MUSLIM WOMEN ON THE CATHOLIC CAMPUS: THE SEARCH
FOR IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, AND UNDERSTANDING

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ABSTRACT

MUSLIM WOMEN ON THE CATHOLIC CAMPUS: THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, AND UNDERSTANDING

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American religious diversity has expanded since the 1960s when immigration law changed the geographical map of our immigrant pipeline from Europe to Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (Smith, 2002). This demographic change in immigration patterns has affected the population of students not only coming from abroad to study, but also from within the U.S. More Muslim American students are entering colleges in the U.S. than ever before and the number is expected to swell in coming years (Institute of International Education, 2011). American colleges and universities who face the challenge of integrating these new student cultures into their wider institutional cultures will only succeed in doing so by educating faculty and student affairs professionals about their new students. The purpose of this study was an attempt to understand the acculturation experience (Berry, 1997) of female Muslim students at two Catholic universities in the American Midwest. The underlying issue which informed this study was how Muslim women cope and learn in the context of an American, Catholic university.
A constructivist epistemology provided the framework for this phenomenological qualitative study, which attempted to discern the ways that Muslim female students adapt to life on the Catholic campus using a bi-dimensional model of acculturation. Eleven female Muslim students were interviewed several times each over the course of five months. The data were then analyzed according to Moustakas’ (1994) methods for phenomenological analysis and Berry’s (1997) bi-dimensional acculturation strategy scale (assimilation, integration, separation or marginalization).

The data revealed that the Catholic orientation of the schools appears to be a positive factor in the choice of schools rather than a negative, however, the acculturation strategies favored by most women is self-confessed and self-imposed separation. Assimilation and marginalization were not chosen strategies for any of the participating students. Exogenous factors such as age, marital status, and country of origin also played a pertinent role in the favored acculturation strategy.

Twelve sub-themes emerged from the interview data: religious observance, difficulty socializing, no dating, satisfaction with academics, satisfaction with university Catholic identity, gender difference, ignorance of Americans about Islam, school choice based on relationships, international or first generation Americans, headscarf as wall/armor, headscarf as flag, and a higher level of religious observance than their mothers (none of the American women who covered had mothers who wore the hijab).

Distilled from the sub-themes, three majors themes emerged from the data: search for identity, search for place in the community, and search for understanding from the larger culture.
Higher education professionals must find ways to help Muslim female students to integrate on campus while allowing them to maintain their religious and cultural values.

Some of the recommendations for higher education professionals are: include a mandatory class or module on Islam in Introduction to Religious studies courses; help Muslim students feel welcome on campus by offering more alcohol-free social events and at least one food outlet on campus that serves halal food; and organize panel discussions, workshops, and seminars to educate the greater campus population about Islam.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge about the acculturation process of minority student groups by studying the experience of female Muslim students at the University of Dayton and Xavier University.

Introduction—Changing Demographics on American Campuses

In an early example of European condescension of American cuisine, “the French aristocrat Talleyrand is reported to have derisively observed that the United States had 32 religions, but only one sauce” (Smith, 2002, p. 577). His witty comment proved to be more prescient than anyone living in revolutionary era America could have dreamed.

Since then America has continually imported and even created new indigenous religions. Religious diversity surged forward in the 1960s when immigration law changed the geographical map of our immigrant pipeline from Europe to Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (Smith, 2002). This demographic shift in immigration patterns to the U.S. also affected the population of students coming from abroad to study in the U.S. For example, of the 8,075 foreign students studying in American colleges and universities in the 1942-1943 academic year, only 231 came from predominantly Muslim countries (Bevis & Lucas, 2007, p. 114). In 1954 there were only 40 students from Saudi Arabia studying in the United States, but by 1979 that number had swelled to 9,540 (p. 173).
Throughout the 1960s the total number of international students studying in the U.S. hovered at approximately 20,000 per academic year (Bevis & Lucas, 2007, p. 173). By the year 2000 that number had exponentially increased to over 500,000 international students per year. Last year the number of international students who studied in the United States was nearly 700,000 (Institute of International Education, 2011). The top three places of origin for these international students were: China, India, and South Korea (Institute of International Education, 2011). As the enrollment of foreign students continues to expand, so grows the diversity of American college campuses. Along with language and cultural diversity, religious diversity increases as well. While many studies address gender, race, cultural, and socioeconomic differences on American college campuses (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Davis, 2002; Merriam, 2002), religion has not garnered much attention (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Kuh, 2007; Levey, Blanco, & Jones 1997). Matters of students’ religious needs, when they have been addressed, have tended to focus on Christianity and Judaism (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006).

Of the top ten countries that sent international students to the U.S. in 2010 only two, Canada and Mexico, are predominantly Christian countries (Institute of International Education, 2011). This expansion in religious diversity has been increasingly showing up on college campuses in the last decade particularly, and will likely continue to swell in decades to come (Haddad, Senzai, & Smith, 2009).

International students are not the only Muslims on American campuses though. Because of the ever-growing numbers in the Muslim community of America at large, Muslim American students are also entering colleges in the United States in greater numbers than ever before (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010). It is difficult not to notice the presence
of Muslims in virtually all American towns and cities. “Students of recent American history are well aware of the dramatic changes in the religious demography of the United States with the arrival of Muslims … and many others to the urban and rural areas of America. One can now find Muslim communities across the continent” (Smith, 2010, p. x). Smith also points out that even though Muslims can be found in the southern U.S. working as day laborers or engineers and the Pacific North West as physicians and farm workers, most Americans do not realize that approximately as many Muslims as Jews live in the U.S. and that they outnumber many of the mainline Protestant denominations.

**Statement of the Problem**

American colleges and universities are facing the challenge of integrating these new student cultures into their wider institutional cultures and will only succeed in doing so by educating faculty and student affairs professionals about their new students.

The purpose of this study was an attempt to understand the acculturation experience of female Muslim students at two Catholic universities in Ohio, the University of Dayton and Xavier University. The underlying issues which inform this study are how Muslim women cope and learn in the context of an American, Catholic university and how much this process is influenced by their religion.

**Research Questions**

The foremost questions guiding this research were:

- What is the acculturation experience of female Muslim students at the University of Dayton and Xavier University?
• What can higher education and student affairs professionals do to help female Muslim students enhance their academic and social integration on campus?

**Significance of the Problem**

When it comes to a discussion of cultural differences, religion is of primary importance: “There appears to be no greater influence on cultural customs and practices than religion” (Lacina, 2002, p. 23). Hunter (1998) points out that religion comprises the heart and the defining element of a civilization, and that it surpasses ethnicity, language, and class in importance to a collective identity. Our spirituality/religion shapes our most basic values, our sense of who we are and where we come from, and our feeling of connectedness to other people and the world we live in (Astin, 2004). In fact, current research indicates that religious identity and engagement is more important to today’s college students than it was to their parents and grandparents (Astin, Astin, Lindholm, Bryant, Szelenyi & Calderone, 2005; Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2006; Nash, 2001).

In the United States many individuals are not receptive to diverse religions. Centuries of conflict between Christians and Muslims, dating back to the long, drawn-out battles of the Crusades, has “left on both sides a legacy of misunderstanding, fear, prejudice, and in some cases, hatred” (Smith, 2010, p. xi). According to a recent Gallup poll, although nearly two thirds of Americans (63 percent) admit that they have little or no knowledge about Islam, nearly half admit to some level of prejudice against Muslims (43 percent) (Inside Islam, 2010). Before September 11, 2001 “few Americans had much awareness of the presence of Muslims in America… as they have moved from invisibility to visibility, many have had to defend their faith and have responded with more overt
forms of public acknowledgement of Islam. Veiling has increased among women” (Smith, 2010, p. 195).

This intolerance for other religions can cause problems for students who belong to non-Christian groups. As an example, on some holy days many Muslims will feel it necessary to attend their mosques for prayer services. Similarly, all observant Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan and they may be fatigued and have trouble focusing in class on these days. University faculty should strive to acknowledge Muslim students’ religious customs and to allow students some flexibility to attend religious meetings and ceremonies. The foremost representative of the university to students is faculty, thus an attempt at religious tolerance among faculty can help schools to both attract and retain Muslim students.

While Muslims of both genders are sometimes the object of intolerant views in the United States, men are more able to “fly under the radar” in most cases because they do not often wear signifiers of their religion in their day-to-day public lives. In contrast, Muslim women are particularly vulnerable to any type of prejudice or intolerance because they are often easily identifiable as Muslim by the scarf (hijab) that many wear in observation of the Islamic practice of dressing modestly in public. According to Roald (2001), who is herself a scarf-wearing Muslim scholar:

The ‘veil’ has various connotations in a western context. A Christian nun wearing a veil might be seen as an image of pure religiosity, purity, and peace, whereas a Muslim woman wearing a veil is likely to be seen as a statement. She may evoke anger from non-Muslim westerners because they believe her to be betraying the
struggle for women’s rights by submitting to her own oppression in wearing the veil. (p. 254)

While the actual number of Muslims in the United States is a politically charged and controversial question, most researchers agree that the number is growing (Nu’man, 1992; Smith, 2010). Because there is no official census taken of religious affiliation in the U.S., estimates range from two to seven million (Haddad, Senzai, & Smith, 2009; Smith, 2007). However, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011, p. 61) 527,000 adults self-reported as Muslim in 1990. In 2001 that figure rose to 1,104,000 and in 2008 the number of self-identified adult Muslims was 1,349,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Clearly, the Muslim population in the United States is growing, and American campuses will reflect this growth as well.

Because most colleges and universities do not require incoming students to divulge their religion, it is impossible to ascertain the exact number of Muslim students attending schools in the United States. Although it is only possible to estimate the population of Muslim students in the U.S., we can discern a general pattern by looking at the numbers of international students studying in the United States over the last few years. According to the Institute of International Education (2011) there were 38,738 international students from the predominantly Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa studying here in the 2009-2010 school year, which is up 15 percent from the previous year. Some estimates run even higher: Rossi (2002) estimates that approximately 75,000 Muslim college students are studying in the U.S.

Approximately 30 percent of the American Muslim population is under the age of 30 and “If current trends continue, the number of U.S. Muslims under age 15 will more
than triple, from fewer than 500,000 in 2010 to 1.8 million in 2030” (Pew Research Center, 2011, p. 2). Clearly, the population of Muslim college students in the United States has nowhere to go but up. Considering that by even the most conservative estimate there are nearly 1.5 million Muslim U.S. citizens, we can assume that there are significantly more Muslim students on U.S. campuses than even the international student population would indicate.

Even though it is a Catholic school the University of Dayton attracts students from 14 predominantly Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, and Pakistan. In 2008 there were 99 international students enrolled at the University of Dayton from those 14 countries (University of Dayton Center for International Programs, 2008). In 2009 that number rose to 163 students and in 2010 the number of international students at UD from Muslim countries rose to 184 (University of Dayton Report on International Enrollment, 2011). And not all Muslim students at UD are international students. Some of the Muslim students at the university were born in the United States.

While Xavier does not match the numbers of international students (200 total, with 60 from predominantly Muslim countries) the numbers there are also on the way up as Xavier strives to increase not only its diversity but also its global presence by recruiting from abroad and offering an Intensive English Program to attract international students (L. Minniti, personal interview, November 14, 2011).

There is some evidence that Catholic schools attract a disproportionate number of Muslim students. According to the Higher Education Research Institute (2010), in 2009 Catholic campuses had a higher percentage of Muslim students than the average four-year institution. In a related interview Catholic University President John Garvey told
National Public Radio host Michel Martin that Muslim students cite the appeal of shared values as part of their attraction to Catholic universities (Martin, 2010).

Though the world’s Muslim population is forecasted to increase at approximately double the rate of the non-Muslim population (an increase of 35 percent) from “1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030” (Pew Research Center, 2011, p. 1) there are very few existing studies on Muslim students, particularly in U.S. higher education. The majority of research about students on American college and university campuses regarding students’ religious affiliation has focused on Christianity (Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2006; Daloz Parks, 2000; Fowler, 1996) Very little higher education research has centered on Muslim students specifically (Bryant, 2006).

In his study of Muslim students Speck (1997) found a consensus among those he interviewed that there is widespread ignorance of Islam among professors, the media, and even textbooks. One student cited examples of textbooks where the description of the Koran was simply that the longest chapters are in the beginning and the shortest chapters come at the end. Another student complained that his textbook described the prophet Mohammed as a Saudi Arabian man who “claimed” that he was given revelations from God: “Why do you say he ‘claimed’?” (p. 43). The student felt that the prophet was being disrespected in a way that a Christian prophet might not have been.

Cole and Ahmadi (2003) reported that because of misrepresentations about Islam and perceived disrespect from both professors and other students, Muslim students frequently perceived their academic integration as marginalized or separated rather than assimilated or integrated. Muslim women routinely report being assumed to be docile, and oppressed because they wear the veil. “In general, reactions from non-Muslims
reflect common stereotypes and misconceptions about veiled women. Varying levels of academic and social discomfort and isolation for veiled women are created as a result” (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003, p. 60).

This study attempted to help sketch in some missing details on a blurry picture of campus life for Muslim female students in the United States. The results of this study can inform the work of faculty, staff and administration as they strive to help female Muslim students navigate the world of higher education, a world in which they are an easily identifiable minority.

**Delimitations**

The scope of this research was limited to studying female Muslim students (both undergraduate and graduate) at the University of Dayton and Xavier University between November, 2011 and February, 2012. This study focused on the individual experiences of eleven Muslim female students as they acculturate to their respective universities.

I initially studied Muslim students of both genders, but discovered that the subject area was too broad to investigate with the level of goodness and detail that could be achieved by limiting the study to one gender. Because female Muslim students are also often visually identifiable as Muslim because of their clothing (whereas men are not) the rationale for narrowing the focus of the study seemed a compelling reason to home in on women.

While Islam is not particularly well understood in the United States, it is often perceived as a somewhat misogynistic religion (Caner & Caner, 2002; Egendorf, 2006; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007; Roald, 2001) so another reason for focusing the study on women Muslim students is the researcher’s interest in feminist issues.
Operational Definitions

Muslims are followers of the religion called Islam, which means submission or surrender in Arabic. This monotheistic religion was founded in the seventh century Common Era by Mohammed and is an Abrahamic faith, springing from the patriarchs of Christianity and Judaism (Ahmed, 1999). There are estimated to be nearly 1.5 billion Muslims in the world today in over 50 countries (Smith, 2010).

Acculturation - The idea of acculturation sprung from the field of cross-cultural psychology – which is the scientific study of the relationship between the culture in which an individual is brought up and the range of behaviors exhibited by the people in that specific culture. Cross cultural psychology has revealed significant connections between cultural context and the behavioral development of individuals (Berry, 1997). Given this connection, the trend in cross-cultural research has been to investigate the results of the transplantation of people who have been brought up in one cultural environment when they try to create a life in a new culture (Berry, 1997).

One of the earliest definitions of acculturation says “acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149). But Berry (1992) points out that while acculturation is a theoretically neutral word, in practice it is more apt to provoke change in only one of the two groups, and more often than not the group who does the changing is the non-dominant group.

Acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997) are the methods that members of the non-dominant cultural group employ to adapt to their larger society. The two major issues that
must be worked out by individuals when they attempt to acculturate are the levels of cultural maintenance (at what level do they choose to maintain the cultural identity and characteristics of their original culture) and contact and participation (how involved they want to become with other cultural groups) (Berry, 1997). These two major issues then create the four specific acculturation strategies that Berry identifies:

*Integration* occurs when the member of the non-dominant group is interested in holding on to some degree of cultural integrity from the originating culture while simultaneously seeking to participate in the greater social network of the dominant culture (Berry, 1997).

*Assimilation* occurs when members of the non-dominant group do not attempt to stay connected to their cultural identity. Instead they seek interaction with other (host) cultures at the expense of their connection to their original culture. This strategy is often referred to as a “melting pot” (Berry, 1997).

*Separation* (also known as segregation) happens when individuals from a non-dominant group seek to maintain their original culture, yet have no interest in communicating with the dominant culture (Berry, 1997).

*Marginalization* is the result when members of the non-dominant group do not attempt to maintain their original culture, while at the same time showing no interest in relating to other groups (Berry, 1997).

*Acculturative stress* occurs when individuals experience stress as a result of daily life events that are connected to the process of acculturation (Berry, 2005). The term is used in lieu of the earlier notion called “culture shock” (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001) for two reasons. First, the term culture shock has only negative associations (Berry,
2005) and second, culture shock implies an immediate and intense negative experience (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007), whereas acculturative stress is believed to stem from the chronic stressors associated with the gradual and long-term process of adjusting to a new culture (Berry, 1997; Lazarus, 1997; Ward, 1997).

*Co-researcher* is the description used for participants in phenomenological research who give researchers information which contributes to knowledge about the phenomena being studied (Moustakas, 1994).

**Summary**

Despite the extensive research on the acculturation of different minority groups on college campuses in North America (Hispanic and African American students, for example), very little exists that looks at the issue from a qualitative viewpoint. I found no published studies which focused on Muslim female college student acculturation; therefore educators may not know how Muslim female students are integrated in the campus community, or how their social and academic integration affect their learning experiences in college.

A phenomenological, qualitative study of Muslim women may help higher education and student affairs professionals analyze the degree to which these students’ acculturation strategies contribute to their development both inside and outside the classroom, and to determine if there are actions that might be taken to enhance student experiences and ultimately improve student learning. The study may also contribute to the literature on minority students’ academic and social integration on campus.

This chapter provided an overview of the proposed study through explanation of the problem (its significance and the rationale for the research), the research questions,
and the operational definitions that are relevant to the study. The second chapter provides a review of the pertinent literature and related research. Chapter three describes the study’s research methodology, data analysis, and the design for the study. Chapter four describes the results and chapter five discusses the implications of the results of the study.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the development of Muslim women students and the choices they make in acculturation strategies as students at the University of Dayton and Xavier University.

Currently there is scant research on Muslim students in American higher education and less still on female Muslim students specifically. Though the focus of this study was qualitative, much of the extant research on Muslim students is embedded in studies on international students and is quantitative in nature (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003). Similarly, nearly all of acculturation research follows a quantitative methodology. Because this study was a look at the meaning students made of their experiences as Muslim female college students and followed a strictly qualitative method the intent was to enrich the field of knowledge on the topic.

This chapter reviews literature describing research related to the development and acculturation of Muslim women students at the University of Dayton and Xavier University and is organized into three sections: a) Islamic culture and context, b) psychological acculturation theory, and c) a holistic model of development.
Islamic Culture and Context

The Arabic word *Islam* means “submission” and it illuminates the essence of the religion itself (Ahmed, 1999; Egendorf, 2006; Understanding Islam, 2000). “For the Muslim, prayer is not simply a mental or spiritual attitude or even just a matter of thanksgiving of the mind and heart. It involves a total bodily response, both sitting [on the floor, as mosques generally do not have chairs or pews] and putting oneself through a series of physical prostrations” (Smith, 2010, p. 1). Observant Muslims perform the prostrations (in which the individual kneels on the ground and places his/her forehead on the ground) and prayers five times each day. The word Muslim in Arabic means “one who submits to the will of Allah” (Ali & Bagheri, 2009, p. 48) and the prostrations that Muslims perform symbolize their obedience to Allah.

The Muslim faith originated in 610 CE when the prophet Mohammed was reportedly visited by the angel Gabriel on Mt. Hira while meditating in a cave near the top of the mountain. Mohammed was said to have heard the angel speak to him, commanding him to recite the first verses of the Quran (Ahmed, 1999; Understanding Islam, 2000). The Quran, the holy book of Islam, is revered by Muslims as the “verbatim revelation of God to Mohammed” (Smith, 2010, p. xi) and is the primary source of Muslim faith and practice.

Like Christianity and Judaism, Islam is an Abrahamic, monotheistic religion (Ali, Liu, & Humedian, 2004; Egendorf, 2006); although “Muslims use the word Allah to refer to the God of all humanity” (Ali & Bagheri, 2009, 48). From early in life Muslim children learn that their religion is based on five explicit beliefs which are manifested in the five responsibilities that are often referred to as the “five pillars of Islam” (Ahmed,
The five pillars are based on both the teachings of the Quran and the experiences of the prophet Mohammed. All faithful Muslims are expected to perform them (Ahmed, 1999; Ali & Bagheri, 2009; Smith, 2010). These pillars include (Ahmed, 1999; Haddad, Smith & Moore, 2006; Understanding Islam, 2000):

1. Testimony or *shahada*. While all five of the pillars of Islam are important to the faith, the *shahada* is the most essential. Unlike Christian tradition, in which God is conceptualized as a holy Trinity of father, son (Jesus), and holy spirit, Muslims believe that there is only one God and they testify to that by saying “I give testimony that there is no God but God and that Mohammed is the Prophet of God” (Smith, 2010, p. 8). Muslims believe that Jesus, like Mohammed, was a prophet and not the son of God.

2. Prayer or *salat* is the obligatory prayer that Muslims perform five times per day.

3. Charity or *zakat* is the almsgiving that Muslims are enjoined to give to the less fortunate among them.

4. Fasting during Ramadan is an important duty for Muslims. It was during the month of Ramadan that the Quran was revealed to Mohammed. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar year.

5. Pilgrimage or *hajj* is the obligation of every Muslim to visit the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia during one’s lifetime.

The practice of Islam is based not only on the Quran, but also on the collected individual narratives of what Mohammed said and did during his lifetime— the *hadith*
The hadith and the Quran together became the basis for the code of law, or sharia, which governs the day-to-day lives of all observant Muslims (Blanchard, 2009).

Although there are many different sects within Islam, there are two broad divisions: Sunni and Shia (also referred to as Shiites). Sunnis account for approximately 90 percent of the global Muslim population and Shias about 10 percent (Blanchard, 2009; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). The Shiites descend from the group of Muslims who venerate Ali as Mohammed’s true spiritual successor (Ahmed, 1999; Blanchard, 2009; Smith, 2010). As Mohammed’s cousin and son-in-law Ali was the first male Muslim and the closest male blood tie that could have succeeded Mohammed. When Ali was not selected as Mohammed’s successor it caused the rift that exists to this day between the Shiite and Sunni sects of Islam (Ahmed, 1999; Blanchard, 2009). The Shiites historically are concentrated in Iran, Iraq, and South Asia. The Shia believe in a powerful, centralized figure of religious authority (an imam) who is more than just a spiritual leader— he is sometimes elevated to superhuman status – as in the case of the ayatollahs of Iran (Ahmed, 1999).

The Sunnis, on the other hand, do not have an ayatollah nor do they believe that humans need intermediary help (through an imam) to communicate with God (Ahmed, 1999). Sunni Muslims take a more literal stance on the reading of the Quran. They believe that the Quran speaks for itself and is not in need of a human to interpret its meaning for its followers (Ahmed, 1999). Sunnis also differ from Shiite Muslims in that they believe that Muslim leaders should be chosen by community consensus and on the individual’s merits (Blanchard, 2009; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007).
The sectarian nature of Islam is relevant because it has caused many of the regional conflicts in the Middle East over the past millennium and continues to be a problem today (Ahmed, 1999; Blanchard, 2009).

The Quran explicitly prohibits the consumption or practice of anything that is *haram*—deemed harmful or impure (Ahmed, 1999; Ali & Bagheri, 2009). As a result, Muslims abstain from gambling, adultery, fornication, and consumption of alcohol and carnivorous animals (Understanding Islam, 2000). In addition, the Quran stipulates that anything that could lead to harmful actions should also be avoided; hence women should dress modestly and should avoid private meetings with men, in order to negate the possibility of fornication or adultery (Haddad, Smith & Moore, 2006).

Another Islamic principle is that food should be prepared in a beneficial way: the term for anything beneficial is *halal*. Observant Muslims eat only *halal* foods much in the same way that observant Jews eat only kosher food. One of the main features of *halal* food is the avoidance of eating pork. Another of the *halal* food rules is the Islamic process of slaughtering meat (Understanding Islam, 2000).

Finding *halal* food can be a challenge for Muslims living in the west, but this can be especially difficult for college students who often do not have a means of transportation needed to shop for *halal* food (Ali & Bagheri, 2009). Mubarak (2007) points out that those institutions who oppose religious accommodation usually do so with this logic: if we offer *halal* meat in the dining halls, we must also respond to the dietary restrictions of other student religions, therefore it is more expedient for the university to deny accommodation to any religious groups’ needs than to run the risk of indulging one groups’ dietary wishes and possibly ignoring others.
Muslim cultures in most of the world operate to some degree under *sharia*, or Islamic law. Arabic for “path,” *sharia* law shapes many aspects of daily Muslim life: family and religious obligations, marriage and divorce ritual and practice, and financial dealings (Johnson & Vriens, 2010). *Sharia* developed gradually in the decades following Prophet Mohammed’s death in 632 CE as a guide to living in the manner of Mohammed, who was considered to be the most pious of all believers. There are various interpretations of what *sharia* means because it is shaped by the varying Muslim countries and cultures where it exists. Because some interpretations of *sharia* are used to justify harsh punishments like stoning and amputation, it remains controversial (Johnson & Vriens, 2010).

Two important components of *sharia* law specifically impact Muslim female students on American college campuses: modesty and drinking alcohol (Mir, 2007). The Quran directs women to dress modestly in order to avoid attracting the attention of men (Ahmed, 1999). A natural offshoot of this modesty has traditionally been the segregation of the sexes in order to preserve chastity, a cardinal value in Islam (Ahmed, 1999). Traditionally, this has meant no dating is allowed by virtue of the fact that unmarried men and women who are not family members are forbidden to be alone together. “The disparity between customs in Muslim countries and the United States puts a great deal of stress on the parents of girls. One of their major concerns is finding appropriate ways for their daughters to meet potential partners. Some refuse to let their daughters date at all…or only with appropriate chaperoning” (Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006, p. 86). This can make living on an American college campus difficult for observant Muslim women who may be torn between their traditional values and the desire to adapt to the dominant
majority norms on gender interaction. In an ethnographic study of female undergraduates at two private East Coast universities Mir (2007) found that:

The absence of parents and non-school home spaces, as well as the presence of a community composed mostly of teenagers/young adults, “heats up” college culture so that romantic/sexual activity flourishes in residential colleges. For my participants, college culture intensified peer pressure to replicate the dominant majority norms on gender interaction. (p. 73)

In a case study of a 21-year old Muslim American college senior Ali, Liu, & Humedian (2004) found that the custom of arranged marriages can also be an issue with which Muslim women on American college campuses have to contend. The tradition of arranged marriage for Muslim families from South Asia is founded on pragmatism rather than love. Students can experience a great deal of conflict with their parents because of their acculturation into their new society and because of their divergent views of marriage (Hermansen, 1991). Ali, Liu & Humedian (2004) found that many college students who seek help from a counselor at school are in acculturation conflict already and may need help to sort out the issues that spring from the pressure their parents put on them for acquiescence to an arranged marriage.

Another difficulty for Muslim women on American campuses related to sharia law is alcohol consumption. Sharia law prohibits alcohol consumption, but drinking is an important part of the socialization process, for better or for worse, on American college campuses (Ahmed, 1999; Ali & Bagheri, 2009; Ali, Liu & Humedian, 2004; Understanding Islam, 2000). According to Wechsler and Wuethrich (2002) nearly half of college students report engaging in binge drinking and over one million students per year
are injured due to their own or other students’ overindulgence in alcohol. “At college campuses, dominant patterns of youth behavior, such as the consumption of alcohol, are the valued form of social capital. Drinking together at bars and clubs is assumed to be an important social ritual of college leisure life” (Haddad, Senzai, & Smith, 2009, p. 214). By refusing to participate in these social activities Muslim students are effectively marginalizing themselves from college life. Mir (2009) found that “Muslim women are, through their alcohol-related choices, relegated to the margins of college culture or to the margins of religious practice” (p. 228). Although Xavier University is not known for its drinking culture, the University of Dayton is infamous for being a party school. For nearly a decade UD chose to close the school down for spring break during the week of St. Patrick’s Day because of the out of control campus parties. Regardless of their party reputations however, drinking is an important aspect of the social life on both campuses, especially for undergraduate students who live on campus.

Also tied to sharia law is the issue of gender discrimination in Islam (Caner & Caner, 2002). The purpose of this study was not to attempt an explanation of this extremely complicated issue. But it is incumbent on any research involving Muslim women to acknowledge the fact that the treatment of women in many Muslim countries and cultures has and still is rife with human rights abuses such as genital mutilation, stoning, honor killings, polygamy, and a basic lack of human freedom (Caner & Caner, 2002; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). For example, the World Health Organization (2010) estimates that the practice of female genital mutilation (sometimes also called female circumcision) affects between 100 and 140 million girls and women a year, yet the practice is not universal in the Muslim world (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). The purpose
here was not to uncover where and why these abuses occur, but to acknowledge them as part of the context of the subject of the study. It is also important to note that many scholars, both inside and outside the Muslim community, argue that these inhumane customs and traditions are cultural and not based on Islam or sharia law (Abdullah, 2010; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007; Roald, 2001).

In fact, many scholars of Islam point out that the Quran elevated women to a more equal status to men than they had previously enjoyed in pre-Islamic Arabia (Caner & Caner, 2002; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007; Haddad et al., 2006; Roald, 2001). According to Ahmed (1999) Muslim women possess the right to inherit property, to work, to an education, to divorce their husbands, and to have their say both at home and in the public sphere. “In Arab countries prior to Islam, inheritance was passed down in the male line…women in Arabia as in many other cultures were excluded from inheritance. However, the Quran emphasizes the right of individual members, including women, to inherit” (Ahmed, p. 155). Ahmed also points out that this measure of equality was only won in many western societies in the last century, whereas they have existed in Muslim law since the very beginning of the Muslim religion when the prophet Mohammed first revealed the Quran.

Although Muslim women in America are not the only students who are marginalized by college cultures, they do have a specific and complex form of marginality that is often described by one of two terms: orientalism or islamophobia (Haddad, Senzai, & Smith, 2009). The term orientalism (Said, 1979) describes the reinforcement of negative stereotypes about the Arab/Muslim world by reiterating negative tropes; for example, that it is violent, undisciplined, and irrational. “Malicious
generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign culture in the West; what is said about the Muslim mind, or character, or religion, or culture as a whole cannot now be said in mainstream discussion about Africans, Jews, other Orientals or Asians” (Said, 1997, p. xii).

Islamophobia is the irrational fear of and hostility toward Islam and the paradox of it is that many people who are afraid of Islam know very little about it. A 2006 Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), (CAIR, 2011) survey found that almost half of Americans have a negative perception of Islam, and yet about 80 percent of respondents in the survey said they lack any personal contact with a Muslim (www.cair.com). Much of what Americans know about Islam comes from negative media coverage (Bloom & Blair, 2002; Egendorf, 2006; Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006).

Unfortunately, several major media events in the last thirty years have profoundly influenced the way many Americans view Islam (Egendorf, 2006). The angry mobs of Shiites in Tehran in 1979 chanting “death to America” was one of the first experiences that most Americans had with the religion (Bloom & Blair, 2002). The next major event to shape American perception of Islam was September 11, 2001 (Bloom & Blair, 2002; Egendorf, 2006). The world watched in horror as American civilians were targeted by a handful of Islamic extremists and it created the feeling among many that it was a situation of “us” (Americans) versus “them” (Muslims) even though over a million Americans are both (Caner & Caner, 2002). Bloom and Blair (2002) explain the prevalent, if misguided, attitude of many Americans, “Most Americans at the dawn of the third millennium, associate the word ‘Islam’ with a range of negative images, from turbaned terrorists to stern faced mullahs exhorting the faithful to shun the temptations of
Western civilization” (p. 11). Smith (2010) points out that a Pew Research Center Survey (2011) found that nearly half of Americans believe that the U.S. has allowed too much immigration from Muslim countries, and that most Americans are worried to some extent about radicals in the American Muslim community.

Muslim students in the United States face a unique challenge: they are not just a minority; they are often a vilified minority. Nasir and Al-Amin (2006) found that Muslim students report feeling that they are viewed negatively by others because of their religion. In the year following 9/11 the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reported more than 700 acts of discrimination against Muslims, some have been violent attacks (CAIR): The Waco Tribune Herald reported that at Baylor University in 2006 a Muslim woman was pushed to the ground, had her hijab torn off and was kicked repeatedly, sustaining broken ribs as a result of the attack (Mubarak, 2007). It is crucial for educators to understand this unique context when working with Muslim students.

**Muslim Students in the United States**

Mubarak (2007) points out that as many Muslim college students find themselves searching for a sense of self and meaning in life as other college students. In a 2003 survey of 112,232 students at 236 institutions, the Higher Education Research Institute found that 76 percent of students are “searching for meaning and purpose in life” (HERI, 2003, p. 7). Mubarak (2007) also calls attention to the fact that many second generation Muslim students are embracing Islam in a more public fashion than their parents: the number of Muslim students attending Muslim schools is steadily increasing, young Muslims are attending more conferences and lectures than their parents do, and they are developing a stronger connection to their religious heritage in general. More young
Muslim women who were born in the United States are also deciding to wear the hijab even though their own mothers do not (Abdo, 2006), and as a result Muslim women are an ever more visible presence on American campuses.

Muslim students in America gained an organized presence on college and university campuses in 1963 when the Muslim Students Association was founded at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign (Mubarak, 2007). Seventy five students representing 10 colleges sought to create an association that could serve as a place for spirituality, community, and religious education during their time on campus. Currently more than 600 MSA chapters in the United States and Canada (ranging from 60 to 600 students) serve students at both private and public colleges and universities (Mubarak, 2007).

In a study investigating Muslim students’ experiences on campus Speck (1997) found that cultural differences and intolerance based on religious practice cast a dark cloud on the Muslim students’ educational experience. In his analysis of the transcribed interviews with Muslim students Speck (1997, p. 40) found that Muslim students identified four problems:

1. Professors’ misunderstanding of Muslim practices may result in misrepresenting them in the classroom.

2. Professors may use media that introduce misunderstandings about Islam.

3. Professors may fail to maintain attitudes of respect for certain religions in the classroom.

4. Professors may not make an effort to accommodate students’ religious practices.
In a postmodern ethnography Mays (2003) found that Muslim students on the Brandeis University campus often feel frustration at both the media’s portrayal of Islam and of the general lack of knowledge about Islam on the part of mainstream America. Although the hypothesis of the study on Muslim students at the predominantly Jewish campus was that the Muslim students would exhibit some symptoms of culture shock, this was not exactly the case. Instead Mays (2003) discovered: “context specific/situational culture shock was evident in the experience of the participants in the study” (p. 160) and rather than reacting to American culture in general, the participants found themselves reacting to specific, yet unexpected social encounters. The research showed this to be particularly true for female participants who felt uncomfortable because they were surrounded by other Muslim women who were wearing head scarves while they themselves wore no head covering.

In a related theme, Mays (2003) also discovered that the idea of double consciousness (Dubois, 1903) did not go far enough in his theoretical expression of Muslim life at Brandeis. As Dubois describes it, “double consciousness is the sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, -- an American, a Negro” (p. 7). Instead, he augmented Dubois’ theory of double consciousness with Villafane’s (1992) idea of triple consciousness because some of his participants believed themselves to be perceived as outsiders by non-Muslims at Brandeis while at the same time feeling themselves to be perceived as outsiders by the Muslim community on campus. “Villafane used the term triple-consciousness to refer to the
constant juxtaposition of feeling like an insider/outsider to the dominant group, while having the same insider/outsider feelings within one’s own group” (Mays, 2003, p. 159).

In a statistical analysis of survey data of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim college students Cole and Ahmadi (2010) found that although they engaged more in group work for class, had more roommates of different racial/ethnic background and participated in more racial/cultural awareness workshops, Muslim students experienced less overall satisfaction with their college experience than their Jewish peers.

**Psychological Acculturation**

The term acculturation encompasses adaptation between groups or individuals at the cultural, psychological, social, economic, and political levels (Lee, Sobal, & Frongillo, 2003). Though it was initially believed to be a community level phenomenon, acculturation can refer to the process of adaptation at the individual as well as the group level (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987). On a cultural level, acculturation references communal transformation of the structure and condition of a society, the organization of the economy, and the configuration of the cultures’ political system (Berry, Poortinga, Segall & Dasen, 1992). “At the individual level, it involves changes in a person’s behavioral repertoire” (Berry, 2005, p. 699) and it is termed psychological acculturation (Berry, 1980; Graves, 1967). “Psychological acculturation refers to the changes in behaviors, attitudes, values, and identities of individuals” (Matsudaira, 2006, p. 462). This study focused exclusively on psychological acculturation.

This study was a purely qualitative investigation of acculturation, but it is probably unique in the field. In a 22-year review of the analysis of the content in acculturation research Yoon, Langrehr and Ong (2011) found that all 138 acculturation
studies from five major American Psychological Association and American Counseling Association journals were quantitative studies. “The most typical type of study from this review was a survey study examining a direct relationship between acculturation/enculturation and such outcome variable(s) as help seeking attitudes and mental health, adjustment, and well-being by using hierarchical multiple regressions” (p. 92).

**Dimensionality**

One of the crucial issues in conceptualizing the process of psychological acculturation is its dimensionality (Dao, Teten, & Nguyen, 2010; Matsudaira, 2006; Trimble, 1989). Does an individual acculturate in a straight line, only moving over time from the original (heritage) culture to the new (Western, modern, acculturated) culture? Or is the process a multidimensional model (Berry, 2003) in which people “can accept sociocultural domains of a new society and also retain some of their old society”? (Lee, Sobal, & Frongillo, 2003, p. 283). The debate in psychology over dimensionality has been ongoing for decades.

The process of acculturation was first thought to be a unidimensional process of cultural change which resulted in assimilation of the acculturating group or individual (Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986; Suarez-Orozco, 2001). The unidimensional model maintains that people surrender their original cultural affiliations when they are acculturating to their new culture (Gordon, 1964). Little to no importance was placed on the retention of the originating culture.

The unidimensional model has been the standard view for acculturation since Park and Miller (1921) first wrote about melting pot theory as sociologists at the
University of Chicago. In a unidimensional model of acculturation the person or group from the non-dominant culture sheds its heritage culture and takes on the new or dominant culture. The simplest version of this model can be pictured as an arrow pointing in the direction of assimilation (Flannery, Reise, & Yu, 2001). Parks’ and Miller’s (1921) three stage model of contact, accommodation, and assimilation was progressive and irreversible ending in the complete absorption of the non-dominant culture by the dominant culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 36).

Matsudaira (2006) points out that the unidimensional model which “holds that individuals relinquish their cultures of origin as they acculturate to new cultures…has crucial problems” (p. 471). Because the unidimensional model presupposes the exclusivity of the two cultures (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991) and also assumes the objective of complete assimilation into the new culture (Dona & Berry, 1994), this model is unable to make a distinction between people who may be enmeshed in both the old and new cultures and those who are not involved in either their heritage culture or their new culture (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Trimble (1989) defines a nuanced linear view of acculturation as a bipolar model: “Psychologists usually attempt to isolate an individual’s cultural orientation on a bipolar linear continuum…an individual is placed somewhere between a traditionalist pole to a fully acculturated position” (p. 174).

However, proponents of the unidirectional model (Gans, 1979; Gordon, 1964) regard assimilation as a complex layered amalgam of stages of change in the multiple facets of language, social interaction, economic, and religious adaptation. Research has also shown that acculturation previously overlooked facets of a person can play a role in acculturation (Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986; Inglis & Gudykunst, 1982; Kim & Hurh,
Acculturation is influenced by exogenous variables such as gender, age, arrival age, length of stay, generation, socioeconomic status, and marital status” (Lee, Sobal, & Frongillo, 2003, p. 284). More recent research indicates that psychological acculturation is multidimensional: an individual can maintain her culture of origin even as she acculturates to her new society by selectively retaining some aspects of the old culture while incorporating advantageous qualities of the new culture at the same time (Berry, 1992, 1997, 2005).

In an empirical comparison of acculturation models Flannery, Reise, and Yu (2001) found that a unidimensional model was ideal for first-generation immigrants and a bidimensional model was ideal for second generation immigrants, but they also found that when acculturation phenomena coincide with ethnicity phenomena a new ethnic identity is created in a process called “ethnogenesis” (Roosens, 1989). In effect, the culture being studied could not be reduced to native and newcomer orientations. Hence, Flannery, Reise, and Yu (2001) offer ethnogenesis as a tertiary track in acculturation theory. In the U.S. the Chicano population is an excellent example of ethnogenesis (Roosens, 1989): it is not merely a function of “being Mexican” and “being American.”

As a matter of fact, many Chicanos refuse the categorization of Mexican American because they believe it is inaccurate (Gurin, Hurtado, & Peng, 1994; Keefe & Padilla, 1987). It is conceivable that this same process of ethnogenesis could arise in the Muslim population in the United States.

**Berry’s Theory of Acculturation**

Different groups and individuals experience acculturation in their own unique ways. Berry (1980) has identified these variations as acculturation strategies. These
strategies contain two parts: attitudes, which are a person’s stated preference about how they choose to acculturate; and behaviors, which are the individual’s actual activities in his or her daily intercultural encounters (Berry, 2005).

Much of the more recent research suggests that acculturation is complex and that true assimilation may never occur, and actually may not even be desirable. A foremost contributor to the study of psychological acculturation is Berry’s (1989, 1992, 1997, 2005) theoretical approach, which is based on the earlier work of Graves (1967): “who shifted the study of acculturation from the macrolevel to the microlevel and proposed the concept of psychological acculturation-the psychological and behavioral changes that an individual experiences as a result of sustained contact with members of other cultural groups” (Ward & Kennedy, 1994, p. 330).

Although the term acculturation is neutral in theory (both the host or dominant culture and the guest or non-dominant culture can experience change), in practice it has tended to mean more change in the non-dominant group--the acculturating group (Berry, 1997). In a correlational study which compared the acculturation processes of Indian rural, urban migrants, and White-Mestizo (non-migrant) workers in Peru Richman, Gaviria, Flaherty, Birz, and Wintro (1987) discovered the possibility that the dominant culture or host culture may experience change due, in part, to the influence from the non-dominant or acculturating group.

Berry (1997, 2005) provides a bidimensional or multidimensional model of acculturation which posits that immigrants can choose which characteristics of the new (dominant) society to adopt and which of their heritage culture (nondominant) to retain. Berry (1997) defines these two issues as 1) cultural maintenance: the degree to which the
heritage cultural identity (and its features) is preserved by the group or individual, and 2) that of contact and participation: the extent to which acculturating groups and individuals become involved in other cultural groups (p. 9).

Berry (1997) also notes that when these core issues are taken into account simultaneously a conceptual framework of four acculturation strategies emerges. Assimilation occurs when people choose not to maintain their original cultural identity and they instead seek to build relationships and to participate in aspects of other cultures. On the contrary, when people attempt to preserve their identification with their heritage culture while evading contact and communication with other cultures they are pursuing the separation strategy. Those who value the maintenance of their original culture while simultaneously endeavoring to participate in the dominant culture are seeking integration. The last, and least preferred, strategy is marginalization, which occurs when individuals do little to maintain ties with their heritage culture and they also make little effort made to communicate or participate in other cultures (Berry, 1997, p. 9).

In his analysis of studies with Indian immigrants to the U.S. (Krishnan & Berry, 1992), and young immigrants from the developing world in Norway (Sam & Berry, 1995) as well as several immigrant groups in Germany, Schmitz (1992) determined that integration appears to be the most efficient strategy when measurements of physical and mental health are the indicators. Conversely, marginalization was found to be the least adaptive.

**Acculturative Stress**

There are two ways in which to conceptualize the outcomes of acculturation: behavioral shifts and acculturative stress (Berry, 1992, 1997, 2005). Behavioral shifts in
an individual usually take place relatively easily and rarely cause problems. Within the process of behavioral shifts is a sequence of three sub processes: “cultural shedding, culture learning, and cultural conflict” (Berry, 2005, p. 707). Cultural shedding and learning take place when the individual replaces certain behaviors from the heritage culture with new behaviors from the host culture that enable the individual to better blend in with the culture they are settling in. Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) refer to this process as adjustment because most of the adaptive changes occur within the acculturating individual and few, if any, occur among the larger societies' members. Although these changes usually are made with a minimum of difficulty, some level of cultural conflict can arise and when it does the individual can sometimes experience acculturative stress (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

Berry (2005) defines acculturative stress as “a stress reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation” (p. 708). He prefers the term acculturative stress to culture shock (Oberg, 1960) because the concept of culture shock carries only negative connotations and implies involvement in a single culture, whereas stress can actually be positive, and because the acculturative stress is caused by two cultures intersecting – not just one culture by itself.

**Adjustment and Adaptation**

The terms adjustment and adaptation appear to be nearly synonymous in a non-academic application, but in cross-cultural psychology they are distinct ideas. Ward and Kennedy (1993) describe the term *adjustment* as the changes made by the acculturating individual that allow her to fit in with the society of settlement. These changes are generally made with little difficulty because they tend to occur in acculturation
experiences that are non-problematic. In this conception of adjustment few, if any, changes occur among the members of the host culture (Berry, 1997). In contrast, adaptation “refers to the relatively stable changes that take place in an individual or group in response to environmental demands. Moreover, adaptation may or may not improve the ‘fit’ between individuals and their environments” (Berry, 1997, p. 20). Thus, adaptation is not necessarily an individual or group’s attempt to emulate the members of their host culture (which would be adjustment), but may involve defiance and attempts to change their environment or even rejection of it altogether. In other words, adaption does not always mean well-adapted (Berry, 1997).

**Moderating Factors**

All people bring their own unique personal characteristics to the process of acculturation, and experience acculturation in their own unique way. Berry (1997) calls these “social and demographic traits” that existed before acculturation and those that surfaced during the process of acculturation “moderating factors” (Berry, 1997). Beiser et al. (1997) found that age in particular has a particularly powerful influence on the way acculturation progresses: when it starts early enough (before the child has started school) the process tends to run smoothly. However, older children and teenagers often have trouble acculturating, especially during adolescence (Aronowitz, 1992; Carlin, 1990; Ghuman, 1991; Sam & Berry, 1995). Exacerbating this problem for adolescents is the nascent issue of identity as a developmental issue that increases the questions they have about who they are as people (Phinney, 1990).

Gender as well as age have been shown to play a part in the acculturation process. Research indicates that females may be faced with greater challenges than males (Beiser
et al., 1997; Carballo, 1994). Berry (1997) concedes that this is a generalization that probably depends on the status of women in their heritage and settlement cultures and the disparity of treatment of women in the two cultures. When there is a considerable difference, women may try to take on new positions and responsibilities available in the settlement culture that could bring them into discord with their traditional culture (Moghaddam, Ditto, & Taylor, 1990; Naidoo, 1992; Naidoo & Davis, 1988).

Education level also appears to have an impact on the ease of an individual’s acculturation: those with a higher level tend to experience less stress (Beiser et al., 1997, Jayasuriya, Sang & Fielding, 1992). Similarly, economic status can play a part in the ease of acculturation because of the connection of financial well-being to social status and social mobility (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Not only is an individual’s departure status often superior to her entry status, but often credentials like education and employment experience are undervalued by the host culture (Cumming, Lee, & Oreopoulos, 1989). At times this status loss is attributable to genuine disparity in qualifications, but it can also be a result of unawareness or bias in the culture of settlement. These problems often lie in the interaction between the acculturating individual and the establishment of the society to which she is acculturating; therefore, they can often be addressed during the process of acculturation (Berry, 1997).

Another factor that has a powerful impact on the acculturation process is the cultural distance (how divergent they are on things like religion and language) between the two contact cultures (Berry, 1997). Research has consistently shown that the more significant the cultural differences, the less likely that immigrants, sojourners, and
indigenous people will have a positive experience in the adaptation process (Berry, 1976; Ward & Kennedy, 1992; Ward & Searle, 1991).

**Effects of Acculturation Strategies**

Similar to the factors that acculturating individuals bring with them to the process are the effects of the acculturation strategies that individuals choose to adopt. Acculturation strategies have been demonstrated to have a major influence on positive adaptation: with integration proving to be the most beneficial strategy, marginalization as the least successful, and assimilation and separation intermediary. According to Berry (1992, 1997) and Berry & Sam (1997), “This pattern has been found in virtually every study, and is present for all types of acculturating groups” (Berry, 1997, p. 24). There is no clear answer as to why this is so, however. It has been theorized that the integration strategy offers acculturating individuals the support of two social systems, whereas, the marginalization strategy involves the rejection by the host culture coupled with the loss of the heritage culture to equal a total lack of social support. In simple terms: “integration involves two positive orientations; marginalization involves two negative ones, while assimilation and separation involve one positive and one negative relationship” (Berry, 1997, p. 24).

In his research on German immigrants, Schmitz (1994) discovered that an individual’s stress reaction styles are related to his or her chosen acculturation strategy. Using the Grossarth-Maticek and Eysenck Psycho-Social Stress Inventory (1990), the “Approach” mode was associated to a predilection for assimilation and the “Flexible” style was positively linked to integration, whereas, the “Avoidance” mode was related to separation and “Psychopathology” was related to marginalization.
In their research involving Indian immigrants to the United States Krishnan and Berry (1992) also found that integration was the favored acculturation strategy and showed the least connection to acculturative stress. They established a significant positive relationship with acculturative stress in individuals who were marginalized or separate from the larger society and a negative relationship in acculturative stress with those who had integrated.

Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Horenczyk, & Schmitz (2003) found that young people who had recently repatriated from Israel, Germany, Finland, and the former Soviet Union favored the integration strategy when using the Berry (1997) four-fold acculturation model. This study also examined the orientation of the host cultures to see if the strategies were concordant or discordant between the two cultures in question (Bourhis, Moise, Perrault, & Senecal, 1997). The acculturation profiles of native citizens and immigrants were found to be harmonious in Germany and Israel, but not so in Finland, where assimilation is the preferred strategy. Bourhis et al. (1997) define concordance as the situation in which the settlement community and the acculturating group share congruent ideas of acculturation. Discordance prevails between the settlement and minority cultures when the acculturation preference of the two groups corresponds minimally or does not correspond in any way.

A similar study by Zagefka and Brown (2002) of students who had immigrated to Germany revealed that a strategy of integration was connected with better relations between groups. This study also found that the congruence between the immigrant and host society in acculturation strategy choice was a good predictor of intergroup relations.
Luque, Fernandez, and Tejada (2006) in their study of African immigrants in Spain found that 61 percent of the participants in the study stated that they keep the customs of their home culture while also participating fully in the Spanish society; 25 percent of the participants articulated an approach of assimilation; and only eight percent separated themselves from the host culture while maintaining their home culture. The smallest number of participants (seven percent) expressed an attitude of marginalization.

**Kegan’s Theory of Development**

The work of Robert Kegan (1994) provides a useful framework with which to consider the acculturation of female Muslim students at the University of Dayton and Xavier University. Kegan sees human development in a holistic light by incorporating three dimensions of development, all of which are necessary for a self-actualized adulthood which he calls “self-authorship” (p. 185). Kegan (1994) explains that this complex system for organizing experience takes all the “values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and interpersonal states” (p. 185) as parts of a system rather than as the system itself- they become parts of a whole. “This new whole is an ideology, an internal identity, a *self-authorship* that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states” (p. 185). The three dimensions of development that create a *whole* person are the cognitive, the intrapersonal, and the interpersonal (Kegan, 1994).

An individual’s cognitive component is focused on how the individual makes meaning and creates a system for making meaning based on how one understands knowledge and how knowledge is gained. A person’s intrapersonal dimension centers on
how she understands her own beliefs, values, sense of self, and how she uses these to conduct herself in the world. The interpersonal aspect of the self-authored person focuses on how she views herself in relationship to and with others and the choices she makes in social situations (Kegan, 1994; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

The cognitive dimension of the individual can affect acculturation because “the assumption in the initial level that knowledge is certain and that knowledge claims can be readily judged as right or wrong serves as a barrier to learning about or accepting differing perspectives” (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 575). Individuals who are operating at this initial level of cognitive development, often see cultural differences that do not mesh with their own beliefs and values as wrong because beliefs tend to be adopted from figures of authority instead of created within themselves. King and Baxter Magolda (2005) point out that this phase has been described as dualistic thinking (Perry, 1968), received knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), absolute knowing (Baxter Magolda, 1992), pre-reflective thinking (King & Kitchener, 1994), and as ethnocentric reasoning (Bennett, 1993).

As individuals develop cognitively they gain the ability to accept multiple perspectives and they are also able to move from blindly accepting the word of authority to processing their own thoughts in order to know about the world around them. From the initial level of cognitive development individuals can then move on to a more complex and nuanced worldview in which that which they know is not only derived from personal experience, but also from the perspectives of others: “The ability to consciously shift perspectives emerges because judgments derive from personal experience, evidence from other sources, and others’ experience” (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 576).
The intrapersonal dimension of development is also known as identity development or ego development and it includes a broad range of identity related topics including the way that people view their social identities based on race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and religion. There is an abundance of research on identity development in the general sense (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Josselson, 1987, 1996) to name a few, as well as versions which address specific facets of identity development, such as racial and ethnic identity (Cross, 1991; Daloz Parks, 2000; Helms, 1995; Torres, 2003).

At the initial level of intrapersonal development the individual may lack awareness of the effect of one’s life situation (race or class, for instance) on his or her values. This lack of internal awareness is mirrored by a lack of cultural awareness which can lead to the idea that people who are different are a threat (Kegan, 1994; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). As a person develops, his or her sense of self comes to be defined more reflectively and is no longer based only on the perception of other people. An individual with a higher level of intrapersonal development will be able to immerse herself in her own culture while still recognizing the legitimacy of other cultures (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

The interpersonal dimension of development also affects acculturation because it involves an individuals’ willingness to interact with people from outside his or her community or culture. Chickering and Reisser (1993) studied the interpersonal development of college students, concentrating on how students learn to welcome differences between cultures. Noddings (1984) studied interpersonal development
through the lens of the ethic of care, in which the individual in a relationship has a moral imperative to care for others.

At the initial level of interpersonal development the individual achieves both her social affirmation and sense of identity from those who are just like her. People who do not share her perspective are viewed as wrong (Bennett, 1993; Kegan, 1994; Noddings, 1984). As a person moves from the initial level of interpersonal development he or she changes from an egocentric attitude of society (“to each his own”) to an understanding that different social groups have different needs, values and experiences which, although different, are no less valid than his or her own (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

Kegan’s three dimensions of development are offered in this study as a framework to examine the idea of adaptation and acculturation of the students participating in the study through how they construct self, others, and meaning, not as detailed, comprehensive lists of capacities at each level. The purpose is not to check items off on a list of developmental milestones; instead, the intention here is to use the theories of Kegan (1994) and Berry (1997) as an effective way to communicate to the reader the lived experiences of the co-researchers.

**Summary**

Although the exact number of Muslim women studying on American campuses is not known, there is no disputing the fact that the number is growing and will continue to grow. Cole and Ahmadi (2010) point out “While researchers do not agree upon an exact figure, they do concur that the Muslim population in the United States is growing” (p. 123). According to Muslim scholar and Georgetown University professor Yvonne Haddad, “If the Muslim community continues to grow at the present rate, by the year
2015 Islam will be the second largest religion in the United States” (in Egendorf, 2006, p. 5). American institutions of higher education must try to equip themselves to help these students integrate both socially and academically in the most expedient manner possible. Little research has been done on a population that according to Egendorf (2006) could outnumber American Catholics within a decade.

This review of the literature included a brief description of the Islamic culture and context, an explanation of the related existing literature, and an account of Berry and Kegan’s perspectives that were used to frame this work. Drawing on selected literature, this chapter argues the need for greater understanding of this group of students.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomena of female Muslim students’ academic and social integration on campus through their lived experience at the University of Dayton and Xavier University. This chapter describes the methodological framework of the study, the context and co-researchers, participant selection, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and limitations.

Methodological Framework of the Study

A constructivist epistemology (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) provided a framework for this study, which attempted to discern the ways that Muslim female students adapt to life on a Catholic campus using Berry’s (1997) bidimensional model of acculturation. The constructivist approach sees knowledge as something that is an outgrowth of individual, human interaction and sees the researcher as an interpreter rather than an objective observer (positivist) or passionate participant (subjectivist) (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Hultgren (1989) describes constructivism as a process in which “Something foreign, strange, or separated by time, space, or experience, is made familiar, present, comprehensible” (p. 41) and aims to understand facets of others’ lives from the perspective of those individuals who are experiencing it.
Phenomenology is the methodological framework I utilized to explore Muslim women’s choices of acculturation strategies on campus. Ridenour and Newman (2008) argue that the research method should be determined by the research question and purpose: “One needs to identify qualitative and/or quantitative research according to the purpose of the study and the question being asked” (p. 34). As stated in Chapter 1, the primary research questions guiding this study were:

- What is the acculturation experience for female Muslim students at the University of Dayton and Xavier University?
- What can higher education and student affairs professionals do to help female Muslim students enhance their academic and social integration on campus?

The lived experiences and student perceptions of the experiences were the focus of the study. Because constructivist, phenomenological research is conducted to uncover the truth of individual experience and to explore how individuals interpret those experiences, it is the most appropriate form of research for this study.

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenological research is a methodology that springs from the work of several philosophers in the first part of the twentieth century -- primarily Edmund Husserl (1931/1960), Martin Heidegger (1926/1996), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962), and Jean-Paul Sartre (1948). The discipline of phenomenology is defined as the study of things as they appear in our experience from a first person point of view, and the meanings we therefore attach to those experiences (Husserl, 1960).
This philosophical foundation of phenomenology functions as a road map for phenomenological research because it “focuses on the uniqueness of the lived experience or essence of a particular phenomenon” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 47). Van Manen (1990, p. 7) and Kvale (1983, p. 184) call this the “lifeworld” of the individual and stress that it is pre-reflective. Van Manen (1990) explains that “From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live” (p. 5) while still acknowledging “that lived life is always more complex than any explication or meaning can reveal” (p. 18).

In his research on white male college students Davis (2002) provided a clear explanation on the phenomenological approach: “Phenomenology addresses experience from the perspective of the individual and is based on the assumption that people have a unique way of making meaning of their experience” (p. 511).

Phenomenology has gained influence as a way of conducting qualitative investigation in recent years by social scientists (Bondas & Eriksson, 2001; Bresciani, 2003; Worthen & McNeill, 1996). Bondas and Eriksson (2001) studied pregnant women’s lived experiences and found that these women’s lives were changed by their desire to have a healthy baby. Their motivation to live a normal and healthy life changed not only their behaviors, but also their relations with other people.

Worthen and McNeil (1996) interviewed eight co-researchers in a phenomenological study of what constitutes good psychotherapy supervision. After analyzing the individual interviews the researchers compared commonalities and
differences between the co-researchers’ responses and then Worthen and McNeil were able to identify a sequence of themes which constituted good supervision.

Creswell (1998) provides guidance for phenomenological research by suggesting that in order to conduct in-depth interviews, the number of participants should be kept to no more than ten. He recommends a protocol of long interviews with prolonged engagement. Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994) point out that phenomenological research can never exhaust the essence of the investigated phenomenon. The results of phenomenological research are “the essence of certainty to be established with reservations” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 396).

Methods

Based on the concept that a qualitative approach is the most effective method to achieve insight on the research problem and also allows for the opportunity to obtain co-researchers’ perceptions and views (Creswell, 2009), I chose the qualitative approach as the most appropriate for this study. Tinto (1993) supported a qualitative approach, noting that more research that utilizes students’ perceptions of the integration process is required to further investigate social and academic integration of students.

Interviews are acknowledged by many qualitative researchers as being a fundamental method of data collection for qualitative researchers (Creswell, 1998, 2009; Janesick, 2004; Krathwohl, 2004; Merriam, 2002), enabling them “to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273).

Consistent with these good practices, this study drew primarily from in-depth interviews and nonparticipant observation. All co-researchers were asked to fill out a
brief demographic form (see Appendix A) before the interview. All but one of the interviews (see Appendix B) were audio recorded to provide accuracy in transcription.

Context and Co-researchers

The research for this study took place at the University of Dayton (UD), a Catholic Marianist school, and the Catholic Jesuit Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio and IRB approval was received from both schools prior to my conducting research.

University of Dayton

Not only is UD one of the largest Catholic universities in the country, it is the largest Catholic university in Ohio. Founded in 1850 by Catholic priests from the Society of Mary, UD enrolls approximately 11,000 students, of who over 7,500 are undergraduates (University of Dayton, 2011). Although it is a private Catholic school, the University of Dayton is a coeducational, comprehensive university, and is also recognized nationally as a top-tier research university. UD offers a broad spectrum of programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and the professions of law, education, and engineering.

The University of Dayton values diversity and social justice as described in the mission statement: “The University forms an educational community thriving on collaboration by people from diverse backgrounds with different skills who come together for common purposes. The University as Marianist challenges all its members to become servant-leaders who connect scholarship and learning with leadership and service” (University of Dayton, 2011). Unlike many religiously based colleges and universities, which have become increasingly secular over the past decades, the University of Dayton strives constantly to reinvigorate its’ Marianist roots: “Marianist
educational philosophy and practice focuses not only on the short-term events, but also on the long-term transformation of cultures into a world where people live in peace, work for justice, and dwell in love” (Characteristics of Marianist Universities, 2011, p. 33).

The Marianist order is somewhat unique among Catholics in that it is a “discipleship of equals, which means brothers and priests share equal status within the order” (Marianist Province of the United States, 2011). The priests, brothers, sisters, and lay people who make up the Marianists share a special devotion to Mary (in contrast to the larger teaching order-the Jesuits) by taking a vow of stability which acknowledges her “strength, grace, and spirituality” (Marianist Province of the United States, 2011). This Marianist ethos of acknowledging Mary as a primary figure in Christianity is unique in Catholicism and positively influences the culture at the University of Dayton, especially for women, by emphasizing the basic value of the mother in society. Not only does the Marianist order value education, but it also highlights the importance of service and social justice.

UD is a residential college campus and over 90 percent of its students live on or near campus in residence halls, university owned housing, or nearby houses or apartments. Because it is a relatively expensive private school, tuition is approximately 30 thousand dollars per year (udayton.edu/bursar), much of the undergraduate student body is economically privileged. The residential nature of the campus also contributes to making UD somewhat infamous as a party school. Although the university has worked hard at containing the drinking culture, and it has improved in the last decade, alcohol is still an important aspect of campus culture.
The undergraduate population of predominantly white, non-Hispanic/Latino students has comprised 85 percent of the student body for the past five years. Nonresident alien (international) students make up only approximately two percent of the undergraduate student population. Table 1 contains reported enrollments for the last five years (University of Dayton, 2011).

Table 1

Compiled from University of Dayton Undergraduate Enrollment by Racial/Ethnic Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial/ethnic group</th>
<th>10-11</th>
<th>09-10</th>
<th>08-09</th>
<th>07-08</th>
<th>06-07</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonresident aliens</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>6,574</td>
<td>6,258</td>
<td>6,594</td>
<td>6,437</td>
<td>6,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,734</td>
<td>7,406</td>
<td>7,731</td>
<td>7,434</td>
<td>7,473</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Xavier University

Though it is now a Jesuit school, Xavier University was founded by Cincinnati’s first bishop, a priest from the Dominican order, in 1831 (Bennish, 1981, p. 20). Originally called the Athenaeum, it was “the first Catholic institution of higher learning in the
Northwest Territory” (Fortin, 2006, p. 19) and its mission was to educate laymen and also to serve as an incubator for priests. “Faced with the increased pastoral demands of his growing diocese, Bishop John Baptist Purcell, who had succeeded Fenwick in 1833, could no longer spare the priests needed to teach at the Athenaeum. So he offered the school to the Society of Jesus” (Fortin, 2006, p. 19). In 1840 the Jesuits took over the Athenaeum and renamed it St. Xavier College. In 1930 the college became a university and was re-named Xavier University (Bennish, 1981, p. 146).

While the Marianists of the University of Dayton are an order with a special devotion to Mary, Xavier’s Jesuits are members of the Society of Jesus. Founded by Ignatius of Loyola in 1534 after being wounded in battle, the Jesuits are known colloquially as “God’s marines” and “the Company” and are known for their work in education and their missionary work (O’Malley, 1993). The Jesuits’ missionary fervor is evident in the fact that there are 28 Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States (xavier.edu.admission) as compared to the Marianists’ three.

The martial tone of the language used to describe the Jesuits is also reflected by some of their participation in politics and war over the centuries. Two prominent examples of this are: Henry Garnet, an English Jesuit, was hanged for treason because of his knowledge of (and implicit cooperation with) the attempt to kill King James in 1605 and in the twentieth century, 12 Jesuit priests were publicly memorialized for risking their lives saving Jews during the Holocaust of World War II (O’Malley, 1993).

Today Xavier enrolls approximately 4,300 undergraduate students in 85 majors from 42 states and nine countries. The graduate student body is nearly 2,500 students. Eighteen percent of Xavier’s student body is people of color (Xavier University, 2011).
The entire international student population is 200 students, of whom about 60 are from Saudi Arabia (L. Minniti, personal communication, December, 2011).

Like the University of Dayton, Xavier is a coeducational, residential college campus, with nearly 99 percent of all undergraduate students living on or near campus. Also like Dayton, Xavier is a relatively expensive private school: annual tuition costs approximately 32 thousand dollars (Xavier University, 2011) but on its website Xavier claims that in the 2010-2011 academic year 100 percent of first year students received financial aid or scholarships. Both Dayton and Xavier offer Intensive English Programs, which makes them attractive to international students.

Xavier’s mission statement makes clear that the primary value of the university is intellectual pursuit: “Xavier’s mission is to educate. Our essential activity is the interaction of students and faculty in an educational experience characterized by critical thinking and articulate expression with specific attention given to ethical issues and values” (Xavier University, 2011).

Co-researchers

The eleven co-researchers for this study were drawn from the female Muslim undergraduate and graduate student population at the University of Dayton (n=6) and Xavier University (n=5) and they range in age from 18-28. The study included both graduate (n=3) and undergraduate (n=8) students because of the small population of Muslim female undergraduate students at both schools. Five of the co-researchers are native English speakers, five speak Arabic as their first language, and one is a native Russian speaker. Five of the women are married and seven of the eleven women wear the hijab. Only four of the eleven women actually live on their respective campuses.
Because UD and Xavier do not keep data on the religious backgrounds of their student bodies, the participants for this study were purposefully selected through snowball sampling (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006; Krathwohl, 2004) which “is used to discover members of a group of individuals not otherwise easily identified by starting with someone in the know and asking for referrals to other knowledgeable individuals” (Krathwohl, 2004, p. 173).

The start of the snowball sample at UD was attained by my attendance at Muslim Student Association meetings and the Friday prayer services in the Muslim prayer room on campus. Having done prior research on Muslim students I am acquainted with the previous president of the Muslim Student Association and have exchanged email addresses with her, and thereby received notice of upcoming meetings and attended them as they occurred (they are not regularly scheduled). At these meetings I requested to be introduced to the women in attendance and asked them if they would consider participating in the study. I told them what participation would entail and if they agreed requested their email addresses in order to schedule interviews. The recruitment script can be found in Appendix B.

Because I am not as connected to Xavier University, my snowball sample there began by my contacting the President of the Muslim Student Association, the Director of the International Student Services, the Director of the Center for Faith and Justice, and the Director of Campus Ministry by email and phone. I also found one co-researcher through a neighbor who happens to be the Director of the Montessori Education program at Xavier and connected me with a female Muslim graduate student.
**Relationship to Co-researchers**

Because the researcher is the instrument of analysis in qualitative research, good researchers need to acknowledge why it is they study what they study. This process is known as “reflexivity” (Jones, Torres, and Arminio, 2006, p. 125) or “autobiographical rendering” (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). My own life experience has contributed to my interest in female Muslim students. As Director of Academic Advising in the Department of Communication at the University of Dayton I already have a predisposition to wanting to work with students. I do so every day in my job, and I love my job. Similarly, from early on in my doctoral studies I have focused on Muslim students specifically because of my interest in the apparent incongruity of Muslim students studying at a Catholic University. In the process of studying Muslim students over the past two years I have become friends with several. I have shared several Eid celebrations with them and have included one of my Muslim friends in my family’s Thanksgiving celebration.

It was during my travels in Muslim countries that I was first made aware of Muslim culture. I have spent weeks at a time in Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, and Indonesia—all majority Muslim countries. But it was during my travels in India, Malaysia, Singapore, Israel, and Thailand – countries that have a significant Muslim population, but not a majority, that enabled me to witness firsthand the tension that arises from the interface of Muslim culture with other cultures.

As a result of my preliminary research with both Muslim men and women I discovered that the experience of Muslim women presents a more complex subject of study for several reasons. First, Muslim women who wear the hijab are much more likely to be confronted with the cultural differences that may exist between their own and the
larger culture because their scarves function as a metaphorical Muslim banner for all to see. It requires a significant commitment to one’s religion when one is compelled to wear what amounts to as a Muslim identification badge when entering the public sphere. The Muslim men on campus wear western clothes and are not obliged to make this public commitment to their faith. Because of anti-Islamic prejudice, this commitment on the part of Muslim women requires a great deal of fortitude in post 9/11 America. The American academy is built around the idea of scientific inquiry and reasoned reflection, so the clash between the secular idea of academic life (reason vs. faith), the Catholic faith represented by both the University of Dayton and Xavier University, and their public avowal of faith demonstrated by female Muslim students presented a fascinating area of study to me.

My interest in studying Muslim women also springs from an interest in gender equality, so as a non-Muslim woman living in America, I came to this research with some preconceptions about Muslim women which are based on these ideas. I am in one sense, “working the hyphen” (Fine, 1994) as an insider (woman) and outsider (non-Muslim). Understanding that some assumptions are negative (for example, a belief that the pressure on Muslim women to cover their heads and most of their bodies is unfair and somewhat discriminatory), I also understand that this is a decision that is based on faith and the sense of duty that many Muslim women feel. I did my best to strive to keep an open mind about the practice in order to treat the co-researchers with the respect they deserve as thoughtful and autonomous individuals who have the right to practice their religion unencumbered by the researcher’s judgment.

Working within the guidelines of qualitative research I did my utmost to achieve a period of prolonged engagement with the co-researchers of the study in an attempt to
establish rapport. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) describe the process of building rapport with co-researchers as an effective way to reduce anxiety and build trust with the researcher, which ultimately benefits the researcher. Patton (2002) explains that rapport is made possible when the researcher is able to “convey empathy and understanding without judgment” (p. 366). Within this period of prolonged engagement I experienced no reluctance to participate from the co-researchers and I also recorded no evidence in my journal that my interactions with them were anything but pleasant. Using the ethic of care (Noddings, 1984) as a guide, I did my best to achieve what Noddings calls the “ethical ideal” of caring which requires “the engrossment and motivational displacement of the one-loving, and it requires the recognition and spontaneous response of the cared-for” (p. 78). The researcher’s ability to care is the foundation for the development of the trusting and respectful relationship between researcher and co-researchers. It is this caring relationship between equals that informs the researcher’s decision to refer to those participating in the study as co-researchers rather than subjects.

Data Collection

Data were collected in the fall of 2011 and winter of 2012 until I reached the point of data saturation (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) – the point at which new observations or interviews ceased to add new knowledge or the new information was redundant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (1980) reminds us to use caution in deciding when saturation has been reached: “The moment you cease observing, pack your bags, and leave the field, you will get a remarkably clear insight about that one critical activity you should have observed … but didn’t” (p. 195).
Van Manen (1990) identifies several critical research activities that can prove as a guide for phenomenological researchers. First, he advocates “turning to the phenomenon” (p. 31) as a researcher who has a deep interest in and questions about the phenomenon in question. Included in this process is Husserl’s (1960) idea of bracketing. The process of bracketing involves the researcher grasping the phenomenon and then setting aside her previous knowledge about it (van Manen, 1990). Although bracketing is a standard protocol of phenomenological research, some in the field claim that it is impossible. Van Manen (1990) suggests that “It is better to make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories” (p. 47). The way that I practiced bracketing was that I was conscious of each co-researcher as an individual throughout the interview process and I attempted to make a real human connection to them. This human connection helped me set aside my preconceptions about women in the context of Islam. I was aided by the fact that the women in my study were kind and helpful.

Another important aspect of phenomenological research that van Manen (1990) emphasizes is the focus on everyday and ordinary occurrences and the thick description (Denzin, 2001; Geertz, 1973) of them. He suggests that the thick description researchers seek is best accomplished through both observation and in-depth conversations with a few participants in order to allow for relationship building and deep immersion into the area of interest. In order to achieve this thick description I attended every Muslim Student Association (MSA) meeting possible during the data gathering time period. And even though all but one of the interviews was audio recorded I also took notes during all of the interviews in order to be able to record other elements of the exchange: facial expressions, hand gestures, and clothing.
Although interviews were the primary source of data collection for this study, observation provided supplemental data. I consulted with the previous president of the Muslim Student Association, who served as gatekeeper (Creswell, 1998; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Krathwohl, 2004) or the primary point of contact for gaining access to the Muslim students at the University of Dayton.

I attended both Muslim prayer services and other Muslim cultural events as a non-participatory observer in order to develop “tacit knowledge” and a “sense of what is seminal or salient” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 275). Through note taking I recorded descriptive notes on the sights, sounds, and experiences of each observation as well as questions for interview follow up (Creswell, 1998, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Davis (2002) and van Manen (1990) both stress the importance in phenomenological research of maintaining personal engagement and genuine interest in the study and its’ participants, as opposed to scientific disinterest. This concept is consistent with the ethic of care and what Noddings (1984) describes as “engrossment and displacement of motivation” (p. 180). Relating to others in a caring way does not require the commitment of an inordinate amount of time. As Noddings describes, “What I must do is to be totally and nonselectively present to the student – to each student - as he addresses me. The time interval may be brief but the encounter is total” (p. 180). Because I am the mother of four children (three of whom are girls) I find it natural to practice the ethic of care in my work and research. The co-researchers were all much younger than I, reminding me of my daughters, and I found that as I listened to them I did care about them and wanted to help them.
I interviewed each co-researcher at least two times in what Kvale (1983) describes as a “semi-structured,” format; “It is neither a free conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire. It is carried through following an interview-guide, which rather than containing exact questions focuses on certain themes” (p. 174). This semi-structured interview format allowed me to do what Heidegger (1926/1996) describes as carefully and thoughtfully uncovering the essence of experience rather than merely providing a conceptualization of the experience. The way that I attempted to do this was that after the woman finished answering a question I followed up with an even more open-ended question in order to keep her talking and delve deeper into the subject or experience.

Prior to each interview, I explained the purpose of the study, described how the data would be triangulated through member checking, and asked each co-researcher to read and sign an informed-consent form (Worthen & McNeill, 1996). All of the interviews but one were audio recorded and transcribed as part of the data collection process (Creswell, 1998, 2009; Merriam, 2002). Interviews took place in my office or in the Kennedy Union at UD or Gallagher Student Center at Xavier, depending on where the co-researcher preferred to meet. The co-researchers picked their own pseudonyms before the audio was transcribed, and once the data were transcribed the audio was destroyed. All interview and observation material was and will be kept locked in my office and not accessible to anyone but me, so the risk of the data being seen by anyone else is negligible. The open-ended and unstructured format of the interview process helped to protect the co-researchers from any possible psychological distress they encountered during the research. I also continually paused to ask the co-researchers if anything that was being discussed was making them uncomfortable, and if the answer
was affirmative I told the co-researcher that it was fine to move to a new line of discussion.

The interview process also taught me something about myself. Listening to my voice while playing back the first taped interview, revealed that I was talking too much and not listening enough. In my effort to create a connection and find commonalities with the co-researcher I was interjecting with stories about myself too often. I wanted to be able to relate to her, but it was too much. I was able to correct this in subsequent interviews.

I asked each co-researcher at the end of the first interview if they would do a journal for the study. None agreed to do it, though they did agree to as many interviews or follow-up emails and phone calls as I needed. As a result, in the narrative description of each individual’s interviews I attempted to use as many quotes as possible in order to anchor the data “in the lifeworld of the individual and the meaning making associated with being-in the world” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 47).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed according to Moustakas’ (1994) methods for phenomenological analysis to capture the co-researcher’s life-world and her relation to it. To be specific, Moustakas’ steps of “epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis” (p. 84) were used to analyze the data.

As defined by Moustakas, “epoche” is the process of “setting aside prejudgments and opening the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence” (p. 180). Epoche obligates the researcher to suspend his or her own feelings and thoughts and to look at the events, experiences, and people involved with new eyes, as if seeing them for
the first time. The transcript of the data was examined with an eye toward avoidance of preconceptions. By acknowledging that I have some prejudgments and preconceived ideas I struggled to then to set them aside and immerse myself in the moment of the interview or observation. Setting aside my preconceptions about Islam was made easier by the fact that I was sitting face to face with women who were kind, cooperative, and intelligent as well as being religiously observant Muslims. This fact allowed me to see them as individuals rather than lump them into a category.

“Phenomenological reduction” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90) is the process of constructing a textual description of the experience and then grouping it into themes. Moustakas (1994) outlines the steps for the process of phenomenological reduction: “bracketing” (p. 97) the topic or question and setting everything else aside; “horizontalizing,” in which every statement has equal value when beginning the analysis process, and only later are they clustered into themes that are not repetitive or overlapping; and finally, organizing and integrating the themes into a coherent description of the phenomena (p. 97).

“Imaginative variation” (Moustakas, 1994) aims “to grasp the structural essences of experience” (p. 35) by intuiting and uniting what is sought after with what is known for the purpose of understanding that which we seek. Moustakas (1994) explains: “The function of imaginative variation is to arrive at a structural differentiation among the infinite possibilities of actual and possible mental states,” (p. 35) and that also “relate to the object in question and thus can somehow go together to make up the unity of an identifying synthesis” (Husserl, 1977, p. 63). Using what Crotty (1998) calls a “radical spirit of openness” (p. 50) to new potential, I tried to stay alert to the multiplicities of
possibilities when clustering and coding the data. Merriam (2002) describes it in simple terms: “Imaginative variation involves examining the data from divergent perspectives and varying frames of reference” (p. 94)

The final step in the data analysis was the “synthesis of composite textural and composite structural descriptions” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 181) in the data. I “intuitively-reflectively integrated” (p. 181) the data from the co-researchers to cultivate a blend of the “meanings and essences” of their experiences in what Kvale (1987) calls a “hermeneutical circle, whereby analysis is created through the relationship of the parts to the whole meaning of the text” (p. 185). This process involved looking for the patterns in the interview data from the individual co-researchers, coding the patterns and then looking for larger patterns of recurring themes across all the interview data. Similarly, Creswell (1998) recommends that in the data analysis phase the researcher make initial codings after reading the transcripts carefully in order to identify significant statements of the co-researchers’ experiences in order to cull themes from the data and then group the themes into meaningful units.

After I transcribed the interview data I looked for themes and patterns within each individual co-researchers’ interview material, my notes from observation, and reflection, all the while practicing the steps of phenomenological reduction: “epoche, bracketing, and horizontalization,” (Moustakas, 1994). I then utilized the “imaginative variation” process which includes “a reflective phase in which many possibilities are examined and explicated reflectively” (p. 99). The final phase of the data analysis in this phenomenological research study was to construct a synthesis of themes from all of the
co-researchers’ interviews in order to inductively provide a distillation of the dynamic experience of Muslim women at the University of Dayton and Xavier University.

**Trustworthiness**

Many qualitative researchers have rejected the standard language of positivistic research terms like validity and reliability and instead describe the *goodness* of the research (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Marshall, 1990; Smith, 1993). Another word used by qualitative researchers to describe the concept of validity is trustworthiness (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As Worthen (2002) explains: in phenomenological research we demonstrate validity:

- by showing that you collected your data in a thorough and authentic manner, were rigorous in your analysis, can explain alternative competing meanings, and can show through your steps of data transformation the path you took to develop your knowledge statement or findings. (p. 141)

Jones, Torres & Arminio (2006) offer six steps to ensuring goodness within the chronology of the research design:

1. **Epistemology and Theory.** The study must be grounded in an epistemological and theoretical stance that is both stated and followed.

2. **Methodology.** The reader of the study must be informed of the chosen methodology and introduced to the basic principles and origins of the methodology.

3. **Method.** The collection of data, or method, must be clearly linked to the methodology.
4. Reflexivity of Researcher. Because the researcher is the instrument of analysis he or she should examine why it is that he/she is engaged in the study. The researchers’ values, interests and experiences influence the analysis of a phenomenological research design and they need to be acknowledged.

5. Analysis and presentation. Good qualitative research is not just merely a report of the obvious; it must also interpret the findings.

6. Recommendations: Implications for professional practice. To meet these criteria of goodness the researcher needs to assure the reader that the research is adding to the existing body of knowledge in the area of the research (p. 121).

I believe that the level of trustworthiness of this study is strengthened by the high level of confidence that my co-researchers showed in me. A few examples of this confidence are the facts that Sara asked me if she could pray in my office and Amani shared a very personal story about her relationship with her husband. I am honored that these women felt comfortable enough with me to share such personal parts of their lives with me.

Limitations

This qualitative study depended on the researcher as the instrument. The function of the researcher as the foremost method of data collection and analysis will be acknowledged in a strategy sometimes labeled reflexivity (Merriam, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (2000) describe the researcher’s position as “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the ‘human as instrument’” (p. 183). This process allows the reader to identify the values and assumptions of the researcher which could affect the
trustworthiness of the findings. Throughout the entire process of doing the interviews, transcribing the interviews, and reading the transcriptions of the interviews and my notes, I made a conscious effort to be aware and on the lookout for any of my potential biases or conflicts of values that could damage the integrity of the research.

In order to minimize the limitations and to improve the trustworthiness of the study I gathered data using multiple techniques in a triangulation process (Krathwohl, 2004) which “consults different sources to determine the validity of data using purposive sampling” (p. 275). Triangulation can improve the trustworthiness of the study.

The two forms of data gathering were interview and observation. I also attempted to triangulate the data through member checking, which “provides participants with the opportunity to react to the findings and interpretations that emerged as a result of his or her participation” (Jones, Torres, and Arminio, 2006, p. 99). The member checking process ensures the co-researchers the ability to authenticate the findings and assures that the researcher understood the meaning of their experiences. I implemented member checking by emailing each co-researcher an attachment of their individual experiences (which would later appear in chapter four) and asked them to read them and let me know if I needed to change or add any information. Only two of the co-researchers replied with minor changes to their individual experiences. Seven of the women replied that the attachments were accurate and two of the women did not reply.

Another method of triangulation that I used in this study was peer review (Merriam, 2002). I emailed my chapters to three colleagues: a UD professor, a UD graduate assistant who is also a doctoral student in higher education, and a college
administrator at a community college. All three of my peers provided insightful
commments and some editing suggestions.

Although observation was utilized, the primary method of data collection for this
study was interviews. Creswell (2009) points out that not all interview subjects are
“equally articulate and perceptive” (p. 186), so this can also be seen as a limitation to the
study.

**Summary**

The purpose of this research is to utilize a constructivist phenomenological
framework and qualitative methods to ascertaint the acculturation strategies of female
Muslim students. Snowball sampling was used to recruit co-researchers in an effort to
explore their academic and social experiences and an attempt to understand how they
interpret their experiences. Chapter three addressed the research methodology, methods,
context and co-researchers, participant selection, data collection and analysis,
trustworthiness, and limitations of the study. Chapter four presents the co-researcher
experiences, my observations, the themes, and a summary of the findings.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Overview

In order to understand the acculturation process of female Muslim students on a Catholic campus a description of my observations of various ceremonies and activities and the interviews with 11 Muslim women (six from the University of Dayton and five from Xavier University) is presented in this chapter. The narrative which follows is an attempt to discover the acculturation strategy of the students and the effect that their religion has on their experience of life on campus. The co-researchers names are self-chosen pseudonyms, used to protect their identities. The demographics of the students vary significantly. Three of the eleven women in the study were graduate students, the rest were undergraduates. Five of the women were married. Of the eleven students in the study four were born in the United States.

This chapter is divided into four sections: observations, co-researcher experiences, themes, and summary of findings. Using a constructivist approach, I was able to see and identify the themes that follow in chapter five because of my unique perspective as a researcher who comes to this study with my own history, feelings, values, and intelligence. The process of identifying and analyzing the themes that will subsequently appear in this chapter are viewed through the lens of the researcher, which
according to Bogdan and Biklen (2007) is closer to a translation than a simple report of the material.

I asked each co-researcher at the end of the first interview if they would do a journal for the study. None agreed to do it, though they did agree to as many interviews or follow-up emails and phone calls as I needed. As a result, in the narrative description of each individual’s interviews I attempted to use as many quotes as possible in order to anchor the data “in the lifeworld of the individual and the meaning making associated with being-in the world” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 47).

**Observations**

In my search to better understand the experience of the female Muslim students at the University of Dayton and Xavier University I was able to attend several cultural and religious events in the course of my research for this study. I attended two different *Eid al Fitr* celebrations, several prayer services, a private party at a co-researcher’s apartment, a film screening, and an international festival. I took notes on all of my observations and was able to refer back to them when I needed to remember certain aspects of the culture or religion. The observations greatly expanded my understanding of the Muslim culture and religion overall.

*Eid al Fitr* is the Muslim holiday that celebrates the end of *Ramadan*. One of the *Eid* celebrations was for women only, and one of the parties was for both men and women. I was invited to both of the *Eid* parties by Safia, one of my UD co-researchers and the former president of the UD Muslim Student Association.

The *Eid* party for women only was held in the basement of a dormitory at UD. It was a surprisingly raucous party with loud music, wonderful food, children running
around dancing and playing, and many of the observant Muslim women dressed in Western clothes with no headscarves. Approximately 30 of the 40 women at this party were from the local Muslim community and were not UD students and some of them brought their young children.

The party centered on an elaborate and delicious Middle Eastern meal which was served buffet style. Hannon, another co-researcher, escorted me to the front of the food line, much to my embarrassment. The only non-Muslim in attendance, I was treated like an honored guest by everyone. After dinner many of the women danced to the traditional Middle Eastern music that was blaring from the stereo system that the women had set up. Several of the women at the party, who ranged in age from children to seniors, wore beautiful traditional clothes and jewelry. The women from India and Pakistan in particular wore fine saris and heavy gold and enameled jewelry. In contrast, some of the women wore revealing western clothes: tight dresses with plunging necklines and stiletto heels. It was interesting for me to see women who outside of this party room would be covered from head to toe in yards of loose fabric wearing skin tight, cleavage revealing dresses and wearing fully made up face and hair.

I talked to seven of the women at the party, but was introduced to most of those present. They were all friendly and welcoming. Safia and Hannon tried (unsuccessfully) to get me to dance, but I was too busy talking with people to participate. One conversation that made a big impression on me was with a young UD doctoral student who had her three year old son at the party. She looked ready to go to a night club in her tight blue dress, makeup and long wavy hair, but instead was sitting in the basement of a dormitory in a room full of women and children with her son on her lap. I asked her
about her husband and she said that he was working back home in Saudi Arabia. I was very surprised to hear that because she is the only Saudi woman that I have ever met (or even heard of) who has managed to come to the United States without either her husband or brother. I asked her how she liked being in the United States. She responded with what can only be described as a facial expression like the cat who ate the canary, and said with great emphasis, “Oh, I like it very, very much.” In the United States she can drive, work, and go out alone. It is a completely different world from what she knows at home.

The other Eid party that I attended was for men and women was sponsored by the Campus Ministry and was held in McGinnis Center at UD. This dinner was a more serious and religious event. Although it was also a buffet, it was more formal in style and was opened with prayers and a brief talk about the meaning of Eid by a male Muslim graduate student. Approximately 30 men and women, mostly students, but a handful of UD faculty and staff, attended this party. Because it resembled a meeting more than a party in the American sense of the word there was not a great deal of co-mingling between Muslims and non-Muslims. I talked to the two Muslim students that I knew and got caught up with them, but did not meet anyone new.

I also attended several Jum'ah (Friday) prayer services at UD in the original Muslim prayer room that is located in the basement of Alumni Hall. It is a small room that has recently been divided with Japanese screens so that men and women can share Friday prayers in the same room, men on one side of the screens and women on the other. At the services that I attended there were between ten and fifteen men and three or four women. All attendees remove their shoes before entering the room and a male student leads the prayers, which consist of a series of sung prayers, responses from the
worshippers, and prostrations. Seeing the physicality and the proximity of the worshippers to each other in these cramped quarters of the prayer service helped me to better understand why it is a tradition for men and women to pray separately. In a Muslim prayer service the worshippers are usually very near each other and the service requires that they bow down frequently on their knees and prostrate themselves placing their hands and foreheads on the ground. It is not a flattering or modest position to be in, with hind quarters in the air, and I can imagine that such a position would be deemed too immodest for women praying in the same tight quarters with men.

I also attended two prayer services in the new prayer facility in the Rike Center, which is the new home for the Center for International Programs. Although this new space is actually a meeting room and is not dedicated specifically as a Muslim prayer room it is much larger than the room in Alumni Hall and has a sound system (the prayer leader wears a mic) and commercial room divider to separate the space so that genders can pray separately. It also has separate attached facilities for men and women to perform their ablutions in private before praying. The prayer meetings that I attended in the new facility were better attended by men with approximately 30 men, but the same number of women as at Alumni Hall, only three at one and four at the other meeting. It was good to see such improved accommodations for the Muslim students and also nice to see how proud they were of it when they showed me around since the university let them help design it.

One of the co-researchers for the study, Maha, invited me to a party at her apartment complex for a friend whose mother was visiting from Saudi Arabia. It was a small, casual women- only party. Half of the approximately 15 Muslim women at the
party were UD students. Most of the students came to UD from Saudi Arabia. Similar to the *Eid* party for women only, the food was delicious and the women treated me with warmth and hospitality, asking me questions about my life and my research. Whenever anyone in the room was having a conversation in Arabic one of the women would always look over at me and give me the synopsis of the conversation so that I did not feel left out or awkward, or worse yet, feel that they were talking about me. I felt privileged to be the only non-Muslim woman at the party and particularly enjoyed talking to two sisters who are master’s students at UD about their experiences moving to the U.S. from Saudi Arabia for an Intensive English Program in Chicago and then on to Dayton for graduate school.

At Xavier I attended a screening in November of *Mooz-lum*, a film by American director Qasim Basir about the struggle of a young Muslim-American man to find his identity at the time of the September 11 attacks. The movie was screened in the movie theater in Gallagher Student Center. The screening was sponsored by the Xavier University African Students Association and the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Nine people attended the screening, most of who were African American Christians, but I did meet my first Muslim student from Xavier at the screening, Summer. I spoke to her at length about my research and she agreed to participate in the study that evening.

In March I took my youngest child to the UD International Festival because it was on a Saturday evening and was a family friendly event with lots of good food and live performances by UD students from all over the world. There were musical, dance and even a martial arts exhibition. In one of the performances two of my co-researchers, Hannon and Safia, acted in a skit they helped write and produce about the culture shock
experienced by Middle Eastern students who come to UD. The skit was a series of
comedie sketches in which cultural misunderstandings are played out for laughs, but with
the intention of clearing up some misconceptions about Arab culture. I describe the skit
in more detail in Hannon’s individual experience section of this chapter.

Individual Experiences

Nadia

Nadia is a 20 year old American-born daughter of Indian parents who is an
undergraduate at Xavier University. I was given Nadia’s name by my friend Omar, a
graduate student from UD and former MSA president. I emailed her and she agreed to
talk to me. When I arrived at the Gallagher Student Center on Xavier’s campus I
wandered around for a long time looking for a woman wearing a head scarf. I walked
right by Nadia several times because she did not look like I expected (no headscarf) and
she was chatting with a very handsome American boy who seemed very intent on her. I
assumed they were a couple. When I walked by for what felt like my tenth lap around the
building she looked at me and said quietly “Are you Cynthia Shafer?” Apparently, I
should have described myself to her as well. Our interview lasted around 50 minutes. I
asked my follow up questions for Nadia via email.

Nadia is a beautiful girl who cut a very stylish figure in her leather bomber jacket
and skinny jeans when I met her at the student center at Xavier. Nadia does not wear the
hijab so I could see her shiny, shoulder length hair. Having grown up in Cincinnati,
Nadia said that she considered going away to school for college and applied to several
out of state schools, but that she ultimately decided to follow in her older brother’s
footsteps and attend Xavier, in part to be close to family. Her older brother (now a
medical doctor) told her that he enjoyed his time at Xavier: “That was a big deciding factor. He said that he really liked it and he did really well here… I knew if I followed his course it could set me up for success. I knew that even if I wasn’t Catholic my brother’s success here gave me the leverage to come here.” Nadia said that she does not notice the Catholic identity of the school, but she did note the lack of diversity, “My high school was completely diverse so I was surprised to come here and find out that most people had not been exposed to other religions. They all come from Catholic schools.” Although she maintained that she has not experienced overt discrimination, she did notice some rude and insensitive comments last May when the U.S. government killed Osama Bin Laden: “People would laugh and ask me how I felt about him being dead and some even jokingly called him my father. I just shrugged it off, but I don’t talk to those people anymore.”

Having grown up in the United States, Nadia describes herself as fully integrated into the Xavier culture. She lives with non-Muslim women and goes to parties with them on the weekends, though she does not herself drink: “I go out with them and I’m definitely fine with that because I’ve met a lot of people that way and I like being social. My brother did the same thing. He’d go to parties and not drink. It’s fine.” However, there is some “acculturative stress” (Berry, 2005) that comes from this behavior. First, she resents that she always has to be the care taker of and designated driver for her drunken friends: “It is annoying when my roommates come back drunk. They scream at the top of their lungs and I don’t like being the person they call when they get sick.” Also, she said that her parents don’t approve of her participation in campus party life: “Yeah – growing up they told me- ‘Don’t be around it’- but I can’t really avoid it as much as you think. My parents don’t understand.”
Dating also seems problematic for Nadia. She described how she attracts the notice of many non-Muslim men who ask her out on dates and don’t understand why she refuses to go:

There have been guys here who want to date and stuff- and I’m like- I can’t.

It’s like part of my culture. I need to find someone who is Muslim. Muslim girls are not allowed to marry outside their faith so I have to marry a Muslim- which I think I can do. [Muslim] People get married really young. Like when I was little I always thought I’d be engaged by 21. Now that I’m 20 I can’t even imagine that!

I was surprised to hear Nadia describe the pressure she gets from her Christian female friends to date non-Muslim men as well as from the Christian men who want to date her. She said that her roommates recently asked her why she wouldn’t give a young man who asked her out a chance. Her reply was “Why? What is the point? I am only interested in dating for the marriage that would come from it. It would just mean that down the road I would have to break up and it would be bad.” According to Nadia, some men have even offered to convert, but she said that she does not take their offers seriously. “If someone wants to convert they need to do it for themselves and actually be dedicated to the religion rather than convert solely to marry me.” Nadia said she expects to marry a Muslim man, and does not rule out an arranged marriage. She described a conversation that took place in her Psychology class:

The professor started talking about love and marriage and then arranged marriages. He wanted to know what the class thought of it. I am the only Muslim in all my classes – so the other students were all like ‘I don’t think that would work at all.’ Like, they were bashing it. I don’t support arranged marriages,
probably because I grew up in America, but my parents have a great marriage. They don’t fight. They don’t yell. They compromise on everything. They love each other now. I guess what they say is true – that you don’t have to fall in love first. I would definitely consider it for myself in order to find someone that is Muslim that my parents approve of.”

Nadia said she thinks about her future spouse in light of her current situation, “A guy cannot convert just to be with me. Because after a while he might decide he doesn’t like it and that won’t work. My husband is going to have to be religious.”

Although she doesn’t wear a headscarf now, Nadia expressed a desire to wear one someday when she is ready to make the commitment. She explained that wearing the hijab is not a big part of Indian culture, so though it is looked upon favorably as a sign of religious piety, it is not mandatory in Indian Muslim culture. Her mother and female relatives do not wear the scarf. Nadia explained, “I just haven’t felt comfortable starting to wear it yet. When I was little I didn’t want to wear it if it wasn’t sincere. Now I don’t feel comfortable starting here. I have plans to start and a lot of my friends have started recently. I don’t know when it will come about but I want to do it.” She explained that she feels like she would have to change her behavior, and act more religious, “College would be a hard time to make that transition because people don’t understand the significance behind it.”

While she described herself as feeling integrated into the Xavier community Nadia did express some ambivalence about her lack of participation in her religion. She explained,
Since entering Xavier I have felt myself distancing myself from my religion, which kind of sucks. Cause I used to be more religious. When I go back home for breaks I get back into it- but it’s hard here. I need to find a way to tie in my religion with what I’m doing here. I haven’t found a way yet.

_Maha_

I interviewed Maha at her condo near a shopping mall because her husband was out of town and she had no one to watch her two young boys. I had met Maha on campus in August at an international student social, and in spite of the heat she was dressed in a long sleeved tunic, long pants, and a head scarf covering every bit of her head except her face from the eyebrows to the chin. All women in Saudi Arabia must cover completely when in public, so when I arrived at her house in November for the interview I was surprised to see her looking so different than she had at the student union. She had her waist length wavy hair down and uncovered and was wearing white Capri pants and a short sleeved tunic. She looked like any pretty American girl one might see on campus. Maha is a vivacious and friendly woman, so when I told her about my study at the social she enthusiastically agreed to participate. I interviewed Maha for nearly four hours that day and she was the only co-researcher that I did not interview at least twice.

Maha is a graduate student working on a master’s degree at the University of Dayton. She and her family moved to the United States from Saudi Arabia approximately two years ago for graduate school. She and her husband chose the University of Dayton because they researched scholarships from the Saudi government and of those offered in the United States, their friends recommended they choose Dayton because it is a smaller town in a Midwestern city and they felt that the value system
would be closer to their own cultural values than those of a larger metropolitan area. She said the fact that UD is a Catholic school did not have any influence on her choosing to come here, although she finds it a very positive aspect of the school “I came here because I wanted to know the American people. And I wanted to know their religion, so I am really happy to go to a Catholic university. It’s a great experience for me.”

Maha expressed satisfaction with her academic progress. Arabic is her first language, so she says that at times she struggles to keep up in with the lectures in class, but she says that her teachers have been patient and are good about repeating things and helping by answering questions after class. She said she has even become good friends with one of her tutors, who has come to Maha’s home several times. She also has found help from her peers “My American classmates are so helpful actually. Whenever I didn’t for example, I didn’t understand something, I said to my classmate, ‘Can you please tell me what the professor said?’ and she immediately helped me. They are so friendly and helpful.”

Although she said that she has made a few friends outside the local Muslim population, she expressed a desire to have more American friends “I only have one classmate that I socialize with. I invite them to my house, but they are busy. I have one classmate who has come to my house several times.” She was effusive in her praise for Americans as being friendly and welcoming, “One of the reasons we chose to come to America is that it is such a welcoming country.”

Ironically, Maha describes the segregated life in Saudi Arabia as being easier for women than life in the U.S. because there all women are in the same situation, “All the houses have two halves. One half for men and one half for women. At parties, even
family parties, all the men are in their side and all the women are in their side.” Although their lives are strictly circumscribed by the culture in Saudi Arabia they are at least all in it together. Here, they struggle to maintain those cultural traditions within a new culture that is so different that it can create acculturative stress. For the students from a strictly observant Muslim tradition, like those from Saudi Arabia, friendships must be strictly among only one gender, so any friends that these women make can never include what would be a conventional American married friendship in which the couples can meet for a meal or a movie. Maha said she has found that it is difficult to establish friendships with non-Muslim women on such narrow terms. When I invited Maha and her family to my home for Thanksgiving dinner this year, like I did with the single Hannon last year, I fear that I put her into an awkward position. If she attended she would either be forced to violate her own tradition (gender segregation) and attend with her family, or break with the spirit of my invitation (Thanksgiving is a family function) and come alone. She declined the invitation.

Maha acknowledged the fact that she is in part responsible for not feeling much a part of the community at UD: “Actually, I think it’s my fault because I don’t participate in any of the events. I just go to my classes and go to my home. So I think it’s my fault. I should have participated in events because I know H-- and also I think you know N--? They participate a lot.”

Safia

Safia is a senior at the University of Dayton who is majoring in Engineering. Originally from Palestine, she moved to the United States with her family ten years ago, so though Arabic is her first language her English is fluent and almost without accent. I
met Safia three years ago when I went to my first Muslim Student Association meeting
and was impressed by her confident and outgoing attitude. She later became the president
of the organization, so I have seen her at Islamic events regularly since that first meeting.
When I asked her to participate in the study at a Muslim Women’s Conference she agreed
to at once and offered her sisters up as well. Unfortunately, none of her sisters go to UD
or Xavier so they could not participate in this study, but I did meet and talk to her older
sister who is a student at another Midwestern university. Safia’s willingness to help
reminded me of the sincere hospitality and helpfulness of Middle Eastern culture that I
noticed when travelling there.

I interviewed Safia two times: once in my office and once
in the Kennedy Union. The first interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and the
second was a little over an hour.

Safia explained that she came to the University of Dayton after being
recommended to UD by a teacher at her charter high school, subsequently receiving a full
scholarship. Safia describes herself as a very observant Muslim and she is modest in her
dress, covering her head and wearing loose fitting tunics and pants. Friendly and
forthright, she is not afraid to speak her mind about the injustices that she has sometimes
noticed on campus within the Muslim student population.

Safia said that her studies are the most important priority in her life and that she
does only limited socializing outside of the Muslim population except for the campus
organizations she participates in. As a first year student she did decide to go to a campus
party, but she quickly discovered that it was not for her:

So freshman year I thought- well, I might as well give it a try. I just walked
around for a little bit. There was drinking and all that kind of stuff and it was
really crammed so after a while I just left. I was like ‘Oh now I see why I don’t want to go around this kind of environment, where there’s drinking and all that stuff. You know- it’s like- definitely not for me. But it’s one of those things that you want to try. You have to try.

Safia explained that dating is strictly taboo in her family:

As far as the dating life thing- you can’t really have one. You can’t even go to tea unless you’re going to be talking about work or school or something. A lot of it is about perception. You don’t want to look like you’re on a date… The guy has to ask permission. You meet the parents and you get engaged. The engagement is like the dating life. Some parents won’t even let them go out together even if they are engaged. I had this experience. Like this guy came over to talk to me about getting engaged and whatever, so we went into the living room and my brother came in and sat with us. My mom made him.

Even with the restrictions on male-female relationships, Safia has told her parents that she will not have an arranged marriage, “I already told my mom. My sisters too- we are not. Like if you want to have a guy picked out that is fine, but if we don’t want to we won’t.”

As former leader in the Muslim Student Association (MSA) Safia helped to have a curtain installed in the Muslim prayer room so that women could join in the Friday prayers. Before the curtain was installed, women were not allowed to pray there at the same time as men. She expressed how hurt her feelings were when she was forced out of her leadership role by a male Saudi student. She talked about that experience:
It was fine before his current role, but now he acts like it’s like ‘my way or the highway.’ As far as leadership I feel like I’m more accepted by the American male environment. Because of the ideologies that they have. Like it’s ridiculous. I feel like – like I have more prejudice coming from my own people. It’s a male thing. Like the American males are different from the Middle Eastern. They grew up having women not be able to do certain things. It’s a cultural outcome, but it’s not a religious outcome.

Safia appeared to be sensitive to the perception that other Muslim students on UD’s campus have of her. Especially the students from Saudi Arabia (the majority of Muslim students at UD are from Saudi Arabia). By Safia’s description of her relationship with these students I was able to discern that the scarf can serve as both a wall to protect her from unsolicited attention from men, but also as armor against charges of not being religious enough. She explained, “When I wear the scarf I don’t even have to high five the guys I know. It’s just like – they know. Don’t touch.”

Safia expressed satisfaction with the efforts that UD makes to accommodate Muslim students, but said that a separate prayer room for men and women with a place for ablutions (required washing of the face, hands and feet before prayer) would be nice [this space has since been provided by the university in the Rike Center]. She also expressed the belief that more publicity could be done when there are special events for the Muslim community: “Not everyone would want to come but at least they would know about it.”
Aziz

Like Safia, Aziz also wears the headscarf, but she just started wearing three years ago, after finishing her undergraduate degree at a large state university in Ohio and just before getting married. Intelligent, soft-spoken, and thoughtful Aziz is a master’s student in Montessori education. She said that she picked the program at Xavier in large part to be near her husband who is a doctoral student at a different school in Ohio, but said she also likes the fact that she has a community of friends from her undergraduate days relatively close by.

I was connected to Aziz by a neighbor and friend who knows the Director of the Montessori program at Xavier. I emailed my contact and asked her if she knew any Muslim women students at Xavier and she said she did know one: Aziz. She asked Aziz if I could contact her and Aziz agreed. I emailed Aziz and she agreed to participate in the study. Aziz and I met in the coffee shop on the second floor of Gallagher Student Center on campus. She was easy to recognize because she was wearing a white hijab. Aziz was my most loquacious co-researcher and our interview lasted nearly two hours. Even though she was willing to share her thoughts and opinions, she was reflective and insightful in her comments and the conversation didn’t really ever stray off—topic or to trivialities. I interviewed Aziz once in person and sent several follow up emails to ask for clarification on certain questions and ask a few more.

Aziz was born in the United States to an American, Catholic mother and a Muslim father from Pakistan, both of whom, according to Aziz, are not very religious. Her mother does not wear the hijab, but agreed to raise the children as Muslims so Aziz always assumed that her mother had converted to Islam: “When I was younger I thought
she had converted, but she didn’t. She used to teach Sunday school at the mosque and was a dedicated parent volunteer, but she didn’t pray five times a day and stuff. It’s been on my mind a lot lately. That she raised us in it but didn’t accept it herself. I have a hard time relating to that.”

Aziz went to a Catholic high school so was used to the religious atmosphere. She said she likes the fact that she is not forced to take theology classes and go to mass like she did in high school, but she also really likes the fact that Xavier is a spiritual place:

I do really enjoy the fact that there’s a safe space to talk about God in the classroom. That never came up at UC. You were always free to share that at UC, but you knew that not everyone shared that experience and they may not want to hear about it. Not to say that there aren’t people at Xavier who don’t want to hear it, but it’s less common at Xavier to find people who are not willing to talk about God. Montessori was Catholic, so spirituality of the child and the teacher comes up. Montessori philosophy talks about the spiritual preparation of the teacher… I like being able to share how things that are part of my religion align with Montessori philosophy.

Aziz was extremely positive in her comments about the Montessori master’s program and she said that she appreciates the sensitivity of all of her professors who excuse her from class when she needs to pray or break her fast during Ramadan. In our conversation Aziz made only positive comments about faculty and staff at Xavier:

All of my teachers have been really supportive and understanding about my religion. Like, they’ll say ‘Let me know what you need or what I can do to help-
it’s no problem.’ When Ramadan came and I had an evening class my professor told me that it’s not a problem if I need to leave for a bit to go have a snack.

Aziz attributed her not belonging to any campus organizations or utilizing the prayer room to the fact that she is a married master’s student and lives off campus. She expressed regret that she is not more involved on campus, “A lot of cool stuff that is offered here is mostly for undergrads, so I haven’t gotten involved. I feel like I’m available but I am kind of new here. I’m always looking for ways to do things that represent my religion well. I am aware all the time that I am representing Islam and I try to do it well.”

Aziz admits that she wears the hijab, at least in part, in order to act as positive representative of Islam. Aziz described her own journey by saying, “I don’t want to give the impression that I wear the scarf and became religious because of a guy, but I do believe that my first fiancé was put into my life for that reason. He was there, asking me tough questions at the time I needed it. But in the end we parted ways. His ideas were just too conservative.”

Although Aziz said that the drinking culture does not affect her as much as it does the undergraduate students, for her, it is still a factor in socializing on campus. She described a time when she and her husband went to a graduate school event they did not realize that there would be alcoholic drinks and dancing. Because the invitation said “non-alcoholic beverages will also be served” she thought that there would not be alcohol at the event: “I wouldn’t have gone if I had known.” She laughingly called the event, “A prom for grad students. Like all the women were dressed up. It was not at all what I thought it would be.” She and her husband were the only Muslims there and she said it
was awkward for them, “The only people we talked to were the other outliers. This one couple, for some inexplicable reason, had brought their pre-teen son, so we talked to them all night.”

Aziz said she thinks that the university could try to inform Muslim students and graduate students a bit more about the campus resources and organizations: “They have all kinds of orientations for the undergrads. They’re spoiled. But grad students are kind of on their own. I don’t think I would have even known about the Muslim prayer space if I didn’t have a friend who was already here. And it would be nice to know if the meat served on campus was halal.”

Hannon

Ironically, the co-researcher I knew the best was the only person I interviewed who did not feel comfortable being tape recorded. Hannon is a doctoral student in Engineering at the University of Dayton. When I met her at an international student fair she invited me to my first Eid al Fitr party on campus. She took me under her wing at the party, shepherding me around and introducing me to people, forcing me to the front of the food line against my will, and in general making me feel like an honored guest. She talked to me at the party about Thanksgiving, which was coming up soon, and asked me what it was all about. I told her about my family’s traditions and invited her to join us for our Thanksgiving meal. She accepted and came to my home for the holiday. So I was surprised when I asked her if I could tape record our interview and she said she would rather I just took notes. I interviewed Hannon twice in the Kennedy Union for approximately 45 minutes each time. The first time I interviewed her she brought me a gift of a small wooden box with tiny brass fittings and “Bahrain” carved in the lid. She
explained that it is a miniature version of a very traditional piece of furniture in most Bahraini homes - a blanket trunk that Bedouins use to transport their rugs or blankets when they move.

Hannon is unusual among the co-researchers for this study in that she said she chose UD for strictly academic reasons. A native of Bahrain who got her Master’s degree in Europe, Hannon followed her Ph.D. committee chair to Dayton from a university in the Southern United States. The school she came to UD from was a state school so when she discovered that UD is a Catholic school she says she wasn’t sure what to think: “When I found out it was Catholic I was nervous. I thought- Will they try to make me take religion classes? Will they try to convert me? But after reading about the Catholic religion and people I decided it was ok. I felt comfortable to come.” Hannon said, “I don’t care about the religion of the person. You have yours and I have mine. As long as we don’t offend each other we can be friends.”

Hannon was the oldest of the co-researchers in the study, and as a doctoral student she said that she does not really have to contend with the issue of alcohol on campus because unlike Aziz, who was born and raised in the United States, Hannon does not participate as much in non-Muslim activities on campus. She is, however, involved in campus activities related to her religion. She is a member of the Muslim Student Association and a regular visitor to the Muslim prayer room. One of her favorite university functions of the year is the Thanksgiving dinner that the president of the university hosts for the international students each year. It was at one of these dinners that she met the president and he asked her to organize an event to promote awareness of Islam on campus. She was planning the event with two other Muslim students at the time.
of our interview and expressed excitement about it. I was able to attend the performance that she and her friends staged at the UD International Festival in March. Hannon and two other Muslim students performed a skit called “From Saudi Arabia to UD” that was a series of scenarios dramatizing the misunderstandings that can occur when students arrive from the Middle East and are not familiar with American culture. The skit was clever and funny. One of the vignettes illustrated the difference in personal space between the two cultures: the skit comically demonstrated how people from the Middle East tend to stand closer to others than Americans do.

Although Hannon is single and in her late 20’s she said that she does not and will not date. When I asked her about a friend she visits on breaks (a graduate student in Europe) she blushed and I could tell that I was pushing the envelope of her comfort level. She admitted that the friend is a man, but she was quick to add: “We don’t have sex!”

Hannon is also the only student who I have been with several times in social, all-female situations who never takes off her hijab. I was with her at a birthday party and at an Eid al Fitr party (celebrating the end of Ramadan) when almost all of the Muslim women had their scarves off and were wearing revealing western clothes, but Hannon never removed hers. I asked her about this and she said, “I am just more comfortable in public with it on. I feel naked without it.”

Hannon said she considers herself to be a part of the larger community at UD and that she has had a very positive experience academically. She said that her program is rigorous and demanding but her grades are excellent- mostly A’s: “I have no complaints about the quality of the instruction here. The classes are difficult but, no, I have never felt offended in any way by students or UD faculty or staff.” She said she likes the fact that
the Muslim community on campus is growing, and appreciates the accommodations that
the university has made for Muslim students: “I think UD has been just great. They have
really tried to make Muslim students feel at home here.” Her only suggestions for
improvement would be to have a separate prayer room for men and women with a more
convenient place to perform ablutions and to have food that was labeled halal in the
campus dining areas. [As mentioned earlier in Hannon’s interview, the university has
since supplied a separate prayer space for both genders and also separate washrooms for
both genders for ablutions].

Summer

Summer, an undergraduate who is majoring in the sciences, said that her friends
call her the Xavier poster child because her face is featured in so many places on their
web site. It’s understandable why the university would want to attach her image to the
school. A gorgeous, scarf-wearing Muslim woman, she wears tastefully dramatic makeup
and elegant Middle Eastern style tunics, so she must be a striking figure on campus.

I met Summer at the Gallagher Student Center on the Xavier campus when I came
to the film screening of Mooz-lum. The film is a drama about the experience of a Muslim
family living in New York City in September 2001 and the screening was sponsored in
part by the Xavier chapter of the Muslim Student Association. I was hoping to meet and
talk to some students from the MSA, so I arrived an hour before the film was scheduled
to start and wandered around looking for women wearing headscarves. Gallagher has a
bookstore on the third floor and I saw Summer in the checkout line as I walked into the
store. I approached her and explained my study and gave her my card. She seemed eager
to participate so I left that night feeling elated that I had made my first connection with a
Xavier student. But I didn’t want to put too much pressure on her so I didn’t ask for her contact information. I had her name, but that was all. After a few weeks of not hearing from her, I got desperate so I typed her name into Facebook. Up she popped as a leader in the Xavier MSA. I sent her a message via the MSA Facebook site and eventually she emailed me. I interviewed Summer in the Gallagher Center a week later for about an hour and then followed up with email questions.

Summer was born in Cincinnati and both of her parents work at Xavier, “My dad has worked here for 23 years, so I grew up on this campus. That’s probably why in the beginning I did not want to come to Xavier. But when my parents promised that I could live in the dorm I was like- ok.”

Although she did not go to Catholic high school, she said that her school student body was 99 percent white and Catholic; therefore, the Catholic nature of Xavier is familiar to her. Summer explained,

I like being in a religious atmosphere. My best friend here is Mormon. Of all my other friends, including the Muslims, she is the one who makes me stronger in my faith. So just going to a Catholic university reminds me that God is important. And like, not to lose sight of it. The majority of people who come here do have strong beliefs, which is like, awesome.

Her mother does not wear the hijab, and Summer did not start wearing it until she came to Xavier. She said she tried to wear one in high school and it didn’t work out very well: “I wore the scarf one day in high school and some of the people who I thought were my friends wouldn’t talk to me. I only wore it that one day. I didn’t want that to happen here.”
Summer said that she has experienced a few occasions of mild harassment on campus. At a basketball game one man sneered the word “jihad” to her as she walked by, but she said that she is not even certain that the man was a Xavier student. Another time she described feeling harassed was when a non-Muslim male student came up behind her in a social situation and grabbed her scarf, which is taboo in most situations. Still, she said, “Those were the only two negative things that have ever happened. I love Xavier. I will fly home even if I live abroad to come to my Xavier reunions.”

Not only is she a prominent face on campus and in the publications, she is also involved in campus organizations and activities. She co-founded the Muslim Student Association on campus and is involved in the Center for Faith and Justice as well as being a regular in the prayer room, “I love the prayer room. It’s a multi-faith prayer room but since we Muslims pray five times a day we’re always the only ones in there. You can see us walking over there together all the time.”

Outside of her involvement in university organizations and academics she said just plain old socializing is more difficult. Summer explained, “So weekends are pretty much like my high school weekdays and weekdays are more like my high school weekends. The weekdays I see my friends, but on the weekends I am pretty much on my own because my friends are out partying.” She described one weekend night when she had been gone and when she came back to her dorm “My suitemates and their boyfriends were up drinking and watching TV. I automatically felt a little unsafe. I just went into my room and closed the door. It was really awkward.”

Summer said she is satisfied with her academic life and her relationship with her professors. “I have one professor that I go talk to all the time. I have a really good
relationship with her. I talk to her about my life. It doesn’t have to do with being Muslim or anything...I have a good relationship with all my professors,” she said. She, like Aziz, expressed appreciation that her professors allow Muslim students to leave the classroom for prayer or for breaking the fast at Ramadan.

Wearing the headscarf is one way that Summer said she is able to act almost as an ambassador for Islam in an effort to dispel some of the mystery around the religion. She explained,

I think that some people are still really ignorant. Like people are afraid to ask me questions before they become friends with me. I’m very open and I don’t mind. That is one of the reasons that I was excited to wear the scarf- because I knew that a lot of women who do wear it are shy and they don’t talk about it. But I like to talk about it and answer questions.

She said she doesn’t think that Xavier students are as misinformed as the general population because of their privileged backgrounds, but she thinks that collaboration between the MSA and Xavier in a classroom situation could be helpful.

_Bella_

Bella is a 25 year old International Studies major who moved to Cincinnati from Uzbekistan with her mother when she was a teenager and she is the only European Muslim woman I interviewed for this study. She is quite different from all of the other co-researchers in other ways as well. Having grown up largely in Russia, Russian is her first language, but she speaks English and Arabic as well as five other languages.

I was introduced to Bella through the Director of International Studies at Xavier, who I had emailed and asked for help finding Muslim women students. Bella and I met in
the Kennedy Union and we spoke for an hour. I had learned my lesson from my previous interviews and described myself to her before we met so that she would recognize me, as I knew that Bella does not cover and she wears western clothes. Bella and I had a subsequent phone interview and then I asked her a few more questions via email.

Two major ways that Bella is different from the other co-researchers in this study is that she does not wear the hijab and she does drink alcohol. When I asked her about this she said “I am Russian.” I just sat there staring blankly at her so she quickly continued, without missing a beat: “I drink.” She says that she is more religious than her parents, who were forbidden from practicing their religion, having grown up in Soviet Russia. Her grandparents taught her about Islam and she said that they are more religious than her parents, but even her grandmother does not cover. She explains, “I have never had pressure to wear the scarf. I do cover at mosque, wear the hijab. But that is the only time I do it. The problem is, if you start, you have to continue.”

Socially, Bella said that she is more integrated than many Muslim women not only because she drinks alcohol and does not cover, but also because she dated before she got married:

I’ve dated, in a sense. I had a boyfriend. My parents were pretty strict but at the same time they always trusted me. As you know, premarital sex is forbidden in Islam, but it is the case for some Christians as well. I’ve travelled so much – so I’m open to other cultures. I wanted to marry someone who was educated. My husband is actually Jewish.
Bella was not really given a choice of where to go to college. She said that her parents picked Xavier because they knew that Xavier had a great ESL program. She was extremely positive about the academic aspect of her time at Xavier:

One thing that I took for granted were the classes of Philosophy and Theology. I found out that not all institutions require those classes. I think they should! I think taking Theology and Religion classes allowed me to become a more open-minded person. I always like to emphasize that Xavier is not a Catholic school but a Jesuit school. One of the most important things in Jesuit tradition is education, and Xavier is surely giving me the best one I can get in the Midwest area…I took Medieval Philosophy and learned things I never knew about Islam. I would suggest it to everyone. I can’t even describe how interesting it was.

She said she also appreciates how understanding all of her professors are about allowing her to leave class when she needs to pray or break her fast at Ramadan, “Our professors are always very respectful and let students leave class for a short prayer.”

Bella sees herself as fully integrated into campus life. She explained, “I am a very social person. I have never had any problems fitting in here at all. I am involved in the Intercultural Society, the Middle Eastern Cultural Society, and the Council on American-Islamic Relations.” Bella was also instrumental in establishing the prayer room, “That is one of the biggest achievements during my time at Xavier.” She described helping to bring Islamic speakers to campus and she said that she regularly participates in interfaith dialogs with different student groups at Xavier and for prospective students during orientation panels.
Educating others was a theme that crept back into our conversation time and again. She said, “I think it is very important to not assume that people know everything about your religion. Sometimes people are ignorant because they never have been exposed to knowledge. Educate! Any time you think people do not understand you because you are coming from the different religion or culture, educate them about it, do not avoid or disregard it!”

Sarah

Sarah’s parents are from India and she was born in London, but she moved to the United States as a baby so English is her first language. A first year student at the University of Dayton studying pre-med, Sarah said she chose UD because she and her parents agreed that she should live at home while going to college and she only had two choices since her family lives in the Dayton area: Wright State or UD. She explained that she felt that the program at UD had higher academic standards and she also liked the fact that UD is a Catholic school, “Actually, when I found out it was a Catholic college I thought it might be a little better. Like I thought that it might have a little more stricter [sic] guidelines that Muslims…like more discipline and stronger morals that might make it better for me. I respect religious people of any faith who are sincere.”

I met Sarah through a student of mine at UD, who while meeting with me in my office about registration saw my pile of books about Islam and asked about them. I told her about my study and that I was looking for Muslim women at UD to participate in it and she said – “Oh, I know a Muslim girl here. She’s Indian like me, but she’s Muslim. I can ask her if you want!” I thanked her and a few days later I received an email from Sarah, who also said that she had another Muslim woman, a friend of hers, Zainab, who
was willing to participate as well. A week later Zainab and Sarah come to my office together and I interviewed them for approximately 45 minutes each. I interviewed Sarah a second time a few weeks later for around 30 minutes.

Like Nadia, whose parents are also from India, Sarah does not wear the headscarf. A sweetly pretty girl with a round face and glasses, she does dress modestly, but stylishly, in western style clothes. Sarah has long, dark, wavy hair and she wore jeans and a pale blue cotton blouse when I met her. Although she was dressed in long sleeves and jeans, nothing about the way that she dressed connoted that she is Muslim. Sarah explained,

I wear the headscarf when I pray. I feel like, my family is from India, and so like, we do all the same things- like we pray five times a day and we fast at Ramadan. And we are taught that we should be modest. Like I will never wear Capri pants, or even short sleeves, even for athletics or hot weather. But like, at the same time, we were always emphasized that modesty was important, but covering up the hair was not emphasized.

Sarah said that as an undergraduate commuter student on a campus that is almost completely residential, socializing can be hard:

Commuting, it’s not like you’re living on campus and getting to know… You can tell kids who are living in the dorms together. They get really tight. I see that. That you’re not getting that so much because of living off campus. At the same time, I love all the people in my classes. Like I can easily talk to them. Like, there’s no awkward moments. Like, it’s really easy and smooth.
She added: “Being involved in clubs definitely helps though. Like Healing Hearts and hospice. I’m looking into Big Brothers/Big Sisters and things like that.”

Sarah said that dating is not something that she plans to do while at UD, “I would not consider dating until I was ready to get married…It seems to me that avoiding emotional and physical involvement is better for young adults …by helping them concentrate on their studies, without being muddled with all the drama which comes along with a romantic relationship.”

Sarah said she does see the silver lining on being a bit of an outsider on campus: “One positive aspect of being a commuting Muslim student is that I’m not confronted with the drinking the way that students who live on campus are. That definitely makes my life easier.” When I asked her, Sarah said she has not ever witnessed or been asked to participate in drinking alcohol, but she adds, “I’m not really around in the evening when they would be drinking. I pretty much go home when my classes or occasional meetings on campus are over.”

She explained that her experience with faculty and students alike has been positive, “I feel so accepted and I have noticed that a lot of professors here are Muslims. You can tell by the name. So it shows that the University of Dayton is not, you know, preferring one religion or faith- they like having a really diverse, open-minded atmosphere with people of all faiths.”

Similarly, she has not felt any discrimination from the students at UD. She explained, My experience with other students is definitely positive. My friends know- the people that I talk to can tell by my last name that I’m Muslim. They even ask me- they’re like: ‘So we heard about Ramadan- tell us about that.’ They’re actually
interested. They actually bring it up more than I do. They make it easy to talk about it when they bring it up.

When Sarah came to UD she did not expect that there would be a prayer room set aside specifically for Muslim students, “When I found out they had a prayer room in the basement of Alumni Hall I was impressed by that. You know, I wasn’t expecting that. I expected that there would be an MSA, but I didn’t expect a prayer room.” She did express regret that the MSA is not very active at the moment. She explained,

Like, I know they have things for Ramadan and Eid and things, but I think there could be meetings where like we get together and have discussions and talk about problems we’re facing. Or maybe even like include other faiths and get to know more about each other. More activities that we could have at a constant—maybe once or twice a month instead of just like having it on, you know, religious holidays.

Sarah had come to my office on campus for our interview in the early evening before driving back home. Before she left my office she illustrated something important. She asked me (a person she had just met) if she could pray in my office. That simple gesture of her praying in my office said almost as much about her sense of well-being and integration on campus as she told me in our conversations.

_Amani_

Amani is a married undergraduate at the University of Dayton. A native of Saudi Arabia, she moved to the United States with her husband to attend a state school in the southern United States. Her husband finished his undergraduate degree before she finished her degree in Psychology and they moved to Dayton last year so that he could
pursue a master’s degree at UD. A delicate, pale woman, Amani wears the hijab and modest western clothing. Amani is so petite that she could be mistaken for an adolescent girl. Her reserved and diffident demeanor also contributes to her child-like appearance. Her clothes were not childish though, she wore a stylish, fitted, black double breasted wool coat, black skinny jeans and a pale gray head scarf.

I met Amani through my gatekeeper – Safia. I had told Safia that I was looking for a few more undergraduate students at UD so she asked Amani if she would be willing to talk to me. Amani agreed and sent me an email to introduce herself. We met in my office for approximately an hour. Our second communication was through email.

Amani’s first language is Arabic, and her English is pretty basic. She can speak it well enough to get her thoughts and feelings across, but her self-consciousness about it seemed to inhibit her a bit during our conversation- she tended toward monosyllabic answers when given the chance. Amani admitted that the language issue can be a problem and she takes notes in Arabic when listening to lectures in class, but she said, “All of my teachers were helpful to me. Especially with me [sic] struggle with language. They are all understanding with me.”

Amani explained that because she lives off campus with her husband she is not often confronted with the drinking issue, but she was on campus last year for UD’s most infamous party day, St. Patrick’s Day: “I was surprised that people come to class and say ‘I’m drunk- hahaha.’ Twas never for me to see this before.” When I asked her how she felt about seeing the drunk people on campus she shrugged and smiled, but would not say anything.
Living off campus also adds to the sense of isolation Amani expressed, “I don’t live here. I only come for classes and then go home. So it’s not much. I have no stories about other students. I have heard there is a prayer room, but I don’t go there.” When I pressed her for more information she admitted:

First when I came here I felt that people were not very friendly. The first impression was that when I was walking and smiling at people most of them were not smiling at me. Even the people that were in my classes. I smiled at them and I felt like they looked at me like – who are you? Maybe because I had gotten used to a very small village – and everyone there knows me. And Dayton is large. In the small town where we were before there were only white people. But here there are many other people and foreign people and they look at me negatively.

Amani apparently does not see herself as fitting into the larger campus community. She said, “I struggle. Especially at first. Once I realized that I am going to graduate in December [2012] it makes me happier.” During our conversation I got the feeling that she is counting down the days to when she can leave Dayton.

Like Bella, Amani did mention that it is her duty to educate people about Islam: “I find that many students here don’t know enough about Muslims or they have bad ideas about Muslims. So maybe I should tell them about this.”

Amani was reticent in our interview, not volunteering any information beyond what I specifically asked her, until I asked her to comment on her experience as a Muslim woman on campus contrasted with the experience that Muslim men have on campus. Her entire mien changed - she really became energized and almost agitated when she answered in a much more forceful voice than she had previously used:
Let me say something here. Muslim men. Maybe they will feel more free to do things. And they don’t expect you, as a Muslim woman, to do it. Like for example – they feel like it’s ok to shake woman’s hands. But they expect you to not shake men’s hands. So, even though it’s the same for both. It’s really a problem for me. Whenever I meet someone and they try to shake my hand and I can’t – I say ‘Uh, sorry, I don’t shake men’s hands’ and it’s really embarrassing.

She said that when she refuses to shake hands with a man often times they blush, but sometimes they are offended and ignore her. I asked her if her husband shakes hands with women and she told me a story about a recent conflict they had about the subject. Amani had an elderly male professor here at UD, who in ignorance patted her on the back in class one day saying “Good job, Amani.” When she told her husband the story he was outraged. He told her that she should drop the class. Coincidentally, later that day they went together and her husband stuck out his hand to shake with an American woman. I asked her if she said anything when it happened. She replied, “No, but later I did. I was angry! I said to him, ‘You told me to drop the class! It was not my fault that my professor touched my shoulder! And you put out your hand to shake with a woman?’” His response was that he didn’t even notice he had done it, but she said that he has since stopped shaking hands with women.

Amani’s lack of participation with the campus Muslim population and her perceived inability to forge many meaningful connections yet at Dayton put her at the greatest risk of all the students in the study of becoming marginalized.
Rochelle

When I went to the Gallagher Student Union on Xavier’s campus to meet Rochelle I knew from our email exchanges that she was from Saudi Arabia, so I was surprised when I met her that she was not covering. She was instead dressed as a preppy American college student, almost boyish in her oxford cloth shirt, blue v-neck sweater and khakis. Rochelle is a cheerful and friendly undergraduate at Xavier, finishing up her degrees in Finance and Marketing this year. Rochelle wore glasses and her shoulder length hair was pulled back in a ponytail. Because of her round, makeup free face, Rochelle looks younger than her age. She wore such a merry and somehow open expression on her face that also lent her an air of youthfulness.

Rochelle and I became connected through the Director of International Studies at Xavier, who forwarded to Rochelle my email inquiry with my introductory letter and an abstract of the study proposal. Rochelle then emailed me and said that she would be willing to participate in the study.

Rochelle explained that while she wears the scarf in Saudi Arabia, she is too self-conscious to wear it in Cincinnati:

Well, like in Saudi, of course I cover. In the U.S. it is so—they’re more conservative, so I just want to hide. I don’t want people staring at me. I am already shy, so I don’t want everyone to look at me. If I were in DC or somewhere then I could wear it and blend in better. I do dress modestly and cover my arms and legs always.

Her mother does not wear the scarf in the United States either, and her father has no problem with it. She said, “It’s our personal choice as far as he is concerned. If we
wanted to wear short shorts he would say something, but as long as we dress modestly it’s fine not to wear the scarf.”

When Rochelle’s sister got a scholarship to Xavier Rochelle came with her. After a year in Xavier’s ESL program Rochelle also applied for a scholarship. She said they picked Xavier because of family connections. Her father is from Saudi Arabia, but her mother is originally a Catholic from northern Kentucky who converted to Islam in order to marry Rochelle’s father. They moved to Saudi Arabia when they got married and that is where Rochelle was born and raised. She said her mother’s sister graduated from Xavier, and had recommended it to the young women.

Rochelle said that being a Muslim student does make socializing on campus more difficult:

Since I don’t drink…that’s a pretty big factor with the students. At the same time, since I’m older, I’m like, well, I’m not going to hang with you guys anyway. My brother is younger – he is at UD- so it’s much harder for him. In a way, because I’m a girl, too, I think I can get away with it [not drinking] easier than my brother can. I can just go to a party and say I want a glass of water and no one worries about it. Men can blend in better and it actually makes it harder for them to stay religious. They get more pressure to drink than we do. The men have more freedom which makes it somehow harder for them if they want to be a good Muslim.

Like the other single women I spoke with, Rochelle said that she does not date. Like Nadia and Safia, she would not consider marrying a non-Muslim.
Although she said she does not believe that the Catholic nature of Xavier has an overt effect on her daily life, she does greatly appreciate the understanding and welcoming attitude that Xavier has shown its Muslim students. She explained, “The rabbi on campus was actually one of the people who helped us get the prayer room.” He is also the Multifaith Minister on campus and was the person who informed the Muslim students about the university rule that excuses them from class on their religious holidays. Rochelle uses the prayer room regularly and, like Summer, said “you can see us all walking over there together.” Rochelle said she is satisfied with Xavier’s efforts to make Muslim students feel welcome on campus, “I really like those things about Xavier. I don’t think many schools do so much for Muslims.”

Like Aziz and Bella, Rochelle claimed that aside from the classes in her Marketing major, she has gotten the most pleasure and knowledge from her Theology and History classes at Xavier.

Of her Theology teacher she said,

I had a great professor. One of the best I ever had. When he saw in class that I was lost he would explain it to me. He showed me how Islam relates to the bible and the trinity and stuff like that. He explained it really well. There is a lot in common between Islam and Christianity. Because back in Saudi we just learned about Islam with very little about Christianity and Judaism. But he actually opened my eyes to other religions and how they are different and how they became what they are today.

She had similar praise for her History professor, “I never liked History before. I used to hate it. Now it is one of my favorite subjects. My professor is so knowledgeable and so
well-rounded. You can talk to him about anything. He wows me. I even watch the History channel now!”

Rochelle said she feels that socializing with other students on campus is challenging and she describes herself as “probably off to the side- because I put myself there.” However, she is actively involved in several campus organizations. Not only does she participate in MSA activities and use the prayer room with peers frequently, she said she also is active with the Marketing club on campus. She admits that it was easier when she was in the ESL program because she was not as busy with academics: “When I first came here and was in ESL and lived on campus I was more interactive with International Student Society and stuff and then I just got busy with my undergraduate degree, so I had no time for that.”

Her only suggestion for how Xavier could help Muslim students more fully integrate on campus is to dispel some of the ignorance and misunderstandings about the cultural differences between the Muslim world and American culture. She explained,

I noticed something. That sometimes the school doesn’t understand the cultural differences. Like with Saudi guys and girls – it gets very complicated. They should look at the cultural background of the students. Like, one time a teacher – who was trying to be helpful- introduced my girlfriend, who is Saudi, to a class full of Saudi guys. Well her brother was among the guys and when the other guys started talking about how pretty his sister is and stuff like that her brother got protective and a fight broke out. That could have been prevented. I know the teacher was trying to be helpful, but with Arabs it is complicated.
Zainab

Zainab is an undergraduate at the University of Dayton who is majoring in Engineering. Although she is a married adult, she is so tiny and shy that she seems much younger than her late teens. Zainab’s English is pretty rudimentary, but I could still sense the easygoing nature of her personality during our conversation. Like Safia, Zainab was dressed somewhat traditionally, in a black head covering and white scarf with a long, loose fitting plaid tunic over jeans. Though the fabric was a western style (plaid) the cut of the tunic gave it a Middle Eastern look.

I met Zainab in my office when she came with Sarah. She and Sarah are friends so when Sarah told her about the study she emailed me to give me her contact information. I interviewed Zainab for 45 minutes in my office after I had finished interviewing Sarah. After we finished both interviews the women asked if I would mind if they prayed in my office. I said yes, and left the office to give them privacy. They prayed for around five minutes and then came and found me in the hallway.

Zainab explained that she is at the University of Dayton because it is where her husband got accepted to school. They were in an IEP program in another state before they came to Dayton about a year ago. The couple lives in an apartment in a suburb south of town and commutes to UD from there. They do not have children yet but she says she hopes to start a family when they finish school and return to Saudi Arabia.

The crosses on the wall of most classrooms at UD made an impression on several of the students I spoke to, and for Zainab it is really her only indicator that she is on a Catholic campus: “I didn’t even know it was a Catholic school. It has no effect. I do see the crosses on the wall and I understand that is a Catholic thing, but umm…that is all.”
Zainab seems conflicted about her place at UD. She said, “Sometimes like, they are so friendly and they are interested to hear about the Muslims. I notice that sometimes they look at me and they are amazed. They don’t smile. I think they don’t know about Muslims and they are worried about us. I think they don’t understand.”

Zainab seems to attribute some of the reactions she gets from other students to ignorance and immaturity:

I have a class called Engineering Innovations and all of the students are around age of 18 or 19 and they look at me like ‘What? Why are you here?’ the first time. And then day after day they, you know, smile and they become more friendly. But the first day they didn’t speak with me and pay attention with me. And when I said to my Muslim friend, they said ‘They are only 18 or 19. Maybe when they are 25 or 26 they may have better behavior than age 18.

She also said that the longer she is here the better she feels about fitting in on campus.

She explained that now sometimes students will even recognize her from class when she has not recognized them and they will initiate a conversation and this small fact has helped her feel more comfortable at UD.

Zainab acknowledged that not living on campus or belonging to any campus organizations makes it difficult for her to integrate into the larger campus life; however, she says she really does appreciate the prayer room and uses it often. She expresses the hope that someday it can be expanded but she also adds, “The prayer room is good. For prayer it’s perfect. Maybe it could be bigger. Some say it is too small. But for me it’s ok.”
Themes

Using Moustakas’ (1994) processes of “epoche” (p. 180) I began the data analysis process with the conscious effort of setting aside my prejudgments and approaching the transcribed interviews with an open mind. Through a process of manually coding and then going back to the transcripts and re-coding, a series of 12 themes emerged from the data. These themes appeared consistently for most of the co-researchers, and three co-researchers was my minimum for concluding that a pattern was evident. The themes are: religious observance, difficulty socializing, no dating, satisfaction with academics, satisfaction with Catholic identity of school, gender difference, ignorance of Americans about Islam, school choice based on relationships, international or first generation Americans, headscarf as a wall/armor, headscarf as flag, and more religious than their mothers.

Twelve Themes

Religious Observance

The only theme that appeared consistently among all the co-researchers is that all of the women are religiously observant to one degree or another. Every woman talked about praying and most use the prayer rooms on their campuses, as well as regularly attend a mosque. Although not every woman in the study wears the hijab, they all dress modestly in observance of their religion, which means that they will not wear skirts, short pants, or short sleeved shirts. In addition, every woman fasts at Ramadan.

Aziz described how important religious observance was to her when she was thinking about whom she would marry, “My former fiancée was way more religious than
me when we met. I don’t want to give him credit for my wearing the scarf, but he really was the one to ask me the difficult questions that got me thinking.”

Similarly, Nadia described how she had to turn down non-Muslim men who asked her out on dates because “There is no way it would work out. I would not marry a guy who wasn’t Muslim. Why even bother dating them?”

**Difficulty Socializing**

Almost every woman in the study expressed some level of difficulty socializing on campus. For Maha, a graduate student who is trying to make friends with Americans: “I came here to know the American people,” it is a problem because the adults she has befreinded already have many commitments and not much time to devote to nurturing new friendships. Maha says, “I have noticed this. Many Americans are very busy!” I got a firsthand taste of the cultural difference in regards to time when I interviewed Maha. I had set aside an hour and a half for the interview. Because of the beautiful, multi-course meal she prepared for me I ended up spending four hours at her home.

For the undergraduate students socializing is problematic for different reasons. Safia explained it this way, “Like here at UD there are parties, and of course there’s drinking. And that is strictly something to stay away from if you are Muslim. Like you don’t even want to be around it. Or you might as well be doing it.”

Most of the undergraduate students in the study have tried to eliminate the problem by living away from campus. Nadia and Summer both started college in the dorms, but by junior year both had moved back in with their parents. Surprisingly, the most outspoken of them about the problems with socializing on campus, Safia, is the only one of the undergraduates who still lives on campus. The second oldest of eight children,
she explains why, “If I were at home my studies would suffer. I would be cooking, cleaning and babysitting all the time. There is no way it would work for me academically.”

Safia compensates for the lack of traditional college socializing (parties) by participating in several campus organizations. She is active in the MSA, the Office of Multicultural Affairs (“I love the OMA!”), and professional organizations for Chemical Engineering.

However, not all of the women struggle socially. Because she is less stringent in her observance Bella is able to move more fluidly between the Muslim and the Catholic cultures. She is privileged to be treated as an insider in two different cultures and as such can observe both, “I drink so it’s not an issue. I go to parties. All the Saudi Arabian guys drink. They ALL drink. The women don’t, of course. But, Xavier is a nerdy school. Everyone is studying all the time so it’s not as much a party school as UC or UD.”

Dating

Dating as a cultural institution does not really exist in Islam. “No premarital sex is allowed in Islam. Therefore, no dating is allowed on the premise that dating inevitably leads to premarital sex,” (Syed, 2011). Obviously, Muslim students on American campuses are swimming against the tide on this particular cultural value as well as that of alcohol consumption. As described earlier in this chapter, Bella alone is the co-researcher who admitted to dating without having to sneak or feel guilty. Aziz dated before she got married, but only furtively. She explains, “In my early undergrad I did date and I hid it from other Muslim students unless I knew them really well. There is a fear of judgment but I also knew I couldn’t reconcile my relationship with the guidelines on relationships
in my faith.” Nadia struggles with dating issues constantly: “Guys try pressuring me by saying, ‘Let’s try dating and then if it works out then we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it.’ But I’m like ‘no - you are the one who would end up getting hurt.”

Satisfaction with Academics

“One of the most important things in Jesuit tradition is education, and at Xavier surely I am getting the best education that you can get in the Midwest.” Bella’s statement is indicative of the perception of most of the students in the study. Not all of the co-researchers feel as strongly as Bella does that her school is academically rigorous, but none disparaged the quality of their education. Several of the women expressed gratitude for the fact that both schools require undergraduates to take Theology classes. Bella and Rochelle in particular appreciate it. Rochelle explains, “One of my favorite classes was Theology. Great professor. He helped me make connections. He really opened my eyes.”

Sara and Summer also described their satisfaction with their programs. Sara said that she enjoyed the small class sizes and the fact that the faculty are so diverse, “I see a lot of Muslim names when I look at the faculty directory. That says a lot to me about UD. They are open-minded and want to provide students with a diverse learning environment.” Summer explained that she gained the most from the professors who challenged her the most. “I learn the best from those who push me the hardest. Those are the teachers that I bond with and I come to talk about everything with.”

Satisfaction with Catholic Identity of the University

Similarly, none of the interviews uncovered any negative feelings around the fact that the schools are Catholic. On the contrary, the Catholic identity was seen as either neutral (Amani, Hannon, Zainab, Safia, and Nadia) or as positive (Maha, Sarah, Bella,
Rochelle, Aziz, and Summer). Sarah explained, “So just going to a Catholic school reminds me that God is important. And like, not to lose sight of it.”

Several of the co-researchers also described the help that the Campus Ministry provided them. Rochelle credited the Interfaith Minister on Xavier’s campus with informing Muslim students of their ability to be excused from classes on Muslim holidays. Safia described how on one of her first days at UD a person from the Campus Ministry struck up a conversation with her out of the blue so that they could tell her where the nearest halal grocery store is located. I even saw evidence of the outreach of the UD campus ministry when I attended an Eid al Fitr party that they organized for both men and women on campus.

In that same vein, both UD and Xavier emphasize the value of social justice and recognize tolerance and community in their mission statements. The schools’ welcoming attitudes toward Muslim students show that they are attempting to deliver on the promises that they make in their mission statements.

*Resentment of Gender Bias*

Safia, Bella, and Amani all brought up the double standards that apply to Muslim women and men. Safia feels it from the international students in the MSA “Well- the men have double standards. Like I get the feeling the men at the MSA frown on women shaking hands. Like they say ‘‘You’re not supposed to do it,’ but they do it!” As referred to earlier in this chapter, Bella pointed out the fact that the Saudi men on campus drink even though it is taboo for observant Muslims, but it is implicit that the Saudi women are not able to do the same: “All the Saudi men drink. All of them.”
Rochelle echoed that sentiment, “My own brother, who goes to UD, definitely drinks. It is much harder for the guys to say no. The pressure is so great. But people tend to leave the women alone.”

Amani was outraged when her husband chided her for letting an elderly professor innocently pat her on the back, and yet he offered his hand to a woman to shake.

_Ignorance of Americans about Islam_

Amani, Nadia, Aziz, Bella, and Zainab all lamented the fact that most Americans are ignorant about Islam. For Amani and Zainab it is a daily personal issue- they are sensitive to the sometimes unfriendly stares they get while out in public because they wear the _hijab_. Amani said “People stare and stare. I smile but they just stare.”

Aziz said she is amazed at how many people fixate on her hijab. “They ask me the weirdest questions…like ‘what do you have under there?’ or they want to touch it. It’s really weird. It’s just a scarf!”

They feel that Americans misunderstand Muslims. Neither Bella nor Nadia wear the headscarf, but they still believe that Americans have a lot to learn. Nadia especially feels the media influence,

I realize that there are actually people who have views like what you see on TV and the news. It’s shocking. Cause I didn’t realize that people actually thought that. I thought that living in contemporary society that people would have been exposed to at least one Muslim person- but some people haven’t. It’s amazing! I think people have these wrong ideas about cultures that they don’t know. So I realized that I needed to clear up some of the viewpoints they have.
School Choice

One of the questions that first piqued my interest about studying Muslim women on the Catholic campus was the issue of school choice. I wondered what the attraction would be. In my interviews with the 11 women I found that there was a very simple answer: friends and family. Only one co-researcher, Hannon, the only doctoral student in the study, chose to come to her school (in this case, the University of Dayton) because of purely academic/professional reasons. She followed her dissertation chair to UD. Everyone else I spoke to came to UD or Xavier because friends or family were here or nearby. Summer, Sarah, Nadia, Safia, and Aziz all came to their respective universities because their families live in Ohio, most within an hour of their schools. Maha, Amani, and Zainab all followed their husbands to the University of Dayton.

International or First Generation Americans

Another pattern that I noticed is that the literature about the changing demographics of today’s college campus appears to be true. “The majority of Muslim immigrants came after 1965, when President Lyndon Johnson sponsored a bill that repealed the long-standing ‘national origins’ quota system that heavily favored European immigration” (Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006, p. 6). All of my co-researchers are either international students, new American citizens, or the children of immigrants (at least one parent was an immigrant). Not one of the students in this study has a multi-generational history in the United States. Five of the women came to UD from Middle Eastern countries in order to go to school. All five said they will most likely leave when they finish their degrees. Three of the women came to the U.S. as children with their families.
and have settled here and three of the co-researchers were born and raised in the U.S. but at least one of their parents came from other countries.

*Hijab as Flag or Armor*

Interestingly, the scarf was an inconsistent variable among the women in this study. The international students did not all wear the scarf, nor did the American born students all reject the scarf. Rochelle, who is from Saudi Arabia and Bella, who is from Russia/Uzbekistan both go without the headscarf. Whereas Summer and Aziz, who were both born and raised in Ohio, started wearing the scarf within the last five years even though no one in their families, including their mothers, wears the headscarf.

For Summer and Aziz, the two American women who wear it, the headscarf appears to be a way for them to serve as ambassadors for their religion. Summer explains that she likes it when people approach her and ask her about the *hijab* because she likes to dispel the mystery surrounding it, “That is one of the reasons that I was excited to wear the scarf – because I know that a lot of women who do wear it are shy and they don’t want to talk about it. But I like to talk about it and answer questions. There are a lot of ignorant people out there.”

Aziz also feels that by wearing the headscarf she is acting as a representative for Islam. “Once my husband and I were dealing with a woman who was being very rude and I got a little bit of attitude with her. My husband was like ‘Just let it go. It’s not important’ because I was wearing the scarf. He thought I was making Muslims look bad. Angry. I couldn’t help it that time, but I’m always looking for ways to do things that represent my religion well. I’m aware all the time that I am representing Islam and I try to do it well.”
For the other students who wear the scarf (Maha, Amani, Zainab, Hannon, and Safia – all of whom were born in the Middle East) the scarf serves its more traditional purpose – mostly as a means of modesty. However, on a deeper level wearing a scarf for these women also seems to act as a barrier to not only unwanted sexual advances, but also as a barrier to human interaction, unintentional though it may be. Amani, Zainab, and Hannon all feel that people stare at them in an unfriendly way. Hannon explains, “Yes, it’s everywhere. The stares. Sometimes people stare just in order to catch your eye so that they can smile at you. But sometimes it is not a friendly stare. You have to get used to it and not let it get to you.” Similarly, Amani believes that the scarf is like a “Hands off” sign that tells men to keep their distance. For the observant Muslim female this can be a real sense of freedom. In Muslim Women in America, an American Muslim woman who just started wearing traditional dress and the hijab, over the objections of her non-veiled mother reflects, “How can I explain to people who see the hijab as a tool of oppression that [deciding to wear it] was one of the most liberating experiences of my life?” (Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006, p. 38).

The wearing of the hijab has come to be such a big issue in modern Islam that some call it “the Sixth Pillar” of Islam along with praying, fasting, giving alms, going on the haj, and recognizing Mohammed as the only God (Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006). To many it has become “the litmus test of a Muslim woman’s piety, and even those who dress conservatively but do not cover their hair and throat are judged as women who have not ‘not quite arrived’ at the ideal level of devotion to God” (Haddad, Smith & Moore, 2006, p. 40). In this circumstance, it is not surprising that many observant Muslim
women seek protection from criticism by wearing the hijab. Safia describes it in such terms: “I feel better when I wear it. Like I’m not going to be judged.”

Daughters More Observant than Mothers

One of the most unexpected themes that arose during the analysis process is that of daughters who are more observant than their mothers. The international students appear to be following in their mother’s footsteps, but the American born women tend to either be similar in their level of religious observance or more so. Mubarak (2007) found “The growing religious consciousness of young Muslims has encouraged them to observe Islamic practices more strictly than they have in the past” (p. 5).

Both Aziz and Summer are American Muslims who veil and whose mothers do not. Both decided to start wearing the hijab in college. And even though Sarah was raised in the United States, she is not challenging her parents desire to keep her living at home with them instead of living on campus, even though as physicians they can afford it.

Similarly, though she does not wear the scarf, Bella says that she is much more religious than both of her parents. She does wear the scarf at mosque and when she prays, whereas her mother does neither. Her parents were born and raised in the Soviet Union where religion was basically illegal, which possibly explains why they have never been observant Muslims. She says that if it had not been for her grandparents she probably would not know anything about her religious heritage.

Three Domains of Meaning

From the twelve themes emerged three domains of meaning: search for identity, search for their place in the community, and the search for understanding from the larger
culture. These three major domains were unifying factors. I interpreted these three domains of meaning in all eleven women’s voices.

Search for Identity

One major domain of meaning that arose from the themes for each of the students was search for identity. In particular, Summer, Nadia, Safia, and Bella are slowly coming into their own in a way which supports what Daloz Parks (2000) describes as the young adult stage of faith development in college students: “During this period, the individual challenges established ideas and identifies new authorities through a variety of curricular and co-curricular experiences, as well as through the influence of peers and professors and other college personnel” (p. 95).

These students are in the process of what Kegan (1994) calls “self-authorship—that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states” (p. 185).

Summer likes to explore new ideas with professors and says, “I have a good relationship with all of my professors. I have one professor that I go talk to all the time. I can talk to her about anything. Bounce ideas off her. And she is one of my hardest professors. The best professors are the ones that push me to the limit.” This aspect of Summer’s development is analogous to Kegan’s (1994) “cognitive dimension” in which she attempts to make meaning based on how she understands knowledge and how she acquires it.

While Summer seeks self-knowledge through a more cognitive dimension by way of her interaction with her professors, Nadia explores self-identity by means of what
Kegan (1994) calls the “interpersonal dimension” through her relationships with her peers. Nadia looks very secular and is able to blend in on campus with no problem. Almost all of her friends are non-Muslim, so she has been living the typical college lifestyle with them: going to parties, living on campus, joining secular clubs. Although she refrains from drinking and dating she says, “I don’t regret that I go to parties where there is drinking. I am very social and I have met a lot of people that way. But it is keeping me away from my religion. When I graduate I think it will be time to wear the scarf and settle down- get engaged. I know I want to: I’m just not ready yet.”

Safia has used her time at the University of Dayton to learn about herself through several avenues. Her brief experimentation with campus party life only served to reinforce her belief that alcohol consumption is counter-productive to the kind of life she wants. She explains, “I don’t regret that I went [to parties] cause I learned something. I learned that it’s definitely not for me. So in a sense it helped me figure out who I am. Which is kind of awesome.” She does not go to drinking parties anymore because she says, “It puts you in an awkward place. So if you don’t want to be in an awkward place don’t put yourself in an awkward place.”

Safia also learned about herself through her participation in campus activities. When she was confronted with behavior that she saw as sexist she found herself speaking up, which is not necessarily the norm in her culture. She reflected,

I’m going to voice my opinion. I’m going to do what I’m going to do. ‘Cause if I have to tell them that they’re doing something wrong when they’re doing something wrong – that’s the way it is. Period. If they aren’t doing their jobs as
leaders, then hey, I’m going to say, ‘This is not fine. This is not the way it’s supposed to work.’ If he doesn’t like it, he doesn’t like it. Whatever.

Safia shows growth in the intrapersonal dimension in that she is gaining the “capacity to create an internal self that openly engages challenges to one’s views and beliefs and that considers social identities (race, class, gender, etc.) in a global and national context” (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). Her observation about her peers might indicate some degree of unconscious self-reflection, “Sometimes I feel like people here are not so defined in their character. Like they are exploring who they are. Which is interesting.”

Search for their Place in the Community

This domain of meaning emerged from the data when I noticed a recurring motif of the co-researchers attempts to find a balance between upholding the traditions of their Muslim culture (prayer, fasting, modest dress, and alcohol free lifestyle) and the conventions of life on an American college campus (parties, drinking, dating, and sexual activity). Of course, there is no one size fits all for how these women looked for this balance in order to find their comfort zone on campus. The lines between the strategies are fluid, but most students used the separation strategy to some degree. Several of the co-researchers appear to have integrated well with the campus, and one could fairly be described as assimilated. Unfortunately, two of the students are treading a thin line between separation and marginalization.

The acculturation strategies of the women in this study range based on the moderating factors (Berry, 1997) of marital status, traditional culture, graduate status, and whether the students live on campus or off. Not surprisingly, the married students from other countries tend to be the least integrated into campus life. Maha, Amani, and Zainab
are all married Saudi Arabian nationals who live in outlying suburbs of Dayton. Maha is the only one of the three who expresses a strong desire to integrate. She actively pursues friendships with Muslim people and non-Muslims. She has had me to her home several times and has prepared and served me an abundance of wonderful Arabic food each time. Every few weeks I get a text from her inviting me to parties at her condominium complex (women’s only parties) or to a traditional party held at a club or assembly hall. Maha is not only seeking out friendship but she also engages with organizations that aren’t necessarily her national heritage. For instance, a month ago the invitation was for a coffee hour at the Turkish-American Society in Dayton. Two weeks ago she invited me to a henna party (henna is the dye that many Middle Eastern and Indian women use to paint elaborate temporary tattoos on their hands and arms). Last weekend she invited me to a birthday party for a young Saudi woman who lives in her condo complex. Maha is not fully integrated yet, but she is trying very hard to become so by her “interest in both maintaining one’s heritage culture while in daily interactions with other groups” (Berry, 2005).

Berry (2005) makes clear that his formulation of acculturation strategies is from the perspective of minority communities and is based on the assumption that “such groups and their individual members have the freedom to choose how they want to acculturate. However…this option is not always the case” (p. 705). Amani and Zainab would seem to illustrate that point. In contrast to Maha they appear to have chosen, or fallen into, the separation strategy, bordering on marginalized. Neither student has joined any campus organizations or made any attempt to befriend people outside of the local Saudi community. Neither woman has developed a relationship with a professor or any of...
their fellow students. Both women express the belief that they are viewed negatively by Americans. Zainab explains, “They stare. Sometimes it is not smiling. They don’t understand.” Amani also feels that people are unfriendly, “Yes, the white people stare. I smile and they don’t smile at me.” During our interview the only time that Amani smiled and seemed energized was when she talked about leaving Dayton, “I struggle to fit in. Especially at first. Once I realized that I will graduate in December I am much happier.”

Berry (1997) defines some of the traits of good psychological adaptation. A well-adapted person is an individual who has “a clear sense of personal and cultural identity, good mental health, and the achievement of personal satisfaction in the new cultural context” (p. 14). By this definition, Amani and Zainab are the least well-adapted co-researchers interviewed for this study. It is probably no coincidence that both women struggle with English, both are shy and soft-spoken, and both live off campus, so are limited in their ability to both join campus groups and make friends.” My findings in regard to Amani and Zainab seem to support the results of several other studies in which marginalization is the least adaptive form of acculturation (Krishnan & Berry, 1992; Sam & Berry, 1995; Schmitz, 1992).

Those women who successfully navigated Berry’s (1997) description of the balance between “cultural maintenance” (p. 9) and that of contact and participation in the dominant culture were able to meet the state of equilibrium know as integration, which Berry claims “is usually the most successful” (p. 24) acculturation strategy. Safia, Summer, Nadia, and to a lesser extent Rochelle, all appear to have adapted well and are finding a place in the campus community. Though none of the women drink alcohol and Safia and Summer both wear the hijab, they all are active participants on their campuses.
and all describe themselves as integrated. All four of the women pursue friendships with members of the dominant culture, belong to secular (or even Catholic, in the case of Summer, who belongs to Manresa, a Jesuit club) organizations and clubs and yet they are also closely connected to their local Muslim community. They all attend mosque and pray in the prayer room; and three of the four belong to the MSA on their respective campuses. Safia says “I am involved in lots of organizations so I feel that I fit into both the Muslim community and the general UD community.” Summer echoes that sentiment, describing herself as the “poster child” for Xavier.

Of the 11 women I spent time with over the last few months, only one appears to be pursuing a strategy of assimilation. Bella is the only student who lives a (moderate) version of a typical female American college student. She has chosen to adopt the American cultural norms of campus life: she drinks, she dated (before she got married), and she does not veil, so there is no outward signifier of her religion. And yet she prays five times a day, attends mosque regularly, tries to keep halal and fasts during Ramadan.

Bella personifies the ideal of what Kegan (1994) calls “self-authorship” better than any of the other co-researchers in that she has successfully created a unique and harmonious blend of the two disparate traditions that she considers a part of her life. She has been able to maintain her cultural heritage by being religiously observant and participating in Muslim activities and services, but she also participates in much of the lifestyle of the larger American culture, even doing so at the risk of alienating her friends and family from either of her two cultures.

Bella believes that most Americans don’t understand that so much of what we consider Muslim behaviors are actually cultural, not religious traditions. She explains,
Islam is just so different all over the world. The Gulf States are really conservative and strict, but Jordan is amazing. Many women don’t cover there. Lebanon is the same. Many Christians live there. Egypt is so touristy - that affects their culture more than anything else. I went to Iran. It is so much more liberal than the Gulf States. The women cover their hair, but they wear totally western clothes. They can have their hair peeking out of their scarves and wear three-quarter sleeves. I know hundreds of people where I come from who drink, eat pork – don’t wear the scarf, and they consider themselves good Muslims! People just don’t understand how many different kinds of Muslims there are.

Search for Understanding from the Larger Culture

In terms of quantity of data, one of the most frequently occurring themes was the quest for understanding from the larger culture. Every co-researcher expressed dismay at the lack of understanding that most Americans have for Muslims and Islam. The Muslim women’s concern about being understood reflects their desire for what King and Baxter Magolda (2005) describe as a mature level of intercultural development “The capacity to engage in meaningful interdependent relationships with diverse others that are grounded in an understanding and appreciation for human differences” (p. 576). Regardless of the level of adaptation they had achieved each woman at least touched briefly on the fact that most Americans are misinformed about Islam. Some, like Aziz, blame the media,

It’s not fair. When terrorists of other religions do bad things their religion is not brought into it. They aren’t called Christian extremists or Jewish extremists. But when it’s a Muslim it is. It’s very deliberate. There are studies that show that the way the media portrays Muslims- like media content analysis - shows that a huge
percentage of Muslims portrayed in the media are shown as terrorists when in reality a fraction of one percent of Muslims are terrorists. So hugely skewed. Very frustrating.

Summer expressed a similar thought, “To tell you the truth- if I was not born Muslim and I was just going off what I saw in the media- well, of course you’re going to be like – Oh my God. These people are terrible.”

Nadia brought up the media’s role in the misunderstanding of Islam as well, “Everything you see about Muslims on TV and the news is negative. It’s shocking to us [Muslims]. I think people have these wrong ideas about cultures they don’t know.”

Rochelle believes that the universities need to make more of an effort to understand and educate their students about Islam. As Rochelle explained earlier in this chapter when she described the fight in the classroom between the Saudi students, “That whole thing could have been prevented if the teacher had just known a little bit about the Saudi culture.”

Zainab and Amani, both scarf wearing Saudi Arabians, said they feel that American students would benefit from taking a class on Islam. They believe that the curious and sometimes unfriendly looks they receive could be due to ignorance. Zainab explained, “Many American people do not know Muslim people and they think of nine eleven. I wish they knew that that’s not who we are. Maybe if they had to take a class that would be good.”

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Aziz and Summer, both American born and bred Muslims, choose to wear the scarf in part to attract the curious gaze of others. As described earlier in this chapter, Aziz and Summer wear their scarves symbolically
almost like a flag, publicly declaring their allegiance to a misunderstood and often maligned religion. They relish the opportunities that this flag offers them to talk to people about Islam and the opportunity to do it proud by behaving in a polite, thoughtful and modest way in public so that they can dispel any bad image that non-Muslims may have of Muslims.

Summary of Findings

Qualitative analysis does not privilege the numbers of responses above the conceptual weight of emerging meanings. Rather, qualitative analysis involves the researcher interpreting, heuristically, from the data. In other words, the researcher works to discover patterns that have conceptual weight in the data. According to Sandelowski (2001), “Pattern recognition implies seeing something over and over again in one case or across a selection of cases. Finding that a few, some, or many participants showed a certain pattern, or that a pattern was common, thematic, or unusual in a group of participants, implies something about the frequency, typicality, or even intensity of an event” (p. 231).

During the process of analyzing the data from the interviews I found myself engaged in the heuristic process (Moustakas, 1990) of working with the information from my own unique perspective. I was then able to “Begin the heuristic investigation with my own self-awareness and explicate that awareness with reference to a question or problem until an essential insight is achieved, one that will throw a beginning light onto a critical human experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11). Thus, I considered the twelve themes I had found time and again, in a combination of sharply focused attention to the data and yet also with a sense of self-awareness.
In this study, the twelve themes were constructed from the voices of “some” of the women. Many of the participants had common experiences and expressed their meaning in common ways. These commonalities were: religious observance, difficulty socializing, satisfaction with academics, resentment of gender bias, ignorance of Americans about Islam, no dating, school choice based on personal relationships, satisfaction with the Catholic identity of school, the scarf as a wall/armor, the scarf as a flag, first generation Americans or international students, and higher level of religiousness than their mothers. The three domains of meaning encompassed the women’s meaning-making across the co-researchers; these domains capture the essence of “searching,” a construct that seems to represent a dynamic in the lives of those transitioning cultures (ie: acculturating). All eleven of the co-researchers appeared to be in some degree on a quest for identity, community, and understanding from the community.

Identity
Every woman in the study is at some level involved in a search for identity. Similar to what Lee, Sobal, & Frongillo (2003) found, the acculturation of the students was influenced by exogenous factors. The age, graduate status, nationality and marital status of the students are moderating factors in this theme. The younger students in particular seem to be grappling with their identity as Muslim women in the context of an American Catholic campus. The younger American students were more likely to be torn between their loyalties to their heritage culture and religious observation and their need to adapt to the wider culture. These students were less likely to have achieved Kegan’s (1994) idea
of self-authorship in that they saw the acculturation process as a zero sum game. As Nadia and Summer both said, once you start wearing the *hijab* there is no going back.

**Community**

All of the co-researchers in the study were engaged in a search for their place in the community. The most influential moderating factors in this theme are marital status and nationality. While all of the students appear to fit Berry’s (1997) multidimensional model of acculturation when choosing which traits of the heritage culture to retain and which to jettison, the married women do not have the same freedom of choice that the unmarried women have. This lack of choice seems to cause “acculturative stress” (Berry, 2005) because the fact of being married brings with it behaviors that make adaptation and integration less likely. Living off campus is the number one behavior that impedes adaptation and integration. Berry (1997) points out that gender can have an important role in the acculturation process when there is a disparity between the heritage culture and the new culture in the status and the treatment of women. Amani and Zainab are two very young married women from Saudi Arabia, where women are deprived of what most Americans consider basic human rights, such as the right to drive, work, or go outside bareheaded. Needless to say, there is quite a disparity between the status and treatment of women in the two cultures and this cognitive dissonance produces acculturative stress. Additionally, both are separated both physically and emotionally from the campus community without any independent means of coming closer. As a result, adaptation is not really happening for them. Unless they succeed at building more connections with people from the Muslim community they risk becoming marginalized.
Maha and Bella are the only married international students who do not appear to be suffering from some level of acculturative stress. In Maha’s case, she is preoccupied with two young children so although she is trying to integrate, she may not focus as much about her place in the community. Since Bella is the most assimilated of all the co-researchers in the study she has really only had to make “adjustments” (Ward & Kennedy, 1993) in order to fit in with the dominant culture.

The women who were most integrated: Aziz, Summer, Nadia, and Rochelle validated the results of the Zagefka and Brown (2002) study which connects the strategy of integration with a positive relationship between heritage and dominant culture. 

*Understanding*

The final domain of meaning that recurred among all of the co-researchers was the quest for understanding from the larger culture. Almost every woman, from the nearly assimilated Bella, to the nearly marginalized Zainab and Amani expressed dismay at the lack of understanding that most Americans have for Muslims and Islam. Instead of being angry about the unfriendly stares or inappropriate comments they receive from non-Muslims their universal impulse is to educate Americans about their religion and culture. Bella, Aziz, and Summer explicitly stated that they found it almost a duty to represent Muslims well to non-Muslims and to correct misperceptions about Islam. But even the co-researchers who did not state this desire explicitly did so implicitly. For example, during a digression in our interview, Maha went into great detail about the daily household life in Saudi Arabia, and how there are two entrances and essentially to halves to every house: one for the men of the house and one for the women.
Surprisingly, one of the co-researchers even expressed dismay at the lack of knowledge and understanding about Islam by Muslims in the campus community. Safia noted, “I wish that the Muslims here had to take a class on Islam. Some of them don’t even know what the religion is really about or what the Quran actually says.”

The desire to enlighten others about Muslim culture shows a high level of interpersonal and cognitive development (Kegan, 1994; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005) because the co-researchers are able to step outside themselves and see their culture through American eyes. By suggesting that non-Muslims just need to be told the truth about Islam the co-researchers are giving credence to the theory that people who believe differently from us are not necessarily wrong, they are just operating without all the data they need (Kegan, 1994; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

This need to educate non-Muslims about their religion also indicates an implicit aspiration of the co-researchers to integrate into the larger American culture. People who want to blend seamlessly with the dominant culture by assimilating would not need to educate that culture about the heritage culture they plan on leaving behind. Similarly, those who plan on just remaining separated from the larger culture indefinitely would also not need to ensure that the larger culture understands them because they would get all of their social needs met through their contact with their heritage culture. This inclination to integration is a hopeful sign, as Schmitz (1992) found that immigrants who choose the integration strategy of acculturation have better physical and mental health than those chose a separation or marginalization strategy.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of Muslim women students at the University of Dayton and Xavier University through the framework of acculturation strategies. This study contributes to the literature on the experience of religious minority students’ on a Catholic campus by exploring the social and academic integration of Muslim female students. Examining Muslim women students’ academic and social integration will help higher education professionals to more aptly prepare for this growing population and to help them succeed on campus. As Smith (2010) points out, American colleges and universities are looking abroad for students to help offset flagging domestic enrollment numbers, and many of these new international students are coming from Asian and African countries, many with large or majority Muslim populations. Coupled with the fact that the American Muslim population is projected to triple by 2030 (Pew Research Center, 2011) it is clear that American higher education needs to better familiarize itself with the needs of this group of students in order to retain them and ensure their success.

The method used to gather the data for this study was an initial round of personal interviews with each co-researcher. The interviews lasted approximately an hour and all but one was audio recorded. The recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher,
which facilitated the analysis process (Riessman, 1993). After transcribing the initial interviews, I followed up with a second round of face to face interviews, phone calls, or email exchanges in order to clarify, elaborate, and member check.

The sample of co-researchers was gathered through my attendance at Muslim Student Association meetings and social/religious events on campus. The former president of the MSA (Safia) participated in the study and also served as gatekeeper (Creswell, 1998; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Krathwohl, 2004) in that she was instrumental in helping me to contact other co-researchers at the University of Dayton. My snowball sample from Xavier was obtained by my calling and emailing the directors of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, International Studies, and the Center for Faith and Justice. I also attended a campus screening of *Mooz-lum* (a film about a Muslim American family in the aftermath of September 11, 2001) that was sponsored by the Muslim Student Association in cooperation with the Office of Multicultural Affairs, where I met one of the Xavier co-researchers.

I also gathered data by observing several religious services, parties and one international festival in an effort to better understand the larger Muslim culture on campus.

**Discussion of the Results**

Lester (1999) proposed that the discussion section allows the researcher to “intrude more into the study by making interpretations and linkages, relating the findings to previous research or commentary, to personal experience or even to common sense opinions, and developing tentative theories” (p. 3). In the context of this research, the essential result is that understanding Muslim female students, and the effect of their
individual acculturation style on their adaptation on a Catholic campus, is still
developing. There is very little extant research on Muslim female students on American
college campuses, and most of what exists is quantitative research. This research helps
provide a more complete and robust representation of this minority population.

Using Berry’s (1997) theory of acculturation as a framework to identify the
strategies used by the co-researchers the data revealed that the acculturation strategy
favored by most of the women was self-confessed and self-imposed separation. While
one co-researcher appeared to be fully integrated into the larger campus community, two
women described their lives in a way that meets Berry’s criteria for marginalization.

Three domains of meaning emerged from the data: search for identity, search for
their place in the community, and search for understanding from the larger culture. While
the semi-structured interviews covered a wide range of topics, all of the co-researchers
touched on these three themes to some degree. All of the women are grappling with the
clash of cultures inherently present for them on an American college campus.

Identity

Mir’s (2007) study found that American non-Muslim negative perception of
Muslim culture “Can obstruct Muslim women’s agency of identity construction, which
leads to ambivalence, contradiction, desire, and disavowal” (p. 71) in regards to their
identification with their cultural background. This ambivalence was exemplified by the
fact that Rochelle, though Saudi Arabian, does not veil because she can’t stand the
attention it brings from non-Muslims. Nadia’s reluctance to start wearing the hijab is also
symptomatic of this phenomenon.
Cole and Ahmadi (2003) found that modesty is not necessarily the only reason that some women veil. In her research Mubarak (2007) also found that some women choose to wear the *hijab* in order to identify themselves as Muslim or as a political statement, not just for modesty. Nasir and Al-Amin (2006) also found that because they are such a small and often easily identifiable minority on campus many Muslim women feel responsible for representing their entire religion and culture, and they often burden themselves with the task of disconfirming negative stereotypes. Aziz admits that she wears the *hijab*, at least in part, in order to act as positive representative of Islam. Though they do not veil, Nadia and Bella both said that they feel a great responsibility to represent their religion well to non-Muslims and also to defend its practices.

Cole and Ahmadi (2003) and Roald (2001) found that Muslim women report being perceived as foreign, submissive, and oppressed when they wear the *hijab*. The veiling, which is seen as a sign of piousness and has positive connotations in their heritage culture, is often viewed as a sign of backwardness and oppression in their new culture - the campus, which can create acculturative stress. The women in this study presented a complex range of reasons for covering, but regardless of the motivation for wearing the headscarf, it has an important role in identity.

For the students who are not yet married and are often still trying to negotiate their level of religious observance this is a more crucial question for than it is for secular students. Because of the cultural traditions of Islam (the abstinence in terms of alcohol and premarital sex, the decision of whether to veil or not, the decision of whether to keep halal, etc.) their choice of mate hinges on the level of religious observance they choose moving forward in life.
Even the married women are placed in a situation where their personal identity is in flux because they find themselves as outsiders in some ways. All of the married women but one wear the hijab and all but one are international students, so they are often for the first time in their lives a very visible minority. For example, the marginalized Amani and Zainab have struggled to even feel comfortable on campus and have not yet succeeded in forging any ties with anyone outside of the international Muslim student population. Although their lives are strictly circumscribed by the culture in Saudi Arabia they are at least all in it together. Here, they struggle to maintain those cultural traditions within a new culture that is so different that it can create acculturative stress.

The search for identity also ties in with Kegan’s (1994) ideas of the cognitive and the intrapersonal levels of development. The women are negotiating the complexities of maintaining the traditions of home/culture by wearing the scarf and following the cultural guidelines that are at odds with their host culture (not drinking or dating). For some the search is proving to be a positive journey and they are attempting to integrate (Safia, Summer, and Nadia). Those who are developing cognitively and intrapersonally have been able to strike a balance between the pull of their heritage culture and the larger community. But for some it has proven to be more difficult (Amani and Zainab) and they are separating themselves from the larger culture rather than searching for a way to live within two different communities.

Community

Mir (2007) found that, “The salience of difference in their identity constructions led Muslim women to prefer exclusively Muslim social and reference groups” (p. 72). As the example of Maha’s Thanksgiving dilemma described in Chapter Four illustrates, life
is just easier for Muslim women students if they remain cloistered in their Muslim peer group. Within the group they are not forced to make the binary decisions about American campus culture norms which will either alienate them from their heritage culture or the dominant culture.

Kegan’s (1994) idea of the interpersonal dimension of development meshes with the co-researcher’s search for community. As people move beyond the initial level of interpersonal development they come to an understanding that although people may not have the same values, beliefs, and customs those who are different are not necessarily inferior. This particular search is especially difficult for Muslim women on the Catholic campus because while they are meeting people they like and admire (Maha, Sara, Safia) their own culture and religion are telling them that many of the prototypical campus behaviors are very wrong and that they should separate from those behaviors.

Just the visual impact their veiling has on others is one barrier to their integration into the larger community. The lack of physical proximity to campus is another barrier for most of the women. Though some of the women are actively pursuing integration, they are in reality, mostly choosing the separation strategy of acculturation. Living away from campus is one of the most effective ways to “separate” (Berry, 1997) from the campus culture.

The incongruence of what the women say and what they actually do can cause cognitive dissonance and acculturative stress. For instance, Sarah says that she likes all of the students in her classes and wants to know them better, while at the same time she chooses to live at home and commute to campus, acknowledging regretfully that this prevents her from fully participating in campus life. Muslim women students are caught
in between two cultures that can seem mutually exclusive. If they subject themselves to the majority gaze they are often faced with “stereotyping, ridicule, and pressure to conform” whereas if they retreat to Muslim-only community they can be subjected to the “scrutiny and control” of their Muslim peers (Mir, 2007, p. 89). Safia personified this dilemma when she described her struggle dealing with the new president of the MSA: “Like, it’s ridiculous. I feel like I have more prejudice coming from my own people.”

Understanding

Nasir and Al-Amin (2006) report that Muslim students on American college campuses describe feeling judged by non-Muslim students because of their religion and are anxious and uncomfortable performing their religious obligations such as praying publicly, fasting at Ramadan, and dressing modestly. All of the co-researchers in the study reported that non-Muslim students lack knowledge and understanding of Islam and several reported feeling uncomfortable as a result.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found that “non classroom interactions with peers have a net positive impact on learning” (p. 121) and that learning is enhanced for students who participate in religious activities and serious discussions about religion. However, the inverse can be true as well. Negative non classroom interactions with peers can also impede students’ development, especially when it causes acculturative stress. The frustration voiced by the co-researchers about the ignorance of many non-Muslims about Islam reflects their discomfort with this ignorance of their culture and religion. This lack of understanding is not as apparent in the classroom. None of the co-researchers reported having any problem with their instructors. It was outside the classroom where they said the issue arose: manifested in behaviors like the rude comments and inappropriate
physical contact that Summer experienced, the hostile looks that Amani and Zainab described, and the pressure by her non-Muslim friends to date that Nadia encountered.

Lack of understanding from non-Muslim peers was not the only issue for some of the students. Both Safia (explicitly) and Nadia and Aziz (implicitly) expressed the idea that there is often a lack of understanding from other Muslims. Safia was frankly critical of some of the members of the UD Muslim community when she complained about being silenced and exiled by the new MSA president. Nadia implied that other Muslim students will be watching her carefully once she decides to wear the hijab and that she will have to change her behavior. And Aziz described the fact that when she dated she only told a few of her Muslim friends. She kept the fact a secret from the larger Muslim community, as did her Muslim friends who also dated.

**Recommendations for Higher Education Professionals**

*Academic*

Catholic colleges and universities are uniquely qualified to accommodate and welcome Muslim students on their campuses: the whole thorny issue of separation of church and state is side-stepped, so offering religious support in the form of a dedicated prayer room is not inherently a problem. Several co-researchers in this study expressed appreciation for the fact that the Catholic campus feels like a safe space to talk about God; and all of the women in the study articulated their gratitude that both schools provide a prayer room for them on campus. Similarly, both Xavier and the University of Dayton have campus ministries that strive to help Muslim students adapt and feel at home spiritually on campus.
Although both the University of Dayton and Xavier University require undergraduate students to take introductory level Religious Studies classes, neither have a required Islamic component. Incorporating a mandatory module about Islamic culture and religion into the introductory level theology class could help raise awareness not only among non-Muslim students, but it would also serve as a good will gesture toward Muslim students who likely will appreciate it.

*Lifestyle*

Alcohol consumption is one of the biggest divides between Muslim and non-Muslim students’ social lives. Though there are many non-Muslim students who abstain from drinking alcohol, there is not the same level of prohibition for them as there is for Muslim students because alcohol is not specifically forbidden in the Bible or the Torah as it is in the Quran. Muslim female students who cover cannot blend in at a party and drink water instead of beer or hold a beer for camouflage to try and fit in. They are not even supposed to be at the party.

The university could help bridge this gap by offering more social events that are not alcohol related that coincide with the party time on campus – weekend evenings. This could also provide a social outlet for Muslim women who abstain from the other big barrier between Muslim and non-Muslim culture: dating. For women who do not date, a non-alcoholic event on the weekend could be a good way for them to socialize without compromising their values.

Observant Muslims have dietary restrictions that most schools do not acknowledge (Mubarak, 2007). The inability to keep *halal* is an impediment to Muslim students who might like to live on campus. Often commuter students are on campus for
extended periods during the day because either it is not worth it to go home and then come back, or in the case of some Saudi Arabian women, they are reliant on a ride from a male relative because they cannot drive. Offering one dining area that offers *halal* food on campus is one way to make even those Muslim students who commute feel more comfortable on campus.

*Co-curricular*

In order to increase awareness of Muslim culture the university could work in affiliation with the Muslim Student Association to sponsor and publicize special events surrounding Muslim holidays. Ramadan in particular offers a unique opportunity. As an example, many schools around the country offer a university wide event called the Fast-a-thon in which all students are invited to join Muslim students for a day of fasting during Ramadan (Mubarak, 2007). UD and Xavier have never sponsored the event on their campuses.

Several of the co-researchers from this study, Aziz, Sarah, and Colette, mentioned that non-Muslim students seem apprehensive to ask questions about Islamic culture and tradition (mostly the headscarf) and often apologize profusely whenever they do so. To help eliminate some of the misunderstandings that non-Muslim students have about Muslim women in general and the role of the *hijab* specifically, the university could organize panel discussions and workshops or seminars. Giving non-Muslim students a forum for asking questions without the worry of being judged would be a way to confront head on the biases and anxiety that many non-Muslims have about veiling.
**Recommendations from the Co-researchers**

At the end of each interview I asked the co-researchers if there was anything that they would suggest their respective schools do to help Muslim students on campus. Safia, Zainab, Hannon, and Amani (all UD students) suggested that a separate prayer room for men and women would be helpful. Having been to Friday prayers in the UD Muslim prayer room, both before the curtain was erected and after, I can appreciate that it is a small space in which to perform the prostrations that Muslim prayer requires. Similarly, both Safia and Hannon suggested that a dedicated sink in which to perform the obligatory ablutions before prayer would be helpful. Safia said, “That way I wouldn’t get the weird looks when a girl walks into the bathroom and sees me with my leg hiked up and my bare foot in the sink.” [This is no longer as much an issue as the new prayer room in Rike Center on UD’s campus, which opened recently, has a dedicated space for ablutions, though the Alumni Center prayer room still does not].

Summer, Safia, Hannon, Aziz, and Sarah all recommended that UD and Xavier make an effort to collaborate with the Muslim Student Association to sponsor events that would raise awareness on campus among both Muslim and non-Muslim students. Aziz focused on the fact that graduate students are out of the communication loop: “It would be nice if there were some way that Xavier could provide some of the same types of programming for grad students that they provide for the undergrads.”

**Future Research Suggestions**

This particular study is one of the first qualitative research studies to focus on Muslim women on American college campuses, and the first that I have found on the experience of Muslim women on a Catholic campus. Clearly, more women at more
schools should be studied to better understand the phenomenon of this population and their social and academic acculturation on Catholic campuses. Since both of the institutions in this study happen to be small Midwestern universities there should be studies at various other Catholic schools across the U.S.

Also, because much of the quantitative research that does exist on Muslim women students is embedded in the data on international students, it is important that research be conducted which distinguishes the international students from the American Muslim students. The role that language proficiency plays in acculturation is important enough that it could be helpful to disentangle it from the issue. The variance in the level of language proficiency just in my small sample of co-researchers was significant and influenced the amount and the quality of the communication in this study.

**Epilogue**

I came to this research from a place of personal interest and curiosity rather than purely disinterested intellectual pursuit. My interest in Muslim women springs from decades of wondering what makes those who have the choice choose to participate in what I have sometimes considered their own objectification. Meeting these 11 women and having the privilege of hearing their stories has been a real gift to me on both a personal and an intellectual level. Never could I have anticipated that they would be so generous with their time, their feelings, and their friendship.

What I take from this process is the knowledge that there is no way I can ever look at a woman in a headscarf as being a “type” of person. Not one of the women that I interviewed puts on the *hijab* (or leaves it off) without a great deal of reflection. From what I could ascertain from my conversations with my co-researchers, these women all
thought deeply about whether to veil or not, and once they made the decision they continued and continue to think about it. I admire the commitment of those who wear the scarf. And I admire the commitment of those who choose not to wear it. Because as a Muslim woman, either decision is a profound cultural statement and she must live with the consequences of that decision all day, every day.

It is my hope that this study can help contribute to greater cultural understanding of Muslim women and that this understanding helps them to live happier and more self-actualized lives.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Can you describe the process you went through when deciding to come to this university?
- What are some specific ways that the fact that it is a Catholic school affect your experience here?
- Can you describe a memory (either positive or negative) about your social life on campus?
- Can you describe a particular time in which the drinking culture here affected you?
- Can you describe a specific experience with faculty and/or staff that made a strong impression on you?
- Can you describe a memorable experience you have had with other students?
- What kind of support system does the university provide for Muslim students?
- How do you see yourself fitting in to the larger campus community?
- Ideally, how could Muslim students be made to feel more welcome and comfortable here?
- Do you have anything else that you can comment on about your experience as a Muslim woman on campus?
Hello. My name is Cindy Shafer and I am a doctoral student here at the University of Dayton in the Higher Education Administration program. Right now I am working on my doctoral dissertation and I am in the process of collecting data for that purpose. For my doctoral dissertation I am interested in exploring the experience of female Muslim students at UD and Xavier. Additionally, I am interested in discovering what university faculty and student affairs professionals can do to assist Muslim women in their adjustment to college and to enhance their academic and social development.

I hope you will consider allowing me to interview you about your experience as a student here. I am happy to answer any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study, and rest assured that you can discontinue your participation at any time you choose. If you decide to participate in the study, any question that I ask which you don’t feel comfortable answering you can also feel free to tell me so.

Thank you for talking to me.
APPENDIX C

E-MAIL TO CO-RESEARCHERS/MEMBER CHECKING

I want to thank you for agreeing to speak with me about your experiences at the University of Dayton/Xavier. I appreciate your willingness to share your opinions, feelings, and personal stories with me.

I have attached a document with your interview information. If possible, would you please look over the document? While reviewing it would you ask yourself if what I have recorded has accurately described your experience here? After looking it over you may find that an important event, idea, or experience was misrepresented. Please don’t be afraid to add notes to the document (or to call me if you like,) that would elaborate or clarify your experience. I am also happy to meet again if that is preferable.

It is my hope that our research will help Muslim women adapt to life on campus and to promote their social and academic development. I truly value your willingness to help in this research by sharing your experiences with me. If you have concerns or questions please do not hesitate to call me.

Warm regards,

Cindy Shafer
shaferct@udayton.edu
(937) 229-3945
APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC FORM QUESTIONS

• What is your campus address and phone number?
• What is your email address?
• How old are you?
• In what country are you a citizen?
• Is English your first language? If not, what is?
• Are you married?
• Do you have a job?
• Are you an undergraduate or a graduate student?
• What is your major?
• Do you have financial aid or a scholarship?
• Aside from the MSA, do you belong to any campus organization?
• Do you have a preferred pseudonym?
APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

October 3, 2011

Ms. Cynthia Shafer
University of Dayton
Dayton, Ohio 45469

SUBJECT: “Muslim Women on a Catholic Campus: How Muslim Women Students Experience”

Dear Cynthia,

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the subject proposal and has found this research protocol is exempt from continuing IRB oversight as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).* Therefore, you have approval to proceed with the study. As long as there are no changes to your methods, and you do not encounter any adverse events during data collection, you need not apply for continuing approval for this study.

The Committee expects that all relevant subject protection measures and ethical standards will be followed, as outlined in your proposal. Please feel free to contact me should you encounter other issues relevant to the protection of human subjects or ethical conduct of this research. Good luck in your work!

Best regards,

Mary S. Connolly, PhD
Chair, IRB
Coordinator of Bio-Research Initiatives
Office for Research
University of Dayton
Dayton, OH 45469
*Exempt under 45CFR46.101(b)(2):* Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.
November 29, 2011

Cynthia Shafer
218 Haver Road
Dayton, OH 45419

Re: Protocol #1123, Muslim Women on a Catholic Campus: How Female Muslim Students Experience Life on Two Catholic Campuses.

Dear Ms. Shafer:

The IRB has reviewed the materials regarding your study, referenced above, and has determined that it meets the criteria for the Exempt from Review category under Federal Regulation 45CFR46. Your protocol is approved as exempt research, and therefore requires no further oversight by the IRB. We appreciate your thorough treatment of the issues raised and your timely response.

If you wish to modify your study, it will be necessary to obtain IRB approval prior to implementing the modification. If any adverse events occur, please notify the IRB immediately.

Please contact our office if you have any questions. We wish you success with your project!

Sincerely,

Morell E. Mullins, Jr., Ph.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board Xavier University
MEM/sb