be audio-recorded during their interview, so detailed, verbatim notes were taken. This extended the time of the interview but was necessary in deference to the participant's comfort.

Demographics

The value of this research is derived from the information participants provided during interviews. Each participant was generous with their time and genuinely invested in answering questions in a meaningful way. The researcher's gratitude to every participant cannot be overstated, and it is appropriate to include some background on these unique individuals who contributed their personal stories and perspective to the researcher's efforts to understand the phenomenon of the collective experience of Muslims living in Western societies.

The participants who graciously and generously shared their perspective included four females and four males. Participant ages ranged from 20 to 73. Two participants were born in the United States, while six were born in other countries. One of the participants born in the United States converted to Islam as an adult. All other participants had been Muslims since birth. Five participants were college graduates, with two of the three remaining participants enrolled in college. Table 1 presents a snapshot of basic information regarding each participant.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Research Participants

	Age	Gender	Religious Background	Place of Birth	Occupation	Time in U.S.
P1	46	Male	Muslim since birth	India	Engineer	Appx 20 Years
P2	35	Female	Muslim since birth	Turkey	College professor	Appx 10 Years
P3	36	Male	Muslim since birth	Turkey	Electrical engineer	Appx 10 Years
P4	57	Female	Muslim since birth	Morocco	Behavior analyst	Appx 30 Years
P5	73	Male	Muslim since birth	Egypt	Retired scientist	Appx 35 Years
P6	45	Female	Muslim since birth	Nigeria	Homemaker	Appx 10 Years
P7	20	Male	Muslim since birth	United States	College student	Born in U.S.
P8	42	Female	Convert to Islam	United States	Homemaker/college student	Born in U.S.

Participant 1 was a 46-year-old male engineer born in India who moved to the United States after college. Participant 1 lived with his wife and three young children, and his perspective included an emphasis on youth as he reflected often on his family. Participant 3 was a 36-year-old male electrical engineer born in Turkey who had lived and worked in multiple places in the American cities after attending college in the United States. Participant 3's family included his wife and two young children.

Participant 5 was a 73-year-old male who had retired after work as a scientist. Participant 5 was born in Egypt and worked in England before moving to the United States in the 1980s to work for a prominent technology company. Participant 5 shared background about his family's history of leadership in Middle Eastern governments as well as his experience living in the United States with his wife and two adult daughters. Participant 7 was a 20-year-old male born in Colorado to parents from other countries. Participant 7 was studying psychology and social

justice as a college student in Denver. Participant 7's parents were born in Jordan and Lebanon. They lived in various other countries before moving to the United States and raising Participant 7 and his sister.

Participant 2 was a 35-year-old female college professor recently married to a husband also employed in academia. Participant 2 was born in Turkey before moving to the United States and continuing her education. Participant 4 was a 57-year-old female behavior analyst born in Morocco who moved to the United States in her 20s. Participant 4 shared her family's history of participation in Morocco's resistance to colonization and about her life in the United States with her husband and children.

Participant 6 was a 45-year-old female born in Nigeria. Participant 6 lived in other American states before moving to Denver where she lived with her husband. Participant 6 was a homemaker who had four children. Participant 8 was a 42-year-old female who converted to Islam as an adult. Participant 8 was married to a husband from Pakistan and had an infant. Participant 8 was a homemaker taking college courses at the time of the interview.

Results

Creswell (2013) indicated text and figures can both be effective means through which to represent research findings. The most meaningful representation of findings of this particular research can be depicted via text. Specifically, the researcher sought to maintain prioritization of participants' voices by using their own words to represent the answers yielded by data regarding the overarching research questions. Care was taken to present findings verbatim with some editing of transcripts to consolidate text and remove vocalized pauses such as um, uh, like, etc. that distracted from participant narratives. Results for both research questions guiding this inquiry are incorporated in the five master themes identified of nuanced existence, frustrating

representation, complexity of interaction, vulnerability, resilience factors as well as multiple

superordinate themes that emerged from within participant narratives. Figure 3 provides an

example of a transcription segment generated from an individual participant interview.

Figure 4

Sample Excerpt of Interview With Participant 1

Speaker 1:
You mentioned how Hollywood portrays.
Speaker 2:

Yeah.
Speaker 1:

Has evolved to portray Muslims so negatively.
Speaker 2:

Yeah.
Speaker 1:

Um, how do you think that impacts the beliefs of, of Muslims in Western
society?
Speaker 2:

It, it's definitely. Like, it, it, there's so many. Maybe 40 or 60% of this city
has never seen a Muslim guy. So all their knowledge comes from movies
or media.
Speaker 1:

Movies.
Speaker 2:
So when they really see a guy with the same attire somewhere,
definitely it may be a cultural shock for them. Like, "Okay, I have to be
very careful with this guy."

IPA was used to note meaning units in individual transcripts using references within

transcripts associated with codes. Cross case analysis was used to identify emerging themes were

across participant transcripts. Superordinate themes were subsequently identified from within

emerging themes. Five total common master themes were identified across a total of 19

superordinate themes. Master themes associated with Research Question 1 were: nuanced

existence, frustrating representation, and complexity of interaction. Master themes associated with Research Question 2 were: vulnerability and resilience factors.

Results for Research Question 1

Superordinate themes associated with Research Question 1 were refined from emerging themes identified through cross case analysis. Themes related to Research Question 1 that emerged from within participant narratives were: foreign, terrorism association, hijab negative, inaccurate news, ignorance, appearance negative, unsafe, fear of Muslims, alienation, individual support, community support, interaction/location, increased awareness targeting, increased awareness/faith, open/interested, independence faith, positive portrayal, and interaction improving. The frequency with which emerging themes presented in individual participant narratives is outlined in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Emerging Themes Frequency: RQ1

Emerging Theme	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Alienation	1	4	2	1	5	1	5	1
Terrorism Association	1	2	1	4	6	1	5	
Hijab Negative		2		1	2		1	2
Unsafe	4	1	1	2	1			1
Foreign	1	2	1	1	3	1	2	1
Diminished		2		1	4	1	4	8
Community Support	5	1	2	4	2	3	1	
Open/Interested	1	2			2		2	
Positive Portrayal					3	1	2	1
Independence Faith	1	4	3	2	1	1	1	1
Individual Support	4	1	3	2	1			2
Interaction Improving		1	1	1	4	1	1	1
Interaction/Location		1		1	1			1
Fear of Muslims	2		1	2	4	1	3	2
Ignorance	2	1		2	7	1	4	3
Appearance Negative	1	1		1	1		2	
Inaccurate News	1	2	1	5	5	1	2	2
Increased Awareness/Faith	1	2	1	2	3	1	3	
Increased Awareness Targeting	2		1	2	2		3	2

There were 10 superordinate themes refined from emerging themes associated with Research Question 1. Those superordinate themes were reinforcement of stereotypes, intergroup threat perception, reaction to hijab marginalization in society, context of positive interaction, positive interaction as response to negative events, interfaith community support system, education and understanding, secure existence, and from bad to better. Table 2 illustrates the relationship between superordinate and emerging themes related to Research Question 1.

Table 2

Superordinate and *Emerging Themes: RQ1*

Superordinate Theme	Associated Emerging Themes
Reinforcement of Stereotypes	*Foreign, Terrorism Association, Hijab Negative, Inaccurate News, Ignorance, Appearance Negative*
Intergroup Threat Perception	*Unsafe, Terrorism Association, Inaccurate News, Fear of Muslims*
Reaction to Hijab	*Hijab Negative, Appearance Negative, Fear of Muslims*
Marginalization in Society	*Alienation, Hijab Negative, Foreign, Diminished, Unsafe*
Context of Positive Interaction	*Individual Support, Community Support, Interaction/Location*
Positive Interaction as Response to Negative Events	*Community Support, Individual Support, Increased Awareness Targeting*
Interfaith Community Support System	*Community Support, Individual Support, Increased Awareness/Faith*
Education & Understanding	*Open/Interested, Increased Awareness/Faith, Increased Awareness/Targeting*
Secure Existence	*Open/Interested, Community Support, Individual Support, Independence Faith*
From Bad to Better	*Open/Interested, Positive Portrayal, Community Support, Increased Awareness, Interaction Improving, Increased Awareness/Faith, Increased Awareness/Targeting*

There were three master themes associated with Research Question 1 refined from superordinate themes. The three master themes were: nuanced existence, frustrating representation, and complexity of interaction. Table 3 illustrates the relationship between master and superordinate themes related to Research Question 1.

Table 3

Master and *Superordinate Themes: RQ1*

Master Theme	Associated Superordinate Themes
Nuanced Existence	*Secure Existence, Reaction to the Hijab, Marginalization in Society*
Frustrating Representation	*Reinforcement of Stereotypes, From Bad to Better*
Complexity of Interaction	*Intergroup Threat Perception, Context of Positive Interaction, Positive Interaction as Response to Negative Events, Interfaith Community Support System, Education and Understanding*

In keeping with the chosen methodology of this research and prioritization of participant voices, findings are best presented through the words of participants. The following narrative provides participant perspective associated with the three master themes related to Research Question 1: nuanced existence, frustrating representation, and complexity of interaction. Specific participant insight related to the superordinate themes of reinforcement of stereotypes, intergroup threat perception, reaction to hijab, marginalization in society, context of positive interaction, positive interaction as response to negative events, interfaith community support system, education and understanding, secure existence, and from bad to better is also highlighted.

Nuanced Existence

Participant responses to background questions and questions derivative of the research questions within the interview protocol all provided insight into the general experience of being Muslim in America. Multiculturalism's complexity as discussed by Kim (2013) was reflected in this narrative which provided insight into the nuanced nature of the experience of living as a Muslim in the United States. This insight is well summarized in the observation of Participant 7 that, "there's always kind of this barrier...I think between Muslims and Americans, more so in

the fact that we live in the same state and we're all American, but there's an obvious divide

between the two groups, and that divide is the faith."

Secure Existence

Despite the presence of this divide, some participants shared their very specific

appreciation for the benefits of living in the United States. Participant 1 explained:

Here, we see a lot of good values than back in India. Because in India everything is for

sale. The developing country is a poor country, everything is for sale. Your will is for

sale, your thoughts are for sale…But here at least people are doing well. They have

housing, they have water, they have all the basic amenities. Not for sale. This is a right

place to raise my kids, rather than going back. [We have] freedom here because you don't

struggle to get basic necessities here. You do your small, even your minimum wage job.

If you do, you should be able to pay your bills here…But there, even for that, you have to

bribe. So even if you have to get water, you have to bribe. Anything you have to do, even

you have to breathe, you have to bribe them. So those are [more] dangerous than

this…Freedom of speech, whatever it is, everything is falling down. Like it's a free fall.

However, even as Participant 1 articulated his appreciation for the security of life in the United

States, he included acknowledgment that existence is not perfect, discussing his prior home of

Oakland, California as "not a good place to roam around alone" because there was a "lot of

racism."

Participant 2 had an even more specific reason for finding security living in America

versus her nation of birth. This reason related closely to the "freedom of speech" referenced by

Participant 1. Participant 2 shared, "I was affiliated with the Hizmet and Gulan movement…I'm

considered a terrorist right now in my home country. I can't go back. I hadn't been back in

Turkey for about three years because I openly criticize the government."

Reaction to the Hijab

Within the overarching theme of nuanced existence was repeated reference to reaction to wear of the hijab by Muslim women in American society. Not all this reaction was negative; however, wear of the hijab surfaced as a significant factor in the lived experience of female participants. Significantly, three of the four female participants did not practice wear of the hijab until either coming to the United States and finding greater freedom to explore their faith or converting to Islam.

Participant 2 described both negative and positive interaction in response to her wear of the hijab. She recalled the hijab as an opportunity for rapport when, "the first question my office mate asked, I was in grad school and he asked, 'Well, I have a question for you…So, do you always have to match the colors of your hijab with your dress?'" She also explained, "I'm used to people staring" and "hijabi people, let's say sitting in a metro train and then talking in their own language, they've heard people saying, 'speak English, you're in the United States.'" Participant 2 also shared her perspective that:

> When you enter into a room with a hijab…Before you are you, you are a Muslim…You
>
> don't have, you don't get this time, extra time to start building personal
>
> relationships...And there is no narrative behind it. There is no personal narrative behind
>
> it. That's why I think it's a little harder.

Participant 4 and Participant 8 discussed negative reactions to wear of the hijab by female Muslims. Participant 4 described the experience of a female friend who was:

> Not comfortable where she's at now because her boss, she keeps making fun of her
>
> wearing her scarf, and she's offensive. She keeps telling her about the religion, how we

are oppressed for example. You have some women, Muslim women, who are targeted

because of their scarfs at the workplace. There are some women who wanna wear the

scarf and dress modestly, but they can't.

Participant 8 recalled:

I had a teacher that I walked into her classroom and all she did was glare at me, and then

look away and then glare at me...She talked to me in a very condescending way, and I felt

like she viewed the scarf as a dumb down. I've had that experience, too, in the parking lot

at my son's high school.

Participant 7 referenced wear of the hijab by Minnesota representative Ilhan Omar saying:

I think it's empowering, for sure, for a lot of Muslims, especially I feel for Muslim girls

and especially, especially for Muslim girls who wear the hijab. Right? Because now our

generation is kind of being told, yes you will experience discrimination and people will

tell you that you're not good enough, but here's proof that yes, if you work hard enough

and if you are a good person, you can become, you can achieve, just as much as all these

congress women do.

Marginalization in Society

Marginalization was a common theme throughout participant narrative. The diverse

backgrounds of participants generated multifaceted perspective on this phenomenon. Some

participants discerned that marginalization in society impacts many minority populations, and

others reflected on the role Muslims play in facilitating marginalization from broader, dominant

society.

Participant 1 observed that, "polarization is everywhere" and that, "maybe 40 or 60% of

this city has never seen a Muslim guy. So, all their knowledge comes from movies or media."

Participant 2 also alluded to generalization and stereotypes, focusing on their impact to individuals newly arrived in the United States:

> People who are coming from different countries, and it's not just about their faith but it's about their accent. Their confidence is a little low level. So, one thing that kind of representation of women being weak and not as valued as in other religions, I think that might be a stereotype representation that might be limiting.

Participant 2 went on to explain her perspective that to compensate for this limitation:

> I feel like if you're a minority in the United States, the way to survive is to be successful at school, so most Muslim parents are doing their best and majority of the Muslim kids are doing their best to go into college.

> In addition to discussing the experience of marginalization for Muslims in America,

Participant 4 shared her perspective on the role Muslims play in this marginalization. She described how:

> This is the situation of a lot of Muslims. You have this in United States, you have it in Europe. A lot of Muslims, like Moroccans, they have houses in Morocco. But this is what's happening. So, you are here physically, and your mind is not here. So that's why you are not dedicated. You are not committed in building your community. And your community, it's not just a Muslim community, it's your community, which is Christians, atheists, Jews, whoever. It's your community. So, they don't have that. For example, volunteering, they don't volunteer. I mean what I love, one of the things I love, about the United States is the benevolence—the volunteerism here. We have a lot of nonprofit organizations, but they don't go, they don't volunteer there. And volunteering, it's very important in Islam.

Both Participant 5 and Participant 7 shared perspective akin to that of Participant 4 regarding the role of Muslims in facilitating marginalization. Participant 5 referred to:

People who are extreme in their-portrayal of their religion…I don't know why they do this. They cannot give up portrayal that we are separate. The impact is very bad impact on the community as a whole if the society feels that this is a separate community; it's a different community. We want to bring up our children to be—I don't wanna use the word "assimilated," I don't want them to lose their social structure—but to feel they are normal. They are part of a society and behave as such and learn the values of the society and find out that these values don't contradict the values we, as Muslims, learn. It's the same values. So, I don't want that - the children to be brought up in a separate way. And we had fights with some imam who's really backward, actually, wants to teach the kids separately. And we said, "No, we don't want them to be like that."

Participant 7 expressed that:

A lot of the Muslims here in this community are first generation…so there's like a language barrier and there's a really big cultural barrier…I think it manifests itself in like if there's ever a situation where you have Americans and Muslims, they will segregate themselves. They won't really intermingle…I think a lot of the issues, why Westerners have a hard time accepting and becoming more open-minded with the Muslim tradition is because Muslims themselves still believe that what they were taught in the Middle East is only acceptable and they have to follow that path…for example, the burka or the niqab...because to me those are more founded in culture and a patriarchal tribal system as opposed to a religious requirement.

Participant 5 further explained:

>I feel like the whole idea of America is not that we all have to come here and meld or like, you know, mesh into one shared identity and you have to adapt the majority's ideas or principles. I think that might be another reason why Muslims and Americans have a hard time co—coexisting. Because there's a belief on the Americans' side that, "Oh, you're in America, you have to join our shared identity," but then the Muslims believe, "Okay, yeah that's true but I'm also not going to give up my own personal outlook on life."

The concept of stigma's persistence was woven throughout participant narratives. Participant 2 provided examples including a situation where she was "cursed when I'm driving" while wearing the hijab, though she did follow up that, "but it could be about any woman who is driving." She also discussed when she:

> Volunteered in youth services…where I needed to travel a little further from the places where I lived…I could feel the tension coming from not knowing, the fear of ignorance…the ignorance regarding ... who those people are, what do they represent, what are their beliefs.

Participant 3's "friends have experienced being cursed at when passing people" and he recalled when "some people attacked the Masjid in Ft Collins [CO]" and also an occasion where, "one Friday, some people came close to my Masjid and protested Muslims, so police officers provided protection." Participant 4 spoke of an "occasion when someone said, 'Go back your country.'" She also explained that, in order to avoid stigma, "some people change their names. They say, okay, Mohammad, Mohammad is known that you're a Muslim. Some like Mohammed, they called themselves, Mo, M.O, or Sam. They change their names." Additionally,

she discussed persistence of stigma in the actions of "the priest in Texas who wanted to burn

[the] Koran, taking advantage of the limited knowledge of some Muslims to initiate a behavior,

start fighting." Participant 5 lamented that, "people don't see a difference between a group of

people and between the society at large…or the religion at large."

Participant 7 shared that, "a lot of times, people think, 'Oh, well it's just the taxi drivers,'

stuff like that right? So, Americans still kind of view Muslims as, 'Oh, they're just third-world

country people that are coming here.'" He went on to cite a specific example of stigma in his

existence:

When I was in seventh grade, I had a science teacher who was pretty anti-Muslim. He

made that fact known, and I never have been one to try to hide my identity. I was always

pretty open with my identity, and one time we were watching this documentary about

atomic bombs or whatever. And at the end of the documentary, my science teacher says

in front of the class, "not to step on anyone's toes here, but there's some people who

believe because of their religion, that they want to get these nuclear weapons and destroy

the U.S." And obviously the whole class knows I'm Muslim. He knows I'm Muslim, so

he didn't have to say Islam, but everyone knew it, and at this point I'm like 12 years old.

Frustrating Representation

Frustration was an overarching theme in participants' discussion of representation of

Muslims in American society. This manifested in reference to stereotypes and generalizations.

While participants felt representation had improved over time, there was still perspective that

positive representation was, "not as much as one would like to see, but it is a step in the right

direction (Participant 5)."

Reinforcement of Stereotypes

Representation as reinforcement of stereotypes that influences perception of other societal groups was a significant aspect of participant narratives. As articulated by Participant 2, "what the majority of Muslims look like, what they do, what do they believe in is not being presented to them that much." Participant 2 clarified, "I don't think it's just for Islam or for my faith. I think it doesn't matter what faith base or what community or what ethnic group you have, the negative news always occupies more space with respect to coverage."

Participant narratives specifically addressed depiction of Muslims by news media. Participant 3 shared his feeling that certain news outlets "depict Muslims as terrorists" while others "are trying to be objective and not on one side – trying to stay in the middle." However, Participant 3 also felt, "some individual columnists are very anti-Muslim." Participant 4 explained her perspective that:

> There isn't a lot of coverage about Muslims...to help spread the word about Islam and correct the misconception about Islam…the more you learn and even the resources you use are important. I think that the media, it's still not doing a good job in being fair in its coverage. The newspapers, I think, for example…Cause the bottom line it's a business. You need to make a profit.

Participant 7 discussed his observation as a young Muslim that, "anytime there's a mention of like Islam or a Muslim, more often than not, it's always kind of negative. So, when growing up, I never really saw representation in the media, like a Muslim doing a positive thing." Participant 8 explained, "I feel like about 98% of the time we don't get a fair rep no matter what channel you're watching, and Participant 6 shared a specific frustration that when Islam is discussed in the media:

Some people, they don't know. They just call [themselves] a Muslim, and they will go to the TV, and they start saying what it is not right, what is correct when they don't have the right education to talk about Islam.

The problematic nature of this representation was addressed by Participant 4 who said, "we are people with a different religion, but we are not terrorists. We're not trying to hurt you or something. And the people, non-Muslims, they listen to the media." Participant 5 observed that people "don't discriminate and don't see the difference between a group of people and between the society at large or the religion at large." Participant 6 reflected on the labeling that accompanies the representation observed across participant narratives:

There is misunderstanding there. Muslims, we know we are not bad people. It's just, we know we are a Muslim, and that we are following our own religion, and the people are saying, "They are not good, they are bad people."

The nature of stereotypical representation of Muslims in various forms of media emerged during analysis. Participant 1 observed:

You have a bearded man or a scarf-clad man, he's always bad. They're always the bad guy. Yeah, maybe someone in a gray area, but never a good guy. It's very tough. You have 10 bad guys, then only one will be moderate or good.

Participant 5 addressed generalized portrayal of genders explaining, "as far as the men, they're always portrayed as…sex hungry. They look at women as sex objects…and that's the picture you see in movies." He went on to reflect on depiction of women:

It's always talk about the position of women in [the] Islamic world and being submissive and mistreated and what have you. And they don't look at it that this is really societal, and it depends on the country, different from one country to another. And if you go to

Egypt, you will find that all my relatives…all my cousins, people who are my age, all the women work. They wear the hijab, but they all work. In fact, the position of the woman in the family is as strong as the position here. It's not suppressive, not oppressed in any sense. It depends on the country. I mean, you can't take examples of Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan and say this represents Muslims. It does not.

Participant 7 described stereotypical portrayal in context of his experience following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001:

So, when I was really younger, you know in the era, the decade right after 9/11, I would say that the representation was definitely really negative, like anyone who's Arab, is represented as being a Muslim…Anyone who's Muslim is dark skinned, curly hair, long beard. Women are always wearing the hijab. They're always uneducated, they're always immigrants, and more often than not they're always terrorists…It's always the macho American guy, battling against the 10 dark-skinned terrorists

Participant 8 also reflected on an adversarial, stereotypical representation of Muslims:

In movies, I believe we are totally, totally either represented as the one of the people in the crowd on the New York street, or we are the enemy if it's a political or military movie. And they always show if there is Muslim that they make a good guy or an okay guy, it's a guy that's just not really into his religion.

From Bad to Better

Improvement in representation of Muslims was noted in participant narratives, but in the context of progress from a bad state to one that was still challenging. Participant 5 expressed that he was:

>Glad that lately actually there is a lot more than in my past years here in the States where
>there was no representation whatsoever. But in the last three years you can see faces on
>TV and on movies and there is more, definitely.

However, he still noted, "they are not in the numbers that would hope." Participant 5 also indicated:

>Voices I hear from professors at universities in political science and in the liberal arts in
>general…they do bring Muslim supporters occasionally. And they have programs on
>PBS about Islam or programs about the politics of the Middle East, which is to me,
>having spent the last 14 years here, is something new.

>Participant 5 also referred to coverage of a European soccer player as constructive

representation of a Muslim individual in popular culture:

>There is an Egyptian player in Liverpool. Liverpool won the European championship this
>year. His name is Mohamed Salah and he's from Egypt. And you wouldn't believe how
>he changed the atmosphere in Liverpool. I was reading in the British newspaper, in the
>Independent, that the hate crimes against Muslims dropped in Liverpool by 90%. That
>people…they form songs for Mohamed Salah. And so, when you have somebody who's a
>good example and people can see it, it definitely reflects well.

>Participant 7 reflected on coverage of Muslims stating that, "I feel like Americans are

starting to become more aware that not all Muslims are terrorists, and if Muslims have really good achievements, they're becoming more well-known." He also referred specifically to the election of Michigan Representative Rashida Tlaib and subsequent media attention:

>There's more representation in government...Rashida Tlaib, I mean when I was—a
>decade or so ago, if anyone would have told me that a Hijabi woman was gonna be a

congresswoman, I never would have believed them. Or a Palestinian American would be

in congress, I never would have believed them. So, I'm kind of fascinated with the quick

change that's occurred with that.

Participant 7 included this observation as part of a broader context with regard to change in the

representation of Muslims:

It's like at first there was one path of "we hate Muslims," for lack of better words, and

now it's kind of splitting off because people are becoming more aware. So, I think it's

only been in this last decade or so that this kind of split has started to form.

Complexity of Interaction

Just as the essence of existence in the United States was described as nuanced by

participants, so was the nature of their interaction within that society, with negative and positive

experiences recounted within narratives. Participants described experiences as unique as their

individual characteristics and backgrounds. Complexity of interaction emerged as an overarching

theme given the diversity and distinction of participant experiences and perspectives.

As an example, Participant 2 explained she had found success in interaction as an

individual with "people knowing your faith and where your background is, they're still really

welcoming and respecting and open-minded. But I think when it comes to a group relationship,

that might be a little challenging." Participant 4 recalled arriving in the United States, explaining

"I stayed there, I got married there, and worked, went to school, had my children in Virginia…I

didn't feel I was in a country that maybe some people were not happy about me being amongst

them." She described a job where "I worked with non-Muslims; my bosses were non-Muslims…

And I was respected. I was given a room where to pray….we respected each other. We helped

each other, ate together." However, Participant 4 also shared that, "when 911 happened, my husband and I did not go out for three days. We were scared."

Participant 8 described taking classes where "our ethnic studies teacher was amazing" juxtaposed with rudeness directed toward her as she was wearing the hijab while driving. She attributed that experience to "just the mentality of that tiny little farmer's town in Minnesota." Participant 8 recounted experiencing "hope" in the election of Minnesota representative Ilhan Omar as "she speaks from a very powerful place, and she's young" while expressing chagrin that "nobody wants to take her seriously." Participant 8 also discussed watching an "interview with the representatives and there were all these literal white national signs on the outside. And they brought [Omar] up inside this, and…there were white folks…they were so angry, red in the face."

Context of Positive Interaction

One of the notable superordinate themes that emerged through analysis was the context in which significant experiences of positive interaction described in participant narratives occurred. Participant 7 said:

> probably one of the most positive interactions would be, it was in 2008 during the Gaza [conflict]…there was kind of like a rally demonstration… And it was just really, really awesome seeing there was a lot of Palestinian Arabs and Muslims there but there were also a lot of Americans also on that same side…As a young kid, it kind of changed my outlook.

Participant 8 simply explained that "sometimes I meet people who do come up to me and say, 'I'm so sorry for what you guys are going through.'"

Participant 4 mentioned collaboration with local law enforcement on the part of Muslims leaders to address problems:

They're working with, for example, the Loudoun County Sheriff's department. They are working with the Fairfax County police department. And if there is an issue with Muslims, like let's say Fairfax County police department, they work with the mosque…to resolve these issues. And the mosque teaches the police department about the culture. So, they are working together.

Positive Interaction as Response to Negative Events

Much of the positive interaction experienced by participants was in response to some negative influence or event. For example, Participant 1 recalled work colleagues at one of the jobs he held shortly after his arrival in the United States ensuring they stayed with him in areas of the city where he might be targeted. Participant one explained his co-worker, "was like, 'no [Participant 1]. This is not the right place to leave you alone.' We used to be always in a group. My manager was like, 'Yeah, you should not be alone here.'" Participant 1 also shared an experience where work colleagues supported him in maintaining his halal diet:

My manager, when we used to work together in Oakland, we used to go to a lot of places like Denny's and all those things because we used to have lunch out together…So I used to carry my own food…I used to carry my box, and one guy came and said, "You cannot eat outside food here." Then [manager] said, "Okay, cancel my order. I'm not coming back here for any time, again." That's the kind of support I get from the fellow workers.

Constructive interaction with the community experienced by Participant 1 also shared this context. He recalled when talk of a Muslim immigration ban occurred, "some bloggers called me…They provided very good support, moral support. Some lawyers' offices called me.

They wanted to provide some free consultation for all the people who want any help, legal help. Immigration kind of help."

Other troubling events concerning the Muslim population were catalysts for positive interaction experienced by Participant 1. He described occasions where:

Somebody called me saying, "Hey, do you guys have any problems? We can come and support you from the church." I said, "What? What happened?" "Oh, you're not aware? Trump gave you this statement." I said, "Oh, okay. Sorry. I didn't pay attention to that." The second time they called me, there was a guy who, rammed into some South Asians, thinking they are Muslims, and one 13-year-old girl was seriously ill.

This theme continued with Participant 2 referring specifically to the attack at the mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand in March of 2019. She explained, "I think the vigil was really cool after the New Zealand attack. They had a vigil in one of the mosques, and they invited the mayor... leaders of the faith from different congregations." Participant 3 also cited positive interaction after that attack, describing how, "after the New Zealand shooting, members of the faith community said, 'we are supporting you.' In those types of situations, there is reciprocal support…In general, people are helpful…an American person came, sat with us, showed his support for us." Participant 3 went on to say, "I hope for good interaction…especially after any kind of shooting. Showing synergy of feelings from all faiths – they are acting like they are with us, the Muslim community."

Participant 4 also spoke of the Christchurch attack, recalling there were so many people at the mosque in support that they were not able to find their shoes in the area where shoes are placed before entering:

When the attack on the 51 Muslims at the mosque in New Zealand happened…it

happened, I think Wednesday, right? So, Friday we had a lot of people from the Jewish

faith…I mean, they came to the mosque [and] we couldn't find your shoes. No room for

shoes. Well, it was quite a picture to remember. So, we were together that day.

Participant 5 shared his daughters' experience of positive interaction in the form of

support from non-Muslims when, after the "immigration ban, they actually both of them went

demonstrations in Los Angeles…Which, as it happened, the vast majority of the demonstrators

were Caucasian Americans. They were not Muslim." He also referred to the attack in New

Zealand:

When that shooting at Christchurch happened, then the following Friday, I see at the

mosque I go to here, a lot of people from a couple of churches and a rabbi as well, they

came and they stood outside and they said, "We are here to protect you."…When those

things happen it really elevates the spirit of the people. I mean, I see for example that in

groups, in WhatsApp and so on, they send pictures to each other and to the families and

see how nice the people are here and how they like us, and they treat us nicely and so on.

It definitely helps a great deal.

This support was also discussed by Participant 6 who had observed that:

whenever something hateful [happens toward] the Muslim community, these people, they

will be there. Whether they are atheist...whether they are Christian, whether they are

Jewish, they will be there…they will be there with us…They are really, I don't know

what to say, they are really good, you know? They will be leaving whatever they are

doing, and they come over there just to show their support to the Muslim.

Interfaith Community Support System

Support from within the faith community also emerged as a theme related to interaction between Muslims and the mainstream community. Participant 1 described his contact with a Catholic woman, saying:

She called me because she found my number on Mountainview Mosque. And she was talking to me, "Do you need any help? Can we provide you any help?"…It's very nice of them to call us when they're hear some bad things happen.

Participant 2 spoke to the reciprocal nature of if this support, explaining "it was the same case after Pittsburgh synagogue [attack]. The people that I spent time with at the mosque, we went to the synagogue and stand with our Jewish brothers and sisters."

Participant 4 recalled a specific incident involving the pastor of a church with a mosque next to it that had to close its facilities to worship for a period of time:

All his attendees, they were White people…He reached the conclusion that he needed to support his neighbors, the Muslim neighbors. So, they offer the church for prayers, and we can pray at a church. There is no problem. We can, as Muslims. So, they were praying there, and there was some resentment. Okay. But, the priest, he was very strong, and he reasoned with his people. So, they started having picnics together, helping each other.

Participant 5 discussed a previous professional relationship with a supervisor who "although he was a conservative Christian—I don't know what denomination, but he had the Bible in his desk—he was very nice to me, actually." Participant 6 explained that "when something happens, you know, we still have this good neighbor, Christian. They are always there with us. Whatever the case happens."

Intergroup Threat Perception

Prevalent within participant narrative regarding interaction was experience and perspective pertaining to intergroup threat perception. This narrative included incidents recounted by participants as well as their observations on what drives intergroup fear. Some of the perspective shared by participants alluded to stereotypical representation and representation in various media.

Participant 1 recalled when a fellow attendee at his mosque reported observing someone in the parking lot "opening the car and showing off his guns, literally, to someone" and news coverage of "that guy shooting in the parking lot in the mosque in Florida." He also explained reaction to individuals in society who appear to be Muslim, saying, "when they really see a guy with the same attire somewhere, definitely it may be a cultural shock for them. Like, 'Okay, I have to be very careful with this guy.'" Participant 1 shared his observations that this fear and stereotyping can change "if they have already seen somebody, met somebody, then they'll definitely say, 'Hey, that is opposite of what is being shown.'"

Participant 5 recounted an experience at a restaurant when other patrons reacted in fear at the sight of a groups of Muslims:

> At the end of Ramadan there is Eid. And with a few families here we go to a restaurant and have breakfast there. And somehow other people, other Muslims in the mosque knew about this. It's a very nice food actually for breakfast, probably the best in Denver. They started coming there as well. We had some Afghans and Somalis, and when they come for Eid, they come dressed in the abaya and they have beards and stuff. So, we were there, and I saw an elderly couple sitting at a table. And soon as those guys walked in and sat in the table…they looked at each other and talked, and then they got up and left. I

wanted to go to them, "No, don't be frightened. Enjoy your breakfast!" But that's the

impression that they have**.**

Participant 5 shared an additional experience he felt reflected some of the reason behind this fear.

By virtue of his job and position, he attended an event at the United States Air Force Academy,

and "the general there, the head of the academy, was giving a speech…he said, 'We will finish

all the Muslims over there.'"

Participant 7 discussed how throughout his upbringing:

My parents always told us…because they never tried to shield us from 9/11 or the reality

of the Muslim experience in the U.S. And so, they always told us, 9/11 happened, and

there's gonna be a lot of ignorant people that are gonna blame you for that and blame

your religion for that., so they always kind of told us, like keep an open mind and don't

let what people say affect your faith.

He shared his experience that:

If there was some kind of attack, or if there was some kind of law enforcement

shenanigan going on, right? It was always like, 'Oh, possible links to terrorism,' so it was

always constant reminder in the news and media that there is a link between Islam and

terrorism, always.

Participant 5 further observed this has created a fear of Muslims in society that must be

overcome through reinforcement that Muslims are not a threat because of their religious identity:

You know if you have a Muslim doctor, that's okay. You don't have to be scared of

them…Muslim congressmen and women, there's nothing to be afraid of. I don't know

how long that's gonna take until it works but, that's the change I'd like to see.

Education and Understanding

Discussion of education and understanding developed within the framework of the complex interaction of Muslims in Western society that emerged in participant narratives. Participants cited personal growth and development of interpersonal connections as consequences of interaction. They also discussed interaction as a means through which members of dominant society were able to learn about them as individuals and better understand the Islamic faith.

Participant 2 reflected that people, "I think, tend to stay in their comfort zone at least initially," however:

> Interactions definitely impact your belief system. The questions that you receive and the observations you make also make you to question your own belief system, your faith. So, when I am spending a lot of time with my LGBTQ friends, and I really like hanging around with them, I really admire their advocacy for human rights…And it makes me question and challenge my faith and my belief. So, we need to be challenged to improve and to develop and to be our better selves. So, I think those interactions are definitely helpful regarding personal growth—also, critical thinking and polishing the religion and then isolating that from traditional and cultural traditions that are embedded in the religion. And then thinking about...so, what does my religion actually say about this, not my grandmother.

Participant 2 shared an example of the type of interaction that fosters personal growth:

> We had Ramadan last month. So, I invited a lot of Jewish and Shias and Christians to my house, also we had Iftars together in different places like outside or … in Mosques or in other congregations. About 40 to 50 women from different faith groups like Jewish and

other, we gather together and then talk about issues once a month. Like... how do you

deal with a death… or what does cleaning mean to you…your faith and practices,

perspective about those issues. Those kinds of things. So…from my observations, I have

seen that, regarding practice, I have more similarities with my Jewish friends…like

regarding fasting and even food…but with my Christian friends, I'm also a spiritual

person. So, I love ... I am passionate about love…So, I do have those connections with

them…experiences that I had with the other faith communities here in Denver and

Pennsylvania, they were really good experiences.

Participant 2 also articulated the need to allow for context in interaction, citing the potential that,

regarding the hijab, sometimes "people are not staring because they are scared but it's just kind

of out of curiosity.…Once people get used to it, it's completely normal." She also recalled the

reaction of an individual to her modest swimwear when they remarked, "'wow, that's interesting.

You look like a mermaid.'"

Participant 3 outlined a model for constructive interaction to facilitate understanding

amongst groups:

There are negative things if you just focus on people who are against Muslims. It doesn't

matter if people are against Muslims, we should approach them with kindness. That's the

teaching of the Prophet. We should make prayer for those types of people. Opinion is

easy, but when faced with someone who is attacking you, it is more difficult. At that

moment, you will understand how you can act. That is a difficult moment, The aim is to

earn them. Their heart might get softer.

Participant 5 explained the impact of understanding through interaction saying he shares "always

when I talk to younger, the next generation...their sons and daughters really, that society here has

changed over years. They are more aware now of what you are. Don't worry, there will be far less discrimination."

Participant 6 reflected that, "you cannot hate somebody when you don't know who he is" and that, "now people, they start to understand. 'Oh, do you believe in God?' I say, 'Yeah!'" Participant 4 indicated understanding must be developed in both directions "because we have to adapt to the culture we live in." She gave an example of a Muslim taking a job where they may be responsible for selling alcohol:

> He was selling the vodka, and he said, "No, I'm not going to use the money I earn, or I will earn from vodka for my own thing." We need to know how to live as Muslims in a non-Muslim society.

Results for Research Question 2

Superordinate themes associated with Research Question 2 were refined from emerging themes identified through cross case analysis. Themes related to Research Question 2 that emerged from within participant narratives were: difficult interaction, racism, attacked, negative faith, youth separate, need to act, alienation, vulnerable, conflicted/frustrated, adaptation, community involvement, importance of interaction, faith knowledge increased, negative faith, negative outlook, loss of opportunity, representation pressure, diversity, freedom, more observant, and open-minded. The frequency with which emerging themes presented in individual participant narratives is outlined in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Emerging Themes Frequency RQ2

Emerging Theme	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Difficult Interaction	3	3	3	2	1	2	3	4
Alienation		1	3	3	1	1	3	3
Negative Faith	7	2	2	4	2	3	4	1
Need to Act	1				2	1		
Vulnerable	3	1		2	5	1	3	2
Conflicted/Frustrated	1	2	1	1	3	3	3	3
Representation Pressure	3	3	1	2		1	1	2
Attacked	2	1	1	1	2		1	2
Negative Outlook		2		1	3	2	3	2
Loss of Opportunity		2		1	1	1		1
Faith Knowledge Increased	3	3		2		2	3	
More Observant		3		1	1			1
Community Involvement	2	2		3	1	1	3	
Adaptation	1	3	1	2	1	2	4	
Diversity	3	2	1	2		1	1	1
Open-Minded	1	3	1	4	1	2	2	
Importance of Interaction	1	2	1	6	1	2	7	2
Freedom	2	4		2			3	1
Racism	1				1		1	1
Youth Separate		1			5	1	2	

There were 11 superordinate themes refined from emerging themes associated with Research Question 2. Those superordinate themes were: intergroup threat perception, questioning faith, vulnerability to radical influence, interaction as a resilience factor, education as a resilience factor, impact on youth, marginalization in society, responsibility of being a

Muslim, harm to well-being, freedom of faith, and confidence in faith. Table 4 illustrates the

relationship between superordinate and emerging themes related to Research Question 2.

Table 4

Superordinate and *Emerging Themes RQ2*

Superordinate Theme	*Associated Emerging Themes*
Intergroup Threat Perception	*Difficult Interaction, Racism, Attacked*
Questioning Faith	*Negative Faith, Youth Separate*
Vulnerability to Radical Influence	*Need to Act, Alienation, Attacked, Vulnerable, Conflicted/Frustrated*
Interaction as a Resilience Factor	*Adaptation, Community Involvement, Importance of Interaction*
Education as a Resilience Factor	*Community Involvement, Faith Knowledge Increased*
Impact on Youth	*Youth Separate, Attacked, Negative Faith, Negative Outlook*
Marginalization in Society	*Alienation, Loss of Opportunity, Difficult Interaction*
Responsibility of Being a Muslim	*Representation Pressure, Importance of Interaction*
Harm to Well-Being	*Representation Pressure, Conflicted/Frustrated, Negative Outlook, Loss of Opportunity, Racism*
Freedom of Faith	*Faith Knowledge Increased, Diversity, Adaptation, Freedom*
Confidence in Faith	*More Observant, Open-Minded*

There were two master themes associated with Research Question 2 refined from

superordinate themes. The two master themes were vulnerability and resilience factors. Table 3

illustrates the relationship between master and superordinate themes related to Research

Question 2.

Table 5

Master and *Superordinate Themes RQ2*

Master Themes	Associated Superordinate Theme
Vulnerability	*Intergroup Threat Perception, Questioning Faith, Vulnerability to Radical Influence, Impact on Youth, Marginalization in Society, Responsibility of Being Muslim, Harm to Well-Being*
Resilience Factors	*Interaction as a Resilience Factor, Education as a Resilience Factor, Freedom of Faith, Confidence in Faith*

In keeping with the chosen methodology of this research and prioritization of participant voices, the following narrative presents findings in the form of participant perspective associated with the two master themes related to Research Question 2. Those two master themes were vulnerability and resilience factors. Specific participant insight related to the superordinate themes of intergroup threat perception, questioning faith, vulnerability to radical influence, interaction as a resilience factor, education as a resilience factor, impact on youth, marginalization in society, responsibility of being a Muslim, harm to well-being, freedom of faith, and confidence in faith is also highlighted.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability of various natures emerged in participant narratives regarding the ramifications of experiencing stigma and marginalization as Muslims in the United States. This vulnerability was discussed as manifesting in impact on the faith and well-being of Muslims in ways that caused potential susceptibility to radical influences. Specific such influences were also alluded to by participants.

Questioning Faith

Participant 6 explained that sometimes Muslims in American society are "just saying, 'Oh, when we are here, we are trying to keep our faith.' You are trying to keep your faith, but always we hear this negative thing." Specifically, she referred to, "Muslim children…they are in the place where they don't have a lot of their own peers, a lot of their people who are following the same thing. So, you see it touch their faith, actually." A similar perspective emerged in the narrative of Participant 7:

> Because you're constantly seeing these negative images, especially I think for children growing up…you associate your own identity with like a negative image and negative feelings that come with it. So, I feel like a lot of kids my age…they say they're Muslim, but they don't actually have a strong belief in it. Because they feel like growing up, all Islam has done is bring negativity to their lives.

Participant 8 gave an example of stigma and marginalization suppressing expression of faith saying, "we start doing those things like wearing the beanie so we're not so conspicuous with a scarf."

Marginalization in Society

Both Participant 3 and Participant 4 discussed the impact of marginalization on their daily lives. Participant 3 related this impacting him professionally where, "in the Federal Government, it is a rare situation to have people from my background. Of 85 in my workplace, maybe four or five are from different countries." In his social life, Participant 3 said he does not feel free to embrace his identity as a Muslim because, "even with friends, politics and religion are not discussed" and "if you ask a question related to religion, it is not appreciated." Participant

4 explained that "some people don't want to pray in front of their friends because they're afraid that's going to affect their job."

Participant 5 and Participant 7 discussed marginalization through the lens of success, with Participant 5 explaining, "if you have a feeling of separation for the young generation, that would be pretty bad for the community. It affects the success in life." Participant 5 also shared his personal experience with denial of opportunity for greater success in his profession where he felt:

> If you were gonna treat me that way, why was I recruited in the first place, except for the knowledge I have? But otherwise, you don't treat me fairly. I worked on some interesting programs, but it was always a struggle…anything to do with defense you are castrated.

Participant 7 said Muslims must overcome marginalization to understand, "your only job isn't going to be a taxi driver…You know you can, you can do any job you want." He added, "that also has to come with educating the West, Western society, and making Westerners more aware that Muslims don't have to just do menial jobs."

Intergroup Threat Perception

Negative impact of association between Muslims and terrorists was a significant component of participant narratives. Participant 2's friend in Pennsylvania had seen "at Penn State, someone hanging a flier about Muslims being terrorists." Participant 4 shared her experience following September 11, 2001:

> My manager said, "Just stay home 'till, you know, you feel comfortable coming back to work."… I was working in our accounts payable department. It was like a wakeup call. I started paying attention to news, the attacks on Muslims.

Participant 5 recalled that his daughter "was in high school when September 11th happened, and they would taunt her. They would call her terrorist, things like that."

Harm to Well-Being

Experienced stigma and marginalization were associated with harm to Muslims' well-being in a number of ways within participant narratives. Participants shared their observations and experiences with fear, negative emotional impact, and disempowerment. Lack of constructive interaction was also mentioned as a contributing factor in harm to well-being related to experiencing stigma and marginalization.

Participant 1 described concern for safety amongst Muslims in America:

Most of the people are concerned. And when I talk to my brother-in-law who is in California, he was very concerned…After [the] New Zealand incident, he was like, "Oh, I will never go back to pray in the mosque again. Because it can happen again." And there were so, so many people doing vigilante kind of work outside the mosque.

Participant 4 said, "they are panicking. Lots of Muslims are in the panic attack. They don't know what's gonna happen to them."

Participant 2 observed, "I think that the fear is stirring up the society today." She felt experienced stigma and marginalization:

Those kinds of things are reinforcing people's fear and when I go out, when I go to Wal-Mart, this is what I experience. So, next time, I will stay away from that zone. Or the neighbors that were not really welcoming, [I] will stay away from them. So, I think it's kind of those negative interactions that causing isolation.

Participant 2 explained, "I don't think that the fear is gonna disappear until we have those personal interactions—we get to listen to people's narratives and their stories as individuals."

Participant 6 shared that when experiencing stigma and marginalization, "it's just like, you have no voice. When you don't have [a] voice and everything is just falling on you, sometimes we just think, 'Why me? Why me, all the time?'" Participant 7 described the impact of feeling marginalized in terms of impact on self-perception saying, "when you see those negative images, and you feel that you're not good enough…you always kind of feel like there's something wrong with your identity.

Participant 8 said Muslims experiencing stigma and marginalization feel:

Emotional suppression…I think it is cancer causing. I think it leads to emotional

unwellness. I think it affects the choices they make, and I think it grows them colder to an

entire body of people unless they're intelligent enough to know that not every white

person is like that, you know? But I think it's discouraging. It makes them feel like

they're in a land where they're not gonna be represented. I think they've shrugged their

shoulders and found out they can't really do much…I think it makes people feel like they

don't have power, that they can't speak up. I think it's disabling; it's emotionally

disabling sometimes. 'Cause you feel like you're useless and whatever you say is not

gonna matter. So, why say anything.

Participant 8 gave a specific example of Muslims in the United States observing the treatment of representative Ilhan Omar saying, "when you see her getting bashed and stuff, it's hard. The community at large—our hope goes down."

Responsibility of Being Muslim

Within the participants' narrative, a superordinate theme related to impact on well-being emerged. Participants shared their perspective on the responsibility of being a Muslim in

American society. They described the burden associated with counteracting prevalent

stereotypical depiction of Muslims and fear within the dominant culture. Participant 1 said:

> We have so many imams talking about being Muslim at these times is a lot of
>
> responsibility. Because there's so much negative. You have to show positive impact, you
>
> have to be well-composed. You need to know what's happening around you. You need to
>
> know what are you and what you are representing. You need to have the knowledge of
>
> what you are practicing.

Likewise, Participant 2 articulated a mindset prioritizing, "because you start representing

something bigger than yourself… how do you reflect those values? When you are a Muslim,

you're representing the whole Muslim community which is really a heavy burden on you."

Participant 3 also described the burden of being a Muslim in the United States. He shared

how he makes it a point to, "act as a good Muslim in my work environment and with friends."

He expressed that he did this to counteract negative stereotypes in society. Participant 2

explained, "colleagues know me and look at me and don't see whatever they watch for going for

me." Participant 8 related her wear of the hijab to the responsibility she feels to positively

represent Islam:

> I do wear the scarf…It's very conspicuous. So, I know that when people see me, I guess I
>
> have to be this perfect person and that's what Islam is. But common sense would tell you,
>
> if I made a mistake or let's say I had like a, what is it called? A little poof or something.
>
> And when you're with a cashier or if I say something and I didn't mean it or…I have
>
> moments. I know there's people in the world that are like, oh, Muslims must be bad, look
>
> at that.

She also explained that as a Muslim in America, "I believe it's my job to open my mouth or maybe present a gesture if there's an assumption going on." She described feeling, "almost like a movie star on a small scale. You're representing this larger body of people and you really do wanna do your best…intending that everyone gets a good impression."

Vulnerability to Radical Influences

Perspective shared by participants spoke to specific vulnerability linked to the lived experience of stigma and marginalization. Participants shared how the effects of stigma and radicalization can result in Muslims in the United States becoming vulnerable to exploitation by radical influences. This discussion included various media influences as well as the impact of community support or lack thereof.

Participant 1 explained terrorist organizations exploit stigma associated representation of Muslims in American society saying, "media creates such kind of organizations…Al Qaeda and all. They have been fed wrong things, bad things. There are certain scholars working towards it, they are making curriculum." He further explained:

> I remember my education. When I was reading the translation of Koran, what it says, and what it doesn't. What to do. It is to teach humanity and all those things. But now when they teach, they teach something different. The tone has changed. I think the tone of the people who are teaching it has changed…And it is getting fueled by the politics maybe because of power, maybe resources, whatever it is. They are making use of all this heated up. And the person with the least knowledge is very—I think he'll get effected by this. I have seen that. I have seen that. There are people, dropouts, who don't know how to read and write…Yeah, so the influences, rationally, are directly related to the level of education and understanding you have.

Participant 1 also described how social media targets Muslims via:

> YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, whatnot. Everywhere there's so many. TikTok, I keep
> seeing so many things coming in. And I think it is making worse things for the
> community leaders. Personally, what I do for my children, whatever knowledge they
> want from the science technology and all, we go to internet and get it. But if they want
> some religious based knowledge, never go there.

The sources of information Participant 1 were cited by Participant 2 as taking the place of interpersonal contact. She explained that with online information sources:

> You don't get to have interpersonal interaction. And then you become a target to be
> manipulated with a lot of populist approaches, right? My husband studies extremists on
> social media. And [in his] research area, one of the, the participants, she was a 14-year-
> old kid from Alabama, a Muslim girl. She was born and raised in United States, but she
> was lacking those interactions. And she stayed in her bubble through social media. It
> makes her a perfect target to be reachable and then to manipulate them using their faith
> and belief. At the age of 14, definitely, you are not capable of critical thinking or seeking
> for resources to check what's right and what's not right.

Participant 2 also reflect that, "I think the experiences people have in social media might be more severe because people are feeling more comfortable reflecting their beliefs."

Participant 5 shared perspective on how experienced stigma and marginalization on the part of Muslims in the United States could "encourage them to join terrorist groups…There is no question there." Specifically, he referred to

> Somali kids who go to Somalia and stuff…when you are young like that age and you
> have these pressures that you gotta go and rescue your country and things like that, if

they think the recruiter who was trying to push them is telling them that you have to come to jihad, we have to kill the Kafir and so on, if they hear that the American military leader is saying that he wants to kill us then we want to go and fight…It is a motivating thing.

Participant 7 observed that absence of community can be a significant factor in vulnerability to radical influences He cited a local:

Afghani mosque and there's a really big Afghani community…by having that big community, I've talked to them before and, even when they face marginalized behavior or discriminatory behavior, because they have such a good community, they don't feel left out. But I think for like me that kind of grew up as a child without a really big community, those negative interactions can be kind of detrimental to the wellbeing, like I said before because you don't have the community support.

Impact on Youth

Some participants made specific reference to the impact on youth of the complex interaction experienced by Muslims in dominant American society. Participant 2 spoke to the more difficult experience of younger people within the Islamic faith saying, "I get to talk with a lot of teenagers, and being a Muslim in high school is not as easy as being a Muslim in college." Participant 6 echoed that perspective on the difficulty of being a young Muslim in Western Society, saying, "they are struggling. They know they are Muslim…so they are struggling keeping their religion and with being with their peers. So, there is these two things for them."

Participant 5 explained that negative interaction in society, "the youth, of course, it would hurt them" because it conveys, "we are of a tribe, so to speak, which is undesirable." He continued with an expression that:

I was happy to see that there are two congresswomen who are Muslims, who are elected. Young people, especially young people, they see a lot of hope. They see, when I talk to the younger people that, "All right, you can succeed in the American society. You can have your voice."

Resilience Factors

An overarching theme of resilience factors emerged in participant narratives as counteracting the vulnerability discussed by participants. This was the case for vulnerability in general and to radical influence. Specifically, factors related to freedom, confidence, interaction and education were included in this discussion.

Freedom of Faith

Freedom of speech was not the only freedom that emerged during analysis of data. Multiple participants spoke of experiences or observations associated with freedom and faith. Participant I recalled being struck by the diversity within his own faith upon arrival in the United States saying, "this was the first time I was seeing Muslims from all the developing countries, from Russia, from everywhere in the world. So, it was like global village kind of stuff."

Participant 2 explained that when she moved from Turkey, "I felt much more comfortable living and learning my own faith and practice here in the United States." She also felt free to explore other faiths and shared:

I attend a lot of Bible study discussions and other interfaith group discussion. I went to synagogues and Buddhist temples... [I] want to know a lot about other religions and then think about, learn more. And maybe if there are good practices in their religion there are a lot of good practices in every religion...I think that was a transition the positive way.

Participant 2 became more traditionally observant in her Islamic faith through life in America. She stated "I had good friends who were practicing as well. So, after I came to the United States, I think I started really getting influenced by those ideas, and in 2013 had my hijab."

Participant 5 shared his wife also began wearing the hijab after living in the United States, and Participant 4 shared a similar experience, relating:

> I am a Muslim. I was born a Muslim. When I was in Morocco, I did not cover. I covered in 1990, but I always wanted to. I always was going to groups, like study groups of Islamic thought and Islamic theology. But my family did not encourage me to cover. It was not important to them. So, when I came here, I started finding more about my religion. And, yeah, I covered in 1990. I learned more about my religion and, you know, I am happier the way I am.

Participant 7 reflected that existing in a society where Muslims are a minority allowed for freedom to develop independently in his faith:

> Because Colorado doesn't really have a large Muslim community, as let's say Chicago or Detroit, I'd say that my outlook on religion is more based on my experiences in America, rather than what the clergy told me in the mosque…I feel like I've been fortunate in a way that my outlook on Islam has been more founded in my own experiences with the faith as opposed to someone tells me, "you have to believe this is right, this is wrong." It was more I got to form those own opinions for myself.

Confidence in Faith

Participants explained they not only felt more freedom to explore and practice their religion but that they also had more confidence in observing their faith. Participant 5 said, "after we had our first baby, I became more observant of the religion. I quit drinking alcohol…I started

to pray and to fast, and I would go to the Friday prayer." Participant 2 attributed newfound

confidence in her faith to the freedom she felt to explore and become more observant as a

Muslim, saying "I think hijab taught me to gain that confidence, just knowing and owning my

faith." Participant 8 made a similar observation:

> I think in a place like America, it really shows who people are, and it reveals their true
>
> colors. And I think when I meet a Muslim on the street here, especially a convert…these
>
> aren't people that are just puppeting along. There's a choice to be had. So, they're not
>
> trying to jive with their own culture, like American culture or let's say Pakistani culture.
>
> They're just jiving with their inner beliefs, and they're trying to match their actions to
>
> their beliefs.

Interaction as a Resilience Factor

Interaction was highlighted as a resilience factor despite obstacles to interaction by

Muslims living in American society, including those highlighted by participants related to stigma

and marginalization. Participants explained interaction with dominant culture was a deliberate

choice on their part. They also discussed their perspective on mutual responsibility in society for

this interaction.

Participant 2 recalled that choice as, "when I decided, okay. When I become a part of an

organization, I'll do something in the school. We need a lot of good interaction with people."

She articulated that, "if you are a part of the community… I was always respected and well

received…it was easier to build personal relationships, people knowing your faith and your

background." She described her interaction:

> I volunteer at International Alliance Club where most people are…white Americans. I
>
> like hanging out with them and they think it's really cool. I also volunteer at the Mosaic

Foundation…kind of focusing on a lot of interfaith and intercultural education and events

and activities.

Participant 2 continued with her perspective on that interaction's benefits saying, "I think that

not interacting with other members of the community makes you an easier target to be

manipulated with other groups who use religion and faith for their interest." Participant 4 also

described her choice to interact:

For example, you know, I am with my scarf. I have a scarf. Okay? And I go to the

doctor's office for example, or whatever. If I see an elderly [person as] I'm about to get

in, I open the door. And if I dare look at them, "Hi, how was your day?" I talk to them.

And some men, you feel that they wanna talk to me, and they don't know. Uh, they don't

know how to act because they, they don't know my reaction. But what do I do? I initiate.

She explained, "what I am advocating for is just for both communities, the Muslims and non-

Muslims, to get together because, the bottom line, they reside on this land." Participant 6 also

shared her perspective on the importance of interaction with the greater community, she

described the Muslim community as, "our own place where you can be free with everything"

until "then you are somewhere where you don't know people" and "the only things that's going

to take you out of this, [for] you to present yourself to these people to show who you are."

Participant 4 outlined what she felt was the responsibility of Muslims to initiate

interaction:

I think the Muslims, they should not sit back and wait for other people to advocate on

their behalf. We found out that Muslims up to 911, they were isolated, you know. They

isolated themselves. It's like you're moving from Bahrain. I mean you're Bahraini and

you come here, you socialize with Bahrainis, you bring your culture here. They should be

more involved in the community. And the community, they call everybody…So you need

to integrate. Don't lose your values. It's like a new culture. My culture is, I took some

from my country, I kept it. And I'm using the values, good things, from this culture

[American] and we have a lot of cultures. So, it's like a new culture.

Participant 7 discussed how interaction allows Muslims in America to feel safe and have

an open mind:

People can learn and experience and live a culture or belief system that's not their own in

a safe, positive way. Because with pluralism, you get to see people live their life how

they wanna live it and you don't have to necessarily adopt those beliefs but it kind of

makes you a world thinker, more open-minded.

Participant 7 continued:

My thoughts for going forward, how the Muslim American community should interact

with Americans, I think that one of the biggest barriers and issues for getting that that

pluralism is the inability for Muslims, and specifically Muslim Americans, to evolve and

adapt to the modern day…I don't blame just the West for the lack of pluralism. I think

that both sides have a role to play in that.

Education as a Resilience Factor

Participant 1 discussed the need for religious education to address vulnerability using an

analogy to describe changes in respect for mainstream religious leaders and growing influence of

social media:

Nowadays the education is distorted. So completely distorted. The foundation is

distorted. My father used to say "If you're drawing a line, a straight line. And if you just

tilt a little bit, the destination will be completely different." And I think society should

know the people who don't have much knowledge…And they come and talk to

everybody like, "I'm an expert. I know this"…Those people are too many. Too many.

And they are multiplying… Like earlier, the imam used to say, "Hey this is the way to

form the line. One has to come to the middle, rest of them keep following, and there

should be no gaps. And this is how you stand up. This is how your posture should be."

And they used to listen and follow. Now when the imam says that [they say], "Can you

believe that our friends follow that? I saw them on the YouTube! This is also permissible.

This is also allowed."

Participant 5 also shared perspective on religious education, saying "the emphasis is always to

teach the youth what is the real meaning of jihad and to steal them away from any extremist

activity. You always try to do this."

Participant 3 explained the need for merging of beliefs in conjunction with education:

We should find a way to merge our beliefs and traditions with U.S. culture. Doesn't mean

I'll drink alcohol, but we should find a way to live in society – follow religious beliefs –

but at the same time follow rules in the U.S. without conflict. If there is no merging point,

for me, the only solution is to go back to another country. As a person, I can't change

society. Religious leaders should educate groups – educate people properly. Living in an

ideal world is almost impossible in any country. Impossible to reach an ideal world, but

we should target that—when I say "we," I mean everyone.

Participant 4 expressed that Muslims in the United States should take part in education by

both reaching out to others to teach them about Islam and learning about the society of which

they are a part. She explained, regarding Muslims learning about others in society:

You don't try to understand the country you live in—it's like, I have nothing to do with them. And that's wrong. Because you need to know what's going on. You need to know what people think, why people are mad and have discussions, have forums, a tone of meetings and discussion, at the community level. They should learn about their surroundings, their environment. And that includes other people with different faiths. They need to know their rights to be able to protect themselves and advocate for themselves.

Pertaining to Muslims teaching others about their faith and culture, Participant 4 related:

I think that if we, if Muslims, did a better job in like reaching out and saying, "Okay, this is who we are…we are people with a different religion, but we are not terrorists. We're not trying to hurt you or something"…Non-Muslims, you know they listen to the media.

Participant 6 discussed the importance of people within groups having knowledge about each other:

If people want to just understand, "Who are these people, we are living with them,"…by having just little understanding, things will be coming normally. It's really hard to get everybody to accept something [when] have little information, they have little understanding about these people they, they don't know before.

She also shared her thoughts on the importance of Muslims knowing their faith, saying "with everything going on, if we concentrate on [the] Quran and follow what it's teaching us, it will keep our life going."

Pertaining to education on broader society, Participant 7 observed that:

Religion has to go through changes… we have to go through some kind of evolution, and I don't know what that's going to look like, but that's definitely gonna start with being

more educated and giving Muslim Americans, and not just Muslim Americans but just

Muslims living in the West, more opportunities and making them feel less marginalized.

Participant discussed his parents' openness about knowledge of religion as a positive example:

> They've always been so open with the religion—for example, if my sister and I ever had
>
> questions about what was in the Quran, they would never shut us down and be like, "No
>
> you're not allowed to ask that question."

He cited this as a factor that impacted his reaction to the teacher who equated Muslims to

terrorists:

> When I had that experience in class, it didn't make me feel like, "okay, well screw this
>
> religion, like this religion is nothing but wrong for me." Because I was able to, because I
>
> had the mentality of, "he has that idea, but I know about what Islam is to me," I was able
>
> to, not brush it aside, but I wasn't gonna let it affect how I looked at my own religion.

Summary

This study's findings manifest in the rich narrative of participants regarding their lived

experienced in dominant Western society. Data was collected via semistructured interviews with

participants followed by analysis through a structured process of coding, sorting, and

synthesizing with the ultimate objective of developing theories regarding what participant

experience reflected regarding the research questions posed. Findings were organized within five

master themes of nuanced existence, frustrating representation, complexity of interaction,

vulnerability, resilience factors that emerged from within participant narratives. Additionally, 19

total superordinate themes were identified: secure existence, freedom of faith, confidence in

faith, reinforcement of stereotypes, from bad to better, positive interaction as response to

negative events, interfaith community support, intergroup threat perception, marginalization in

society, the persistence of stigma, reaction to the hijab, impact on youth, education and

understanding, questioning faith, harm to well-being, responsibility of being Muslim,

vulnerability to radical influences, interaction as a resilience factor, and education as a resilience

factor.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Marsella (1998) called for qualitative research, including inquiry focused on socialization contexts and forces, when discussing global psychology's value in meeting the needs of an evolving world as that approach to research acknowledges the subjectivity of human experience. Marsella (1998) asserted this enhances the accuracy of meaning derived from research and contextual knowledge to address the world's challenges more effectively. This chapter provides interpretation of the findings of this study by synthesizing the subjective, contextual narratives of its participants with foundational principals of international psychology that include promotion of goodwill and understanding among populations and psychology's application toward resolution of problems such as terrorism that exist without borders (Stevens & Wedding, 2004).

Discussion of the manner in which this study relates and adds to existing research pivotal to the concepts it involves and questions it poses is also included in this chapter. The researcher makes recommendations for further study by addressing limitations identified within this research and potential directions for inquiry that can promote better understanding and ability to positively influence the problems central to this research in keeping with core objectives of international psychology (Stevens & Wedding, 2004).

Interpretation of Findings

The questions central to this research were designed to derive greater understanding of relevant intergroup and interpersonal aspects of the lived experiences of Muslims in Western societies regarding stigma and marginalization. The objective was to gain insight on how the impact of stigma and marginalization may potentially influence an individual's trajectory toward radicalization. This study included review of literature examining stigma and marginalization of

Muslims living Westerns societies, some from the perspective of those individuals. Literature regarding the process of radicalization was also reviewed.

What sets the current research apart from that available literature is its wholistic inquiry into those separate but interwoven phenomena through the perspective of those whose lived experiences provide the insight sought.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of stigma and marginalization on the part of Muslim populations in Western contexts?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of the impact of stigma and marginalization on the part of Muslim populations in Western contexts?

Interpretation of this study's findings relevant to the research questions is organized within the five master themes of nuanced existence, frustrating representation, complexity of interaction, vulnerability, and resilience factors that emerged within participant narratives . This is in keeping with this study's commitment to "prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (Saldana, 2016, p. 106).

Nuanced Existence (RQ1)

Participant narratives depicted a multifaceted existence experienced by Muslims living in Western societies consistent with the intricate processes of acculturation described by Vaughn (2019), particularly regarding continuous negotiation of identity in a multicultural context. Kim's (2013) assertion that there are limits to globalization and multiculturalism was reflected; however, the idea of a better quality of life through these phenomena emerged in the experiences and perspectives of participants. This was despite struggles associated with the process of acculturation for Muslims living in the context of a dominant Western culture.

Participants' descriptions of exploration of their faith and that of others related to

Vaughn's (2019) explanations that synergy happens when individuals develop an original

multicultural identity and that integration occurs as individuals have routine interaction with a

dominant culture while maintaining their own. The narrative of participants reinforces Lynch's

(2013) argument that total assimilation is not constructive and reference to research finding

expressions of faith on the part of Muslim youth in Britain have increasingly incorporated

elements of that nation's identity. Additionally, participants spoke of confidence associated with

freedom to practice their religion more devoutly, including adopting wear of the hijab. This was

similar to Lynch's (2013) allusions to increases in religiosity and religious symbol use by British

Muslim youth as manifesting greater security in their identity and confidence they can

incorporate multiple elements in that identity rather than a rejection of Britishness.

One of the original concepts that emerged associated within the current research is the

implications of the liberated nature of American society regarding freedom of speech, religious

practice, and general freedom from insecurity regarding basic human needs. This contrasts with

principles discussed in Gole's (2003) examination of motivations of Muslims to embrace what

he describes as more radical Islamism. While participant narratives certainly detailed challenges

within their lived experiences, the current research yielded evidence the freedom in American

society and absence of strong influences referenced by Gole (2003) that contain Islamic public

presence in some Western societies is a positive nuance of the Muslim existence in the United

States.

Frustrating Representation (RQ1)

The prevalence of stereotypes and their unfair, inaccurate nature as described by authors

included in Nelson's *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination* (2009) was a

superordinate theme within participant narratives. Participant description of stereotypes were consistent with that text's characterization of them as facilitating judgment of people through dubious categorization rather than their individual characteristics and actions (Nelson, 2009). Bail's (2012) assertion that the divide between Muslims and dominant society can be exacerbated by media influence on public opinion was also reflected in participant narratives.

Dominant society's embrace of this divide can be explained through Plous' (2003) assertion that in-group biases allow for maintenance of self-esteem related to social identity theory which identifies a component of maintaining self-esteem is holding belief that one's own group is superior to others. Even as participants indicated they have seen improvements in representation of Muslims, their narratives reinforced these concepts associated with divide. As Participant 8 stated, "if there is Muslim that they make a good guy or an okay guy, it's a guy that's just not really into his religion." This depiction is consistent with the way Plous (2003) indicated group members explain behavior of another group to maintain self-esteem.

Participants expressed frustration not only with portrayal of Muslims as terrorists and bad, but also with stereotyping of gender and societal roles. Participants mentioned inaccurate depiction of women as "submissive and mistreated" (Participant 5) and men as "sex hungry" (Participant 5) or "dark-skinned terrorists" (Participant 7). Continued ramifications of the attacks on September 11, 2001, to representation of Muslims in various media and society emerged within this research. Frustration was a notable theme given Borum's (2004) discussion of Drive Theory outlining the correlation between frustration and aggression as a "master explanation" (Borum, 2004, p. 12) for radical thought and action.

Complexity of Interaction (RQ1)

Many of the concepts discussed in reviewed literature about stigma experienced by Muslims in Western societies emerged in participant narratives. Those included stigmatization following the attacks on September 11, 2001 (Barkdull et al., 2011), resistance to the presence of Muslim worship (Hummel, 2012), youth experience of discrimination (Murshad & Pavan, 2011), and inclination by Muslims to adopt more neutral surnames (Khosravi, 2010). However, just as participant narrative portrayed a nuanced existence for Muslims in the United States, it also indicated the experience of interaction with dominant culture is also of a complex nature.

Participant narratives provided examples of positive interaction with other groups, but that positive interaction generally occurred within a certain context, specifically as a reaction to negative acts or sentiments toward Muslims. Numerous participants cited secular and faith community responses in support of Muslims in the aftermath of the deadly attack on the mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand. Others discussed specific support they received from coworkers in light of discrimination or members of the community after events in the news media concerning to Muslims. Highlighted within these examples of support was that provided by diverse interfaith communities.

Examples of stigma and intergroup threat perception were prevalent within participant narratives regarding the complex interaction they experienced within dominant culture. These included expectations for Muslim roles in society, wear of the hijab, and association with terrorism. Participants discussed marginalization impacting them in both their personal and professional lives. They described professional limitations at work perceived to be associated with their faith and limitations on their social activities to avoid stigma. The examples of stigma and marginalization that emerged within participant narratives were characteristic of the

grievances and social circumstances McGilloway et al. (2015) identified as appearing to contribute to radicalization of thought and action.

Notable in the discussion of marginalization was assertion by several participants that Muslims in Western societies bear some responsibility for maintaining marginalization from the dominant culture. This was noted as occurring when Muslims "cannot give up portrayal that we are separate" (Participant 5) or "are not committed in building your community" (Participant 4) in addition to other examples. Participants also described situations where interaction facilitated education and understanding within community groups and faiths, echoing the assertions made by Pels & de Ruyter (2012) regarding the influence of education and socialization.

Vulnerability (RQ2)

According to Vaughn (2019), individuals in the process of acculturation may experience acculturation stress that can affect them psychologically and with negative impact to their health and self-esteem. This stress, in addition to the grievances and social circumstances identified by McGilloway et al. (2015) and the individual factors of identity, injustice, and belonging Borum (2004) asserted contribute to radicalization of thought and action, emerged within themes found in participant narratives. Specifically, the following superordinate themes were identified: questioning faith, harm to well-being, responsibility of being Muslim, and vulnerability to radical influences.

Participants explained experiences with stigma, marginalization, and stereotypes can impact the faith of Muslims in the United States, causing them to doubt its worth and legitimacy or the legitimacy of mainstream clergy. Participants echoed Atran's (2010) concerns regarding radical clergy on the internet who call for action in absolute terms and discussed the outsize influence of social media. They also shared that being Muslim in a Western context causes them

to feel the weight of significant responsibility. As Participant 2 states, "when you are a Muslim, you're representing the whole Muslim community which is really a heavy burden on you."

Harm to well-being associated with experienced stigma and marginalization was described in participant narratives as manifesting in diverse ways. Participant 8 said that upon witnessing the poor treatment of Muslim politicians because of their identity, "our hope goes down" and alluded to "emotional unwellness" and stigma and marginalization causing Muslims to grow "colder to an entire body of people." Other participants spoke of feeling isolated, fearful, voiceless, and as if something was wrong with their identity.

Participants expressed particular concern regarding the impact of stigma and marginalization on Muslim youths' well-being and religious beliefs. This synthesizes with the conclusion of various research that there is increased prevalence of radicalization among young adults and adolescents and that vulnerability to radicalization is influenced by the developmental tasks inherent to these age groups that include development of social, personal, and political identities as well as relationship formation (Pels & de Ruyter, 2012). Specifically, Pels & de Ruyter (2012) pointed to research indicating radicalization takes place at the intersection of personal trajectory and an enabling environment.

Perspective in participant narrative included examples of this sort of intersection. Participant 1 explained that there are certain clergy exploiting media representation of Islam to "teach something different…and the person with the least knowledge--I think he'll get effected by this. I have seen that. There are people, dropouts, who don't know how to read and write." Participant 2 cited isolation as a significant vulnerability to radicalization saying, "you don't get to have interpersonal interaction…And then you become a target to be manipulated …at the age of 14, definitely, you are not capable of critical thinking or seeking for resources to check what's

right." Participant 5 explained, "kids who go to Somalia and stuff… if they think the recruiter who was trying to push them is telling them that you have to come to jihad…It is a motivating thing."

Resilience Factors (RQ2)

The final overarching theme that emerged from within participant narratives concerned resilience factors that can mitigate these vulnerabilities. Participants emphasized both education and interaction as protective factors that can hamper the ability of radical influences to exploit stigma and mitigation's negative impact on the religious beliefs and well-being of Muslims living in Western societies. Interaction with dominant culture was characterized an action Muslims living in Western contexts must choose to take deliberately. Education within this narrative entailed gaining greater societal as well as religious knowledge.

Interaction was highlighted as a resilience factor despite obstacles to interaction by Muslims living in American society, including those highlighted by participants related to stigma and marginalization. Participants explained interaction with dominant culture was a deliberate choice on their part. They also discussed their perspective on mutual responsibility in society for this interaction.

Participants described choosing to interact through volunteer work or seeking contact with individuals in the dominant culture, particularly if those individuals seem unsure how to engage. Participant 4 explained, "what do I do? I initiate." Participant 2 shared her perspective that, "not interacting with other members of the community makes you an easier target to be manipulated with other groups who use religion and faith for their interest." Participant 7's explanation of the benefits of interaction put them in the context of an antidote for the negative impact to well-being of fear resulting from stigma and marginalization . He said, "people can

learn and experience and live a culture or belief system that's not their own in a safe, positive way" and continued, "you get to see people live their life how they wanna live it and you don't have to necessarily adopt those beliefs but it kind of makes you a world thinker, more open-minded.

Atran's (2010) concerns regarding the influence of radical clergy was addressed by participant narratives. Participants discussed the need for religious education to mitigate susceptibility to "completely distorted" (Participant 1) religions teachings that encourage radicalization of thought and action. Participant 5 said, "the emphasis is always to teach the youth what is the real meaning of jihad and to steal them away from any extremist activity." Participant 7's experience was that open-minded religious education allowed him to experience negative interaction within dominant society without having it affect, "how I looked at my own religion."

The foundational international psychology concepts of multiculturalism, acculturation, and identity negotiation as discussed by Vaughn (2019) were prominent in participant narrative related to resilience factors. An emphasis on evolution through learning and interaction so Muslim individuals and communities develop a better understanding of each other and their beliefs was evident. The perspectives of participants indicated society of a mosaic nature where groups maintain their cultural identity while sharing some norms and allowing diverse cultural interests would be desirable and foster resilience to exploitation of vulnerabilities by negative influences. Participant 3 shared his feeling that it is, "impossible to reach an ideal world, but we should target that—when I say 'we,' I mean everyone."

Recommendations

While this research provided novel and wholistic perspective regarding the lived experiences of Muslims in Western societies regarding stigma and marginalization and how those factors potentially influence an individual's trajectory toward radicalization, it did include some specific limitations. One of those limitations pertains to participant demographics as all were adults, and none of the participants claimed to have every aligned with radical groups or beliefs. Conducting further research based on the experiences and associated perspectives of Muslim youth living in Western societies would yield even more rich data given the emphasis on youth evident in participant narratives in the findings of the current research. Likewise, research centered on the experiences and perspectives of individuals previously aligned with radical groups or beliefs would expand the knowledge gained through the current study. Both inquiries would require specific considerations be incorporated in their approach and methodology.

The location in which this research was conducted also represents a limitation. While Denver has a significant and diverse Muslim community, it is not as sizeable as other communities and naturally has different dynamics than other areas. Dominant cultures in the United States vary from one metropolitan area to another and are different in rural and urban locations. Other locations in the United States would also offer the opportunity to gain insight from participants of more varied socioeconomic status than those included in the current research.

Additionally, while the United States represents a Western culture, societal norms differ greatly across Western societies. As noted by Yukleyen (2009), there is diversity of experience for Muslims even across European nations. Further research across varied Western societies

would provide enriched perspective and a better representation of the lived experiences of Muslims in a Western context.

Implications

The insight provided by this research is applicable to four of the five global concerns Stevens and Wedding (2004) described as significant to international psychology. Those include intergroup conflict, societal transformation, physical and mental health, and the struggles of disempowered groups (Stevens & Wedding, 2004). Our world is increasingly connected through technology, travel, and the economic aspects of globalization, yet intergroup conflict persists. One of the specific manifestations of that conflict is radicalization to thought and action of members of Muslim populations within Western societies (Barrett, 2015; Chrisafis, 2015; Evans, 2015; Yukhananov & Dunham, 2015). This exacerbates already problematic intergroup conflict due to increased stigma within those societies (Barkdull et al., 2011). In short, this is an inherently traumatic and detrimental cycle with a foundation in perceived fear of real or symbolic harm posed by individuals and groups considered to be other (Stephan, Ybarra, and Morrison, 2009).

This cycle is representative of the struggles Pawlik and d'Ydewalle (1996) indicated present growing demands for the psychology field in an international context. Pawlik and d'Ydewalle (1996) encouraged psychologists to invest in development of an enhanced understanding of underlying mechanisms of conflict and the means through which that conflict can be avoided, managed, and mitigated. Research regarding the potential relationship between stigma and marginalization of Muslims in Western societies and vulnerability to radicalization from the perspective of that population is not extensive. Foundational literature in the international psychology field reinforces the need for such research as stigma and

marginalization are part of the "human subjective experience" (Valsiner, 2009, p. 2) examined by international psychologists in search of solutions to basic human problems.

Muslims in Western societies have been the subject of abundant scholarly literature suggesting they experience stigma and marginalization (Murshed & Pavan, 2011). The current research is consistent with the international psychology principles of equality and social justice (Stevens & Wedding, 2004) as it prioritized the voices of this population living as an out-group in dominant Western culture. Those voices shared perspective on the complexity of their existence and interaction, including the impact of stigma and marginalization. Participants described stigma, marginalization, and vulnerability to radicalization as interconnected phenomena, alluding to concepts consistent with Vaughn's (2019) description of acculturation stress. Significantly, they also shared their perspective on resilience factors that can mitigate negative outcomes associated with stigma and marginalization, including vulnerability to radical influences. These concepts can be applied to alignment of therapeutic goals to address global trauma and to include equality and social justice as discussed by Stevens and Wedding (2004).

Participants in this research described integration and synergy as desirable strategies for acculturation and identity negotiation as described by Vaughn (2019) rather than separation and compartmentalization. They acknowledged the need for Muslims in the United States to take responsibility for constructive actions toward those ends, but also shared their experiences and perspectives regarding isolation and barriers they face. These aspects of participant narratives are significant to the objective of international psychology to build cultures of peace and tolerance as articulated by Stevens and Wedding (2004).

Pena (2007) explained how Muslim organizations in the United States provide resources and knowledge to assist Muslim individuals become part of America as well as their engagement

with and education of various societal entities. The perspective generated by this research

through the narratives of its participants provides additional understanding of what other targeted

resources can do to foster enhanced societal cohesion and reduced conflict. The generation of

this perspective is consistent with international psychology's "commitment to the value of social

responsibility in teaching, research, practice, and public service" (Stevens & Wedding, 2004, p.

18).

The cycle of stigma, marginalization, and intergroup conflict on which this inquiry is

focused has inherently traumatic implications, and there are serious mental health challenges

associated with acculturation stress. Individuals who are stigmatized "report more psychological

distress, depression, and lower levels of life satisfaction and happiness" (Nelson, 2009, p. 7).

Bongar et al. (2007) explained that acts of terrorism are "intended to create a fearful state of

mind in an audience far wider than the immediate victims" (p. 400), explored the need for crisis

interventions in the aftermath of mass violence or terrorism, and discussed the impact of

"vicarious traumatization" (p. 305) from those events. Discrimination and prejudice in the

acculturation process has been found to have a "direct, strong, and long-lasting impact on

psychological well-being and health" (Sam & Berry, 2016, p. 512). Developing a better

understanding of the stigma and marginalization experienced by Muslims in Western societies in

the framework of intergroup conflict and acculturation as was the aim of this research can

contribute to potential development of strategies for mitigation of stigma, marginalization,

violence, and trauma in a global context.

Conclusion

Horgan explained that research has yet to identify precisely why individuals radicalize in

thought and action; however, he posited that, "a core 'causal' factor in terrorism lies in the

connection between the broader conditions and individual perceptions of those conditions"
(2014, p. 158). This research examined the lived experiences of Muslim populations in Western
societies with a focus on stigma and marginalization to gain insight regarding those conditions
and perceptions. This was accomplished through phenomenological reflection on data elicited
through semistructured interviews focusing on the perceptions of Muslim individuals in Denver,
Colorado regarding stigma and marginalization and the impact of those influences on
psychological outcomes.

Overarching themes emerged from within participant narratives pertaining to their
nuanced lived experiences as Muslims in dominant American culture, their frustrating
representation in society, the complex nature of their interaction within that society,
vulnerabilities as an impact of stigma and marginalization, and resilience factors to mitigate
those vulnerabilities and ultimately the devastation of intergroup conflict and associated trauma.
This research reinforced the relevance of international psychology by synthesizing the narratives
of its participants with foundational international psychology principles outlined by Stevens and
Wedding (2004). Those foundational principles include the promotion of goodwill and
understanding among populations as well as psychology's application toward resolution of
problems such as terrorism that exist without borders (Stevens & Wedding, 2004).

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Appendix A

Recruitment Script

RECRUITING ADVERTISEMENT SCRIPT

I'm contacting you at the request of Jeni Groot-Begnaud, a doctoral student with The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

She is working on research as part of her dissertation requirements for the school's International Psychology Doctoral Program.

The purpose of this study is to explore how the experiences of Muslim individuals in Western societies such as the United States effects their lives and well-being. Jeni is looking for Muslim adults in the Denver, Colorado area to spend approximately one hour reflecting on their life experiences during an audio-recorded interview based on open-ended questions.

There are no direct benefits to participating in this study. However, Jeni hopes the information learned from this study will benefit society through increased understanding of the life experiences of Muslim individuals living in Western societies and how those experiences affect the well-being of those individuals and society as a whole.

Interviewees can select an interview location at which they are most comfortable.

Please contact me at **ibr.nadeen@gmail.com** for further information on participation in this research.

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Investigators: *Jeni A. Groot-Begnaud*

Study Title: *Muslim Populations in a Western Context: Lived Experience of Stigmatization and Marginalization*

I am a student at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. This study is being conducted as a part of my dissertation requirement for the school's International Psychology Doctoral Program. I am asking you to participate in a research study about your experiences as a Muslim living in the United States. You will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately one to two hours. Discussion of life experiences during this interview may cause emotional reaction. Although you may not benefit directly, my hope is that information learned from this study may benefit society through increased understanding of the life experiences of Muslim individuals living in Western Societies. Deliberate steps will be taken to prevent any breach of confidentiality during this research.

Please take your time to read the information below and feel free to ask any questions before signing this document.

       Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore how the experiences of Muslim individuals in Western societies such as the United States effects their lives and well-being.

Procedures: I am requesting you spend approximately one to two hours hour with me reflecting on your life experiences during an interview based on open-ended questions. These questions will focus on your perspective regarding representation of Muslims in society and interactions experienced by Muslim individuals with other societal groups. I will be audio recording the interview and taking notes. Highlights of the information you share will be included in my dissertation.

Risks to Participants:

Discussing life experiences with me during an interview may cause you to experience emotional reactions. If you should experience any such feelings, please let me know and we can pause or stop the interview. Additionally, I will provide you contact information for a resource that can help you with these feelings should they arise. There is also a risk that your identity may not remain confidential, however I will be taking very specific measures to protect your identity. The laptop computer I will use is password protected with credentials known only to me. All electronic media and paper documents will be maintained in a locked filing safe to which only I have access. Notes, data sheets, and audio recordings will identify participants by code versus name.

Benefits to Participants: You will not directly benefit from this study. However, I hope the information learned from this study will benefit society through increased understanding of the life experiences of Muslim individuals living in Western Societies and how those experiences affect the well-being of those individuals and society as a whole.

Alternatives to Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from study participation at any time without any penalty.

Confidentiality: During this study, information will be collected about you for the purpose of this research. This includes your name, phone number, and email address. Your confidentiality of responses, and personal information will be guarded through association of your responses with a number rather than your name. General references to your city of residence, age, and gender may be made to provide context to the information your share.

I will safeguard research materials including your name and contact information as well as any electronic data in a secure filing system to which only I have access. Research materials will be kept for a minimum of five years after publication per American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines before being destroyed by shredding. Audio recordings of interviews will be deleted after transcription. I will complete written documentation upon destruction of research materials. Destruction of research materials will be accomplished through a professional document destruction company such as those used by governmental and medical entities to accomplish destruction of sensitive material.

It is possible that your data may be used for future research or distributed to another researcher without your consent. However, information that could identify you will be removed.

Your research records may be reviewed by federal agencies whose responsibility is to protect human subjects participating in research, including the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and by representatives from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees research.

Questions/Concerns: If you have questions related to the procedures described in this document, please contact me via phone at 912-230-6345 or via email at jag7527@ego.thechicagoschool.edu. You may also contact my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Patricia Perez, at pperez@thechicagoschool.edu.

If you have questions concerning your rights in this research study you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is concerned with the protection of subjects in research project. You may reach the IRB office Monday-Friday by calling 312.467.2343 or writing: Institutional Review Board, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 325 N. Wells, Chicago, Illinois, 60654.

Consent to Participate in Research

Participant:

I have read the above information and have received satisfactory answers to my questions. I understand the research project and the procedures involved have been explained to me. I agree to participate in this study. My participation is voluntary, and I do not have to sign this form if I do not want to be part of this research project. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my records.

_____

Name of Participant (print)

_____

Signature of Participant

Date: _____

_____

Name of the Person Obtaining Consent (print)

_____

Signature of the Person Obtaining Consent

Date: _____

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Jeni A Groot-Begnaud

Introduction:

"Nadeen has explained you go by, *name of participant/title/as given by POC*. Is there any other

way you would like to be addressed?"

"I want to make sure you understand that talking with me today is completely voluntary. In fact,

I need to make sure that we document that. Here is paperwork that explains this *(walk through*

informed consent paperwork and obtain signature).

Thank you so much for agreeing to talk with me. This is what I'll be using to record our

interview (*show recording equipment*) to make sure I'm able to use your exact words just as you

say them. I'll also be taking notes while we are talking. Please know that even if I am writing as

we talk, I'm listening closely because I appreciate the gift of your time. I just want to make sure I

document all you share in the best way possible."

Rapport Questions:

"I'd like to tell you a little about myself so you have a better idea who you're talking to. Like I

said, my name is Jeni. I grew up mostly in the state of Florida in a large family with six sisters. I

live in Georgia now with my husband and our eight-year-old son. I also have three grown

stepchildren. Where I grew up and live is very close to the beach, so it's fun to come out here and see some mountains."

"So, that's a little about me. Please tell me what you think it is important I know about you."

Based on response, follow up with questions so the following is gathered from each participant:

Age. "How old are you?"

Geographic Background. Please tell me about where you grew up. (Note: appropriate follow-up questions will address acculturation elements of the participant's background associated with their or their family's upbringing somewhere other than the United States, amount of time in the United States, and other acculturation factors.)

Education. "Tell me a about your education."

Occupation. "Please tell me about your work."

Family background. "Please tell me about your family."

Religious background. "Please tell me about your religious background and the role of your faith in your life."

"Is there anything else you think I should know about you that could help me better understand your background and perspective?"

Questions:

"Thank you for letting me get to know you a bit. Now I have some questions that focus on your feelings about living as a Muslim in the United States. As I ask these questions, please just let me know if you need to me to explain anything about what I'm asking. Also, if you have a thought on the topic that's not necessarily related to the exact question we're on, please share that. This is a very flexible discussion. Also, I'd really like for you to answer these questions as much as possible by sharing your life experiences along with your opinions."

The following are general questions with the expectation that follow-up and clarification questions will be asked.

"Please describe your perspective on how members of your Muslim community are represented on television; in the movies; by newspapers, books, magazines, and educational material; and in other forms of media."

"Please share your observations about interaction between your Muslim community and other groups in society."

"Please share your experiences with positive interaction between you and your Muslim community and other groups in society."

"Please share your experiences with negative interaction between you and your Muslim community and other groups in society."

"How do you feel the *representation* of your Muslim community effects the well-being of members of your community?"

"How do you feel the *representation* of your Muslim community effects beliefs held by member of your community?"

"How do you feel *interaction* with other groups effects the well-being of members of your Muslim community?"

"How do you feel *interaction* with other groups effects beliefs held by members of your Muslim community?"

"Are there any other experiences or thoughts on this subject you would like to share?"

"Are there any suggestions you would like to offer?"

"Do you have any questions on what we've talked about?"

Close:

"Thank you so much for talking with me and sharing your experiences and thoughts. I'd like to know how you feel after talking about this *(at this point, discuss any observations regarding emotion reactions of the participant to subject matter discussed – this is also the point where referral to established services would be appropriate if the participant needs those services to address emotional reactions to discussion)*.

"I'm very much hoping this research you've helped me with today will be something that helps people understand important perspectives from within your community. I want to make sure you understand that I'm not just going to take this information and disappear with it. Nadeen has been wonderful about working with me to organize this research, and I know she is very active in the Denver community. I'll keep working with Nadeen as I write up my final research, and will make sure she has a copy to share in whatever way she feels is most beneficial to the community here."

"Again, I am so grateful for the gift of your time and what you've shared today. Do you have any questions for me before I get you a copy of that document we went through earlier?"

Provide copy of informed consent and resource information.

"Here is your copy. Thank you again, *participant name/title as appropriate*. It was wonderful to meet you and talk with you."