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People Read as Muslim:

A New Framework for Understanding Anti-Muslim Harassment

Hanna Niner

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes 172 interviews collected in the summer of 2016 in San Antonio about how the religion of Islam was being talked about during the presidential election. Eighty-six out of the 172 respondents identified as a person of color and/or Muslim. Of those, 19 experienced anti-Muslim harassment. However, I demonstrate that the people who experienced harassment were not in fact always Muslim. Muslim black men and non-hijab wearing Muslim white women were able to avoid harassment by passing or covering as non-Muslims either naturally with no effort or through altering their appearance. Sikh men who wear a turban, non-Muslim Arabs and Indians, were read as Muslim and therefore endured anti-Muslim harassment. Although individuals from all racial backgrounds are racialized, I argue specifically that the transformation of people read as Muslim (prM) into racialized subjects made them vulnerable to physical and verbal harassment from others. This had four significant impacts on their everyday lived realities, including: misidentification, fear of violence, altering one's life through changing certain activities, behaviors, and appearance in addition to being stripped of their cultural citizenship. This research demonstrates that we need to reconceptualize anti-Muslim harassment as a new example of color-blind racism that includes prM and excludes Muslims who pass as non-Muslim.

Introduction

On November 8, 2016, Donald J. Trump became the 45th President of the United States after running a campaign that, among other things, fostered anti-Muslim sentiment. He said, “I think Islam hates us” and called for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” that would remain in place until “our leaders figure out what the hell is going on (Johnson 2015; Santucci 2015; Schleifer 2016).” Opponents of the ban saw this proposal as the legalization of religious profiling, but Trump argued that “this has nothing to do with religion; it’s about safety (Santucci 2015).” Although Trump’s rhetoric brought the discussion of Muslims to the forefront of political discourse during the 2016 presidential campaign, anti-Muslim sentiment was not a new phenomenon, but rather part of a larger history of rising anti-Muslim rhetoric in the United States. In the early 1990s, Samuel Huntington (1993) popularized anti-Muslim sentiment in his argument that Islam fundamentally clashes with Western civilization. Anti-Muslim sentiment continued to rise after September 11, 2001 as anti-Muslim fringe organizations increasingly gained influence in mainstream society through the media, government, and public opinion, resulting in the majority of people in the United States holding negative views of Muslims (Bail 2015: 36).

The following thesis uses a racialization framework, instead of Islamophobia theory, to examine how what I call “people read as Muslim” (prM) experienced anti-Muslim sentiment during the 2016 presidential campaign. The term prM describes people who are perceived as Muslim. I use the term prM instead of Muslim because, as my data will show, not all Muslims were read as Muslim, yet certain non-Muslims groups were perceived as Muslim. I demonstrate that this resulted in the othering and marginalization of their bodies. Meer and Modood (2010) argue that racialization, an idea that Omi and Winant (1994: 14) describe as the assignment “of

racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group,” provides a better framework than Islamophobia in understanding the impact of anti-Muslim sentiment. Islamophobia does not focus on Muslim people themselves, but rather the vilification of their religion (Meer and Modood 2010 qtd in Selod 2015: 3-4). While the term *Muslim* refers to a religious identity, to begin to understand the lived experiences of prM, the discussion surrounding the experience of prM must take into account what scholars term “the racialization of the Muslim body.”

Through this racialization framework, this thesis analyzes how certain groups were socially constructed as Muslim while others were not during the 2016 presidential election. Some Muslims, such as black men and non-hijab wearing white women, were able either naturally or with some effort to avoid harassment by passing or covering. On the other hand, the bodies of certain non-Muslim groups, including Sikh men who wear a turban, non-Muslim Arabs and Indians, were racialized as Muslim and therefore endured anti-Muslim harassment. Once these individuals were transformed into racialized subjects, I show that they became vulnerable to physical and verbal harassment from other people, which had four significant impacts on their everyday lived realities. These impacts include: misidentification, fear of violence, altering one’s life through changing certain activities, behaviors, and appearance in addition to being stripped of their cultural citizenship. This research shows that anti-Muslim harassment has not only a religious, but also a racial component.

Setting and Method

This thesis draws on research conducted by a team of seven researchers that examined how the religion of Islam was being talked about during the 2016 presidential election. Researchers conducted open ended interviews during the summer of 2016 in San Antonio,

Texas, the 7th largest city in the United States comprised of approximately 1.5 million people (Moravec, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau 2015a). San Antonio is a predominantly Latinx¹ city both culturally and in terms of population, but remains segregated along racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines (City-Data 2016). Overall, 53 percent of households in San Antonio have income lower than the national average of approximately \$55,000 (United States Census Bureau 2015a and 2016). San Antonio remains a liberal enclave within the conservative state of Texas with 52% of registered voters identifying as Democrats compared to 47% Republican (Facts Web 2016). From a religious standpoint, approximately 43.5% of San Antonians do not affiliate with a religion, 31% identify as Catholic and 22% identify as a certain type of Protestant (The ARDA). Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, and individuals who practice other religions make up the remaining approximately 3.5% (The ARDA). While our study captured a diverse sample of voices, wealthy, educated whites were somewhat overrepresented in our research (See demographic table in the appendix).

Overall, 172 people from diverse backgrounds were interviewed for this project. Both individual interviews and focus groups were conducted ranging from an hour to two hours in length with 83 respondents interviewed individually and 89 people in a focus group setting. The same questions were asked in both the individual interviews and the focus groups. The only difference between these two types of interviews was that focus groups consisted of two to five respondents and two researchers, one who asked the questions and another who took notes. In order to have a representative sample of San Antonians, respondents from political, religious, and social organizations that had a stake in the conversation surrounding Muslims were

¹ I choose to use the term *Latinx* instead of *Latino* or *Latina* to remain gender neutral and to include people who do not conform to gender binary.

² In a survey given to respondents before their interview or focus group, respondents religiously self-identified as Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Pagan, Jewish, Catholic, Multi-Religious, Spiritual, Baptist, Lutheran, Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Methodist, Evangelical, Episcopal, and non-denominational Christian.

³ Respondents from the following secular organizations were interviewed: universities, a senior

interviewed. The research team compiled a list of religions² represented in San Antonio and contacted leaders of the religious congregations. When possible, a member of the research team interviewed the religious leader of the congregation. Following these initial connections, we would inquire if the respondent knew of any other individuals in their congregation willing to participate in the study. We would then conduct individual interviews or focus groups with members of the congregation. We conducted interviews with people from secular organizations as well to capture the voices of people not represented in the religious community, but who had a stake in the conversation surrounding Muslims and Islam.³

Respondents were prompted to discuss their experiences through a semi-structured open-ended interview. This thesis will mainly focus on responses from two questions: *In the presidential campaign, there's been a lot said about Islam. What have you heard?* and *Have you ever experienced fear around these issues?* The research team specifically chose to ask open ended questions and use terms such as “these issues” to allow the participants to formulate their own responses based on what they defined as issues in the presidential campaign rather than being led by the interviewer. Therefore, respondents spoke about fearing a wide range of issues including Muslims taking over the United States and wearing a hijab in public. The entire interview guide is located at the end of this thesis in the appendix. In addition, respondents answered basic demographic and media consumption questions in a short, anonymous⁴ survey

² In a survey given to respondents before their interview or focus group, respondents religiously self-identified as Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Pagan, Jewish, Catholic, Multi-Religious, Spiritual, Baptist, Lutheran, Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Methodist, Evangelical, Episcopal, and non-denominational Christian.

³ Respondents from the following secular organizations were interviewed: universities, a senior citizen community center, a gay/lesbian political organization, a refugee organization, a political organization working for the rights of Muslims, community development organizations, and anti-Muslim groups who work to protect the United States from “radical Islam.”

⁴ In the following paper, respondent's real names were not used, but rather replaced with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

before each interview.

This study focuses on 86 respondents who identified as a person of color and/or Muslim instead of the 172 total respondents in order to include prM who are often not a part of the discussion on anti-Muslim harassment, but exclude white, non-Muslims who did not experience anti-Muslim harassment. Of the 86 respondents, 19 stated that they experienced anti-Muslim harassment. These individuals religiously identified as Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Christian, in addition to racially or ethnically identifying as Latinx, Middle Eastern, black, Asian, or white.

The Construction of Racial Identity

Racialization

The study of racialization represents a subfield within race scholarship that examines how society ascribes racial meaning to a once non-racial group by constructing ideology based on preceding racial concepts (Omi and Winant 1994: 14). Although racialization literature theorizes racialization in connection to race, Miles (1993) goes beyond the focus on phenotypical differences and instead supports the argument that other signifiers of difference, including ideological or cultural traits, take on racial meanings (Selod and Embrick 2013: 647). Therefore, people assign racial meanings based on both phenotypic characteristics and cultural symbols, such as skin tone, behavior, sexuality, language, dress, name, nation of origin and religious beliefs (Cole and Maisuria 2007: 107; Selod 2015: 3, 15). Due to the importance of racial meaning in society, Omi and Winant (1994: 12) argue that people feel discomfort when they cannot identify another person's race because race provides certain clues concerning "who a person is." In certain instances, to escape this discomfort, people racialize other individuals.

The racial meanings and categories used during the process of racialization continually shift and change based on a given political, social, and economic situation. Although Muslims

experienced the vilification of their religion before 2001, prM moved from an invisible to visible minority after September 11th. After September 11th, Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians became racialized as a single group that embodied a “Muslim look” (Patel 2005: 63). Selod and Embrick (2013: 649) along with Cainkar and Maira (2005: 19) problematize this “Muslim look” concept by arguing that the characterization of Muslims as a monolithic racial group is fundamentally wrong because Muslims come from multiple racial and ethnic groups. For example, although not all Muslims are Arabs, the United States Census ignores the racial and ethnic diversity of this part of the Muslim community by racially categorizing Arabs as white (Selod 2015: 3). Although the Census categorizes Arabs as white, not all Arabs enjoy the privileges associated with whiteness because people, specifically Whites, racialize them as non-white (Selod 2015: 3). Arabs lost some white privileges after September 11th when they shifted from a model minority to a racialized other. Therefore, Selod and Embrick (2013: 652) argue that racialization theory should not only focus on the formation, shifts, and changes of racial categories, but also understand the racialization process as people being excluded from whiteness.

People understand race not only through skin color, but also through perceived cultural differences. Jamal and Naber (2008: 119) push racialization theory beyond examining differences simply through a narrow phenotypical understanding and contend that the racialization of differences results from “a perceived clash of values and exacerbated by cultural ethnocentrism.” The racialization of differences results in the othering and marginalization of Muslims and Arabs by producing an image of them as a homogenous enemy group “who are naturally, morally, and culturally inferior to real Americans” (Jamal and Naber 2008: 117, 121). Instead of viewing Muslims and Islam through a positive lens, Jamal and Naber (2008: 122) assert that non-Muslim United States citizens know Muslims and learn about Islam “through the

prisms of terrorism and barbarism.” People in the United States use this negative construction of Muslims as un-American and terrorists to racialize Muslims as different.

The racialization of prM is not only the theoretical formation of groups, but occurs in the everyday lived experiences of prM because of other people’s actions. The actions of others creates a new category of prM, which can be interpreted by interpellation theory. Once racialized by skin tone and/or cultural differences, interpellation theory explains how people’s thoughts of non-Muslims transform into actions that construct prM as un-American, terrorists, and different. The process of interpellation explains how certain acts, such as speech, can “hail or name a person into social existence” (Patel 2005: 67). Patel (2005: 67) applies Louis Althusser’s (1971) theory of interpellation to Muslims. For example, Patel (2005: 68) argues that the racialized identity of a “Muslim looking” individual manifests through phrases or questions, such as *are you a terrorist?*, that socially construct prM as foreign and a threat. The person on the receiving end of hate speech supposedly inhabits a certain social position, which permits the speaker to utilize hateful rhetoric in order to injure the person and place them into social submission (Patel 2005: 67-68). Therefore, hate speech and other forms of anti-Muslim rhetoric create boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims, resulting in Muslims experiencing othering and marginalization.

Racial Performance

In contrast to the process of racialization, which describes people’s perceptions of other individual’s identity, identity theory, specifically racial performance, looks at the agency individuals have in how others understand their racial identity. Racial performance examines how individuals actively performing or constructing their race brings their “race into being” (Patel 2005: 65). This identity construction involves the way a person presents themselves in

addition to how they manage “verbal and visual impressions” (Peek 2005: 217). The choices individuals make when presenting themselves or performing their race gives social meaning to their racial identity by creating and re-constructing people’s ideas of race and perceptions of themselves as racialized subjects (Patel 2005: 66). Examples of racial performances include individuals shaving their facial hair, deciding not to wear a turban, or altering their accent in order to control the way others perceive, construct and, ultimately, experience their racial identity (Patel 2005: 67). These examples demonstrate how an individual’s identity changes when they alter or embrace new identities, shed previous identities, or rearrange their multiple identities based their relative importance (Patel 2005: 67; Peek 2005: 217). Racial performance theory acknowledges that race is not a static identity, but rather “a continual process of negotiating and performing identity” that can change because of a person’s experiences and changes in “the larger social structure within which the individual thinks and acts” (Patel 2005: 65; Peek 2005: 217).

Cultural Citizenship: Who has a “right” to belong?

Non-Muslims in the United States deny Muslims cultural citizenship, or a sense of belonging in a country, when they perceive Islam as fundamentally opposing American values. Ong (1996: 737) defines cultural citizenship as “the cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish these criteria of belonging within a national population and territory.” Non-Muslims use this criteria of belonging to question Muslims about their American status. When people interrogate Muslims about their American status, the underlying assumption is Muslims are not *real* Americans because their religion supposedly threatens national security and has “become synonymous with terrorism, patriarchy, misogyny, and anti-American sentiments”

(Selod 2015: 1-2, 4). This belief of Muslims as un-American has caused physical signifiers of Islamic faith to take on negative meanings, such as female oppression or violence against the West, which excludes Muslims from cultural citizenship or societal membership (Selod 2015: 2).

Both the state and citizens maintain the boundaries of cultural citizenship, often excluding Muslims because, as Selod (2015: 2, 5) states, people view Muslims as “perpetually foreign, bad for society and disloyal to America.” When Muslims experience “de-Americanization,” people maintain the “racial and ethnic boundaries of social citizenship,” therefore excluding Muslims from claiming that they belong to or have membership in society (Selod 2015: 4). Glenn (2002: 196) argues that both government and citizens work simultaneously to control the boundaries of the country’s citizenship (Glenn qtd Selod 2015: 5).

Glenn says:

Citizenship is not just a matter of formal legal status; it is a matter of belonging, including recognition by other members in the community. Formal law and legal rulings create a structure that legitimates the granting or denial of recognition.... The maintenance of boundaries relies on ‘enforcement’ not only by designated officials, but also by so-called members of the public.

Selod (2015: 15) takes the argument a step further by contending that while the state maintains the legal authority to formulate citizenship boundaries, citizens take cues from the state and act as the informal gatekeepers of membership. Non-Muslims who act as gatekeepers to cultural citizenship feel warranted in prohibiting the extension of this form of citizenship to Muslims or people read as Muslim.

Findings: The Reading of Muslim Identity and its Impact

As I sat in people's homes, quaint coffee shops, and various religious institutions, I began to hear and read the stories of harassment from interviewees who practice the Muslim faith or who their attackers believed were Muslim. Some of the stories were devastating events that appear to have left the respondent emotionally scarred while other incidents of hate were told matter of factly as the person's everyday lived reality. This thesis echoes Richard Delgado (1995), one of the prominent proponents of Critical Race Theory (CRT), who argued that people of color have stories that originate "from a different frame of reference, one underpinned by racism" that "deserve to be heard" (qtd. in Cole and Maisuria 2007: 98). This thesis seeks to provide a platform that gives people of color the opportunity to have their voices heard in a society that all too often silences their opinions, feelings, and accounts of their lived realities.

Misidentification

Out of the 172 interviewees, 86 identified as a person of color and/or Muslim. Forty of the 86 respondents discussed how they were perceived in public spaces during the 2016 presidential election with 12 individuals stating that people misidentify them either as Muslim or as not Muslim. Of the 12 misidentified interviewees, three Muslim men were read as non-Muslim while nine non-Muslims were read as Muslim. The nine respondents perceived as Muslim were forced to endure interactions with people who questioned, mislabeled, and discriminated against them while the three who "passed" did not.

Emma, a female Middle Eastern international college student in her teens who does not identify with a religion, grapples with the racialization and misidentification of her body by others. The racialization of her body has real life consequences for Emma because it forces her to

navigate a society where her body has become the site of contestation between how others perceive her identity and how she self-identifies. Emma says:

People would put labels on me that I would never have put on myself. They just said, “you’re first generation American,” “you’re middle eastern,” “you’re Muslim.” It was aggravating because I never went up to one of my friends and went “Oh, you’re Catholic, right, because you’re white?” “Oh, you’re Jewish, because you look like you’re Jewish.” For my culture to be the one culture that I could think of as one of the ones that are predominantly associated with race and religion together is really frustrating. They all assume and someone will ask, “Why aren’t you wearing your head scarf?” Or someone will ask why you’re wearing the cross, and then you get very confused.

Although the census identifies people of Middle Eastern descent as white, Emma demonstrates how racialization results in Middle Eastern people being read as non-white and therefore not enjoying the privileges of whiteness. Emma points out that people do not constantly question white individuals about their religious identity, one example of white privilege. In contrast, people ascribe racial meaning to Emma’s body, but when Emma does not conform to her assigned racial meaning, people interrogate her about her identity, thus confirming findings by Selod and Embrick (2013: 647).

All three Sikh men in our study stated that people misidentify them as Muslim due to the incorrect association of their turbans with Islam. For example, Ahmed and Hari, Sikh men in their forties who identify as Asian, engaged in a discussion about how the misidentification of their turbans forces them to endure anti-Muslim harassment. Ahmed and Hari said:

We’ve [Sikhs] had plenty of negative experiences where people have associated me with them [Muslims] and with terrorism just because I wear a turban. —Ahmed

I am perceived to an American [as] Muslim. If I walk down Stadium Drive and I'll get yelled at, "Hey, Bin Laden, how are you doing?" Or "Osama." And it will happen all the time. —Hari

Ahmed and Hari's inability to cover their stigma, in this case their turban, resulted in their misidentification as Muslim. The process of covering one's stigma involves a person first acknowledging that their stigma exists, either because the stigma is known or apparent, followed by the person working to minimize it in order to reduce tension within society (Goffman 1963: 102; Patel 2005: 70). To reduce tension in society, a person can restrict the visibility of failings associated with a given stigma (Goffman 1963: 103). By failing to reduce tension in society through covering, Ahmed and Hari became vulnerable to verbal attacks, which following interpellation theory, named the men into existence as "Muslim looking" individuals with phrases such as *hey, Bin Laden*.

Hibba, an Indian woman in her thirties who identifies as Hindu, discusses people misidentifying her as a Muslim. People misidentify Hibba as Muslim because they assume South Asians are Muslims instead of realizing that the majority of people from India practice Hinduism and many other religions. In addition, people perceive Hibba as a Muslim because of her brown skin, which acts as a physical marker in the same way Ahmed and Hari's turban signify their difference. Hibba explains:

Today he's [Trump] targeting Muslims. A lot of people like to just say "well we're not Muslim so it doesn't affect us." I was like, yeah, but to an untrained eye we could be.

In contrast to Ahmed, Hari, and Hibba who face anti-Muslim harassment even though they do not practice Islam, Josh, a black man in his fifties who is a long time member of the

Nation of Islam, describes how people failing to read him as Muslim allows him to escape anti-Muslim harassment. Josh does not face anti-Muslim harassment because he does not fit the stereotypical, racialized image of the “imagined” Muslim, but rather faces discrimination because of his blackness. Josh discusses how he cannot “take off black skin to fit right in,” compared to Muslims who can alter their identity by removing cultural clothing. Josh told me:

They could care less that I am calling myself a Muslim. All they look at is the dark skin, that is how I am judged, that is how we are all judged, as black people. Especially black men.

Instead of facing harassment due to his religious affiliation, Josh’s race resulted in his marginalization from mainstream white society. Josh’s black identity supersedes his Muslim identity because he cannot pass as another race, but can pass as non-Muslim. Josh cannot pass as another race because, as Goffman argues, passing proves difficult if the traits that deviate from normalcy are hard to conceal and therefore remain visible (Goffman 1963: 75). His black skin remains visible unlike Muslims, who Josh argues can fit into society when they hide their stigma by altering their dress. In addition to changing their clothes, people hide their racial identity through various methods including “silence...speech, distancing from the racial community...not responding to a racialized atmosphere...[and] embracing a non-activist identity,” to name a few (Patel 2005: 71). When stigmatized people alter their identity or use a “front,” they create desired images of themselves (Patel 2005: 70). Josh does not have the option to create a desired image of himself because he cannot alter the color of his skin to avoid racism in the United States.

The Fear of Violence

When asked *have you ever experienced fear around these issues*, 12 interviewees out of

86 discussed how they feared violence from people who internalized anti-Muslim rhetoric that framed Muslims as un-American, anti-West, and a threat to national security. In addition to people who identified as Muslim (6), non-Muslim individuals (6), including those from the Sikh and Hindu faiths, who people perceived as Muslim also experienced fear of violence. Respondents' fear originated from hearing anti-Muslim statements and threats first hand or in the media.

Sayeeda, a black, Muslim, hijab wearing woman in her twenties discusses how everyday events, in the below example of shopping at Walmart, become the site of verbal attacks on prM by other people. This muted Sayeeda and her sister, who feared voicing their outrage might cause violence towards them. The fear of enduring bodily harm for speaking out against severe anti-Muslim sentiment stripped Sayeeda of her freedom of speech. Sayeeda recounted her experience:

I was in the most diverse Walmart on Earth and then the guy behind me which is so weird because he was a minority. He was probably African American or mixed. You could definitely tell he wasn't white...he looked at me and I was like whatever. That was a weird look but I don't care. Then he gets on his phone. He's like "yeah all these terrorists" and I'm like oh my God this guy is going to do something or he's going to try to get me to get mad. He's behind me doing this. He said, "we should just kill all of them. We just need to go over there and just have a big bomb and kill them all." Now, I turn around and I look at him and he acts like nothing happened. Then he just keeps going. I'm like oh my God should I say something. Then my sister, she like "no, no don't say anything. What if he tries to do something?" Then when I go on the line, I tell the Walmart lady, "just so you know I don't feel safe in your store. This guy is talking about

blowing people up and we need to blow up all the Muslims and I am Muslim.” Then he’s like “I never said anything. What are you talking about? I didn’t say anything.” I’m like “ma’am he’s talking about people in your line. Can I talk to a manager?” They’re just like “ma’am okay just take this and just go.”

When the person working at Walmart told Sayeeda to leave the store without addressing the harassment she endured, the individual forced Sayeeda to negotiate her existence in public spaces. Sayeeda’s lived experience mirrors Selod’s (2015: 15) argument that non-Muslim people, who believe Muslim women “do not have the same rights to public spaces as they do,” often dominate public spaces by verbally attacking hijab wearing Muslim women. The man felt he had a right to inhabit a public space and discuss his plan to exterminate the Muslim community in certain parts of the world.

Claire, a white woman in her forties who converted to Islam, fears for her safety as a Muslim woman in both private and public spaces. Claire’s fears have increased over the past year as she reads and hears stories about violence inflicted on Muslims. Violent recounts of Muslims facing harassment or being killed because of their religious choice has resulted in Claire no longer feeling safe. Claire discusses her fear:

I’m feeling fear in my own home that someone’s going to come and maybe shoot my home up or run me off the road or try to beat me up because I’m a Muslim woman. That’s how it’s affected me. It has brought fear into my life as a person where I never had fear in my life before. The fear has become very strong in the last six months to a year. It’s become a lot of fear because I see on social media women being attacked, a woman being beat up in a restaurant because she’s sitting with her husband and children wearing a scarf. I’m seeing women being killed. I’ve seen innocent young college students being

killed because of their religious choice. That's where some fear comes in that someone may try to kill me just for my religious choice.

Claire demonstrates the racialization a white woman experiences when she puts on the hijab. The process of racialization explains how the assignment of racial meaning to groups classified as white results in the group's inability to enjoy the privileges of whiteness (Selod and Embrick 2013: 647). For example, the hijab, with its ascribed meanings of anti-feminism and anti-Westernism, inhibits Claire from enjoying the privileges of her whiteness that previously allowed her to feel safe in the United States instead of constantly fearing harassment and death. Claire could escape the constant emotional reality of having to fear violent attacks because of her religious choice if she decided not to wear the hijab because she would pass for a non-Muslim. Before wearing the hijab, whites viewed Claire as an "insider" because of her whiteness, but now the hijab acts as a religious signifier of difference that "others" Claire as non-white.

Altering One's Life: Activities, Behaviors, and Appearance

Eleven of the 86 people who identified as a person of color or Muslim discussed how they have altered their life or their physical appearance during the 2016 presidential election. PrM have changed aspects of their lives and identity as a mechanism to avoid harassment. The alterations people made include: limiting movement, taking precautions when inhabiting public spaces, leaving places of employment, changing physical appearance, such as shaving one's beard, removing one's turban, or cutting one's hair, and even quitting the practice of a religion. The following quotes demonstrate how harassment forces prM to negotiate their existence in order to escape rejection and harassment in addition to physical and verbal violence.

"I should not feel like I should only go to the ethnic grocery store. I should be free to go

anywhere.” —Kali, Pakistani Woman in her forties who was a former Muslim

“When I video call with my mom and I have a big beard she gets scared a lot, ‘You have to shave your beard. Shave your beard.’ Sometimes people make jokes between us like, ‘Come one shave your beard people will think you are a terrorist’ ...like when I applied for US visa people told me, ‘Shave your beard or you are going to be rejected.’”

—Michael, a Muslim Middle Eastern man in his twenties

“I take precautions. Like right now, I was sitting in the car [and] I didn't see anybody. A couple of times, I went back [and] I parked again. Then, I drove over there. I didn't see anybody. I'm not ready even though there is no threat here. You have Muslim students, you have Muslim professors but I just don't want to take any chances.” —Fatima, a Muslim woman in her sixties who identifies as Asian

“I was working at Wells Fargo and the manager actually harassed me. One day she came to me and said, ‘You have a choice. You have to remove that [her hijab] or leave this job.’ I said, ‘What do you mean by that?’ She said, ‘I don't like your whole new appearance...I want you out of this company.’ She gave me no choice. I left” —Claire, a white woman in her forties who converted to Islam

“[Fear] is always a thought that's there all the time. Specifically right after events that happen lot of times, where you feel let's maybe not go to public places because you never know what could happen. Specifically I feel that elders, parents and grandparents, they

feel it a lot more and they advise you, ‘Hey, don’t’... There have been instances where folks in our community have taken their turban off and they’ve cut their hair because they thought they would blend in more in the regular society.” —Ahmed, a Sikh man in his forties who identifies as Asian

“I think that things are just getting really scary now to where a lot of people are like man I need to change my routine, I can’t go here anymore. [I] can’t do this. I can’t do that. People taking off their scarf now or talking about taking off their scarf. I know some people that have dropped Islam altogether actually.” —Sayeeda, a black Muslim woman in her twenties

The respondents who discussed shaving their beard, cutting their hair, and not wearing a turban or a hijab were taking part in what Patel (2005: 67) describes as a racial performance in which they were attempting to control how their fellow United States’ residents perceived, constructed and experienced their racialized identity. The respondents who changed their physical appearance were either taking part in passing or covering. According to Goffman (1963: 74), people who have the ability to *pass* will intentionally choose to do so because they benefit from conforming to the what society defines as “normal.” The respondents, who changed their physical appearance and could still not pass as a non-Muslim, partook in the process of covering their stigma. When a person covers their stigma by making alterations to their appearance, they minimize the physical presence of the stigma and therefore escape tensions when in public spaces (Goffman 1963: 102; Patel 2005: 70). In addition to altering physical characteristics, respondents changed their routines, such as not going certain places or taking extra precautions,

and even stopped practicing their religion. The fact that individuals felt forced to alter their lives to escape violence, harassment, marginalization and othering by society demonstrates the severe impact anti-Muslim sentiment has on the everyday lived experiences of prM.

Effects: Stripping prM of their Cultural Citizenship

Fifteen out of 86 respondents experienced people denying them access to cultural citizenship, which Ong (1996: 737) defines as a sense of belonging to the United States by non-Muslims living in the United States during the 2016 presidential election. When denied cultural citizenship, these respondents cannot enjoy the basic privileges, such as feeling that they have a right to live in the United States, afforded to people not read as Muslim. Non-Muslim individuals act as gatekeepers to cultural citizenship through what they say and how they interact or treat other prM. The ways that these gatekeepers have denied prM include: treating prM and people not read as Muslim differently, saying “go home,” and labeling someone a terrorist. Fatima, Ahmed, Khadijah, Martha, and Claire share their stories:

“It hurts because this is the only country I know now. I came here when I was 17 years old. I did all my high school and everything here. Now, when I go [out] at least once you will hear ‘Go back to your home.’” —Fatima, a Muslim woman in her sixties who identifies as Asian

“Often times I've heard, ‘Hey terrorist, get out of our country.’ It's the underlying assumption that people have, ‘you must be Muslim and you must be bad.’” —Ahmed, a Sikh man in his forties who identifies as Asian

“It’s just kind of the discomfort that you feel. Everybody is looking at you. Everyone thinks that you’re a refugee or foreign. I feel like it just comes with a kind of indifference that people aren’t as welcoming, they’re not as friendly to help you out with anything. I don’t care what people are thinking for the most part but the white people are staring at us.” —Khadijah, a white Muslim woman in her twenties

“We move around in society as Muslims, as Muslim women with a scarf on the head or with a religious garb. When you’re standing at HEB in line and you hear some comment and you have that sort of moment. Is the comment really directed at you because you’re wearing a scarf or is it my imagination? So I feel those moments are all over the place. I am definitely in a hyper vigilant or hypersensitive mode when I’m amongst people.” —Martha, white woman in her fifties who converted to Islam

“It’s affected me as an American because I’m not feeling safe in the land where I was raised, where I was born. It’s affected me to fear my own safety in my own home.”

—Claire, a white woman in her forties who converted to Islam

In contrast to Selod (2015: 9), who argues that fellow citizens deny Muslims a sense of belonging in society when they utter offensive statements such as “go back home,” I argue that gatekeepers deny both Muslims and prM of their cultural citizenship through offensive statements. Selod (2015: 5) defines a gatekeeper as a private citizen who maintains the boundaries of citizenship by extending or denying cultural citizenship to another person. For example, people telling respondents to “go back to your home” and “get out of our country”

stripped Fatima and Ahmed of their cultural citizenship. These statements insinuate that Fatima and Ahmed's home is not the United States, but rather some foreign country, resulting in their otherization and marginalization from the imagined "American." Fatima and Ahmed were not read as Americans because people racialized their bodies as "other." Although Selod (2015: 9) focuses on the hijab and how wearing it signifies anti-Western values, I argue that Ahmed's turban acts as a signifier of religious difference that symbolizes anti-Western values to some people in the United States. Gatekeepers target these signifiers of difference when deciding which individuals to extend cultural citizenship to and which individuals to deny access.

Compared to Fatima and Ahmed who were denied cultural citizenship through statements from others, both Khadijah and Martha describe their denial of cultural citizenship through how they experienced their bodies as "foreign" and "othered" in public and private spaces. For Khadijah, the perceived foreignness of her body resulted in people, especially white people, staring at her in public, making her very uncomfortable. Khadijah attributes how people constructed her body as the reason for why people were less friendly and did not desire to help her, resulting in her marginalization from mainstream society. When people do not interact with Khadijah in the same way that they would interact with "normal individuals," these individuals reinforce the notion that she does not belong. Martha also experiences this othering when people racialize her body because she wears a hijab. Unlike Khadijah and Martha, who spoke of their cultural citizenship being stripped in public, Claire experienced fear for her safety as a Muslim woman in private spaces.

Conclusion

The lived experiences of respondents in this thesis show how race continues to matter in the United States. Bonilla-Silva (2014: 1) argues in his book *Racism without Racists* that whites,

knowing that outright bigotry and racism is unacceptable today, argue that they do not see color, but rather that they just see people. The people of color and/or religious minorities in this study offer a very different racial reality in the United States. Instead of having the respondent's race or ethnicity ignored, prM's experiences with anti-Muslim harassment are a new example of color-blind racism. Similar to Trump's use of color-blind racism when he stated that the Muslim ban had "nothing to do with religion; it's about safety," the people who discriminated against our respondents would not frame their actions or statements as religiously or racially discriminatory (Santucci 2015). In contrast to what they may believe, these people were racially discriminating against our respondents. This harassment endured by prM structures and impacts their everyday lived realities with prM feeling like "outsiders" who do not belong in the white "insider" society. The "outsider" and "insider" dichotomy creates a racial division that produces more opportunity for racism.

The week after Election Day 2016, people reported 701 "incidents of hateful harassment," only 51 were identified as anti-Muslim.⁵ My findings suggest much higher incidences of hate crimes than officially reported. Although the respondents' claims of discomfort, bias or discrimination in this study fail to violate hate crime⁶ laws since they are not criminal offenses, the emotional and mental labor these prM exert to make it through their daily lives represents an injustice. I argue that the United States, a country that prides itself on its

⁵ See the article by the Southern Poverty Law Center <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/11/18/update-incidents-hateful-harassment-election-day-now-number-701>

⁶ The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines "a hate crime as a 'criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender or gender identity.'" See the FBI website for more information about the FBI's definition of a hate crime <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/civil-rights/hate-crimes>

promise of religious freedom, must address these injustices in order to ensure that all people living in the United States can live free of discrimination, harassment and violence.

Now that Trump is the President of the United States, his anti-Muslim campaign rhetoric has become mainstream. Therefore, future research proves necessary in order to study the impact, if any, that his rhetoric has the lives of prM in the years to come. I argue that future research needs to shift away from the Muslim/non-Muslim binary that dominates scholarship and instead focus on prM. By shifting to a prM framework, researchers can ensure that the study includes people who face harassment and do not allow individuals who pass as non-Muslim to skew the data.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Engagement Question

- 1) Tell me a little about yourself...anything you think is important.
- 2) Where do you get your news?

Political Rhetoric

- 3) In the Presidential campaign, there's been a lot said about Islam. What have you heard?
 - a. Are these issues being talked about in your social network?
 - b. When was the last time you heard a conversation about Islam?
 - c. Why do you think Islam is an issue in the campaign?
 - d. How much has the campaign affected your thinking?

Attitude Questions

- 4) Does this discussion around Islam remind you of any other political conversation in history?

#5, 6 and 7 IF NECESSARY:

- 5) Do you remember hearing about this story? *A few weeks ago, young man had boarded a plane on Southwest Airlines when he was overheard speaking Arabic on the phone. A passenger alerted a crew member, and the young man was escorted off the plane and not allowed to fly. It was later confirmed that he was a US citizen with no links to any terrorist organization.* How would you feel if you witnessed this?
- 6) And do you remember this? *A young couple, one American-born and the other Pakistan-born, shoot up a room full of people in San Bernadino, California, killing 14 and injuring 28 others. The FBI calls them "homegrown terrorists," motivated by sympathy with*

extremist Islamic groups. They were not shown to have any official ties to terrorists groups. Do you think this is different from other mass shootings in the US?

- 7) There is an argument that the police in the United States should be able to “stop and frisk” people they find suspicious. What do you think of this policy and would you support a similar policy for Muslims?

Personal History Question

- 8) I’m curious about how you’ve formulated your ideas about Islam.
- a. Do you know any Muslims?
 - b. Can you remember how old you were when you first heard about Islam talked about in politics?
 - c. Has your (education, church group, social group) been influential?
 - d. How do your opinions compare to your parents’ or other (community groups or the nation)?
- 9) Have you ever experienced fear around these issues?

Exit Question

- 10) Is there anything else I should have asked you or you would like to tell us about Islam or the election?

Appendix: Demographics

Characteristic		Number (Percent)
Gender	Male	83 (48%)
	Female	88 (51%)
Political Affiliation	Democrat	87 (50%)
	Republican	28 (16%)
	Independent	41 (24%)
Position on Fiscal Issues	Conservative	53 (31%)
	Moderate	54 (32%)
	Liberal	54 (32%)
Highest Degree Earned	Current student	28 (16%)
	Less than High School	3 (2%)
	High school or GED	39 (23%)
	BA	45 (26%)
	Advanced Degree	55 (32%)
Relative Income	Above \$140,000	11 (6.4%)
	\$110-140,000	30 (17%)
	\$80-110,000	11 (6%)
	\$50-80,000	31 (18%)
	\$20-50,000	32 (18%)
	Below \$20,000	24 (14%)
Religious Affiliation	Christian, all Protestant types	58 (34%)
	Catholic	21 (12%)
	Jewish	20 (12%)
	Muslim	24 (14%)
	Sikh	4 (2%)
Age	70 and above	31 (18%)
	50-70	59 (35%)
	30-49	34 (20%)
	Twenty-nine and below	45 (26%)
Race/Ethnicity	White	91 (53%)
	Hispanic	38 (22%)
	Black	13 (7%)
	Asian	9 (5%)
	Middle Eastern	9 (5%)