

RECONSTRUCTING THE NARRATIVES AROUND YOUNG MUSLIM MEN IN THE GTA

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ABSTRACT

Reconstructing the narratives around young Muslim men in the GTA

Master of Social Work, 2019

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This research explores the narratives of young Muslim men and challenges social work practitioners to be more critical about their own implicit biases towards them. Existing literature on young Muslim men have not focused on the positive narratives that I personally and professionally know of them. This research examined the harmful impact the historical and current master narrative has on young Muslim men. This was a qualitative study examining Canadian Muslim men. Participants were interviewed through open-ended questions to examine how they continued to thrive regardless of the problematic notions that surround them, the strategies they used to navigate to be successful and their self-perception. The findings present a compelling case for rethinking about the way young Muslim men are perceived, using orientalism in reconstructing how we perceive them. In conclusion, although themes were common amongst both participants, the experiences of young Muslim men cannot be generalized.

Key words: Young Muslim men, anti-Muslim racism, orientalism, narrative resistance, social work

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DEDICATION

This major research paper is dedicated to the Muslim community. I hope this serves as a reminder of how valid and significant our narratives are.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Young Muslim men are often represented as embodying a masculinity that is inherently dangerous and, more recently, associated with radicalization and terrorism (Sanghera, Thapar-Björkert & Humanistisk, 2012). These notions can influence the self-concept of young Muslim men, as stories shape individuals and what they can do. As a young Muslim woman who worked as a practitioner with predominantly young Muslim men as my service users, it was frustrating to hear the amount of negative remarks made towards them by other professionals. These remarks were often biased, as they constructed them as “aggressive” or “threatening” which impacted their education, emotional health and how they perceived themselves. As a member of the Muslim community, the issue of young Muslim men being perceived as problem-oriented is incredibly personal to me. The negative stereotypes of young Muslim men have detrimental and violent consequences for them in which I have personally witnessed men in my community being detained, randomly selected at airports while being held for several hours without any explanation, falsely accused of crimes they did not commit, and their names added onto the no-fly list. There have also been tragic events such as the Quebec mosque shooting in which six Muslim men were killed while praying (Canadian Press & Montreal Gazette, 2019). Most recently, another white supremacist murdered fifty Muslims in the New Zealand mosque massacre (Beydoun, 2019). The impact of Muslims being killed is not only a result of the normalization of white supremacy, but also a consequence of systemic Anti-Muslim bigotry that demonizes them. While this paper specifically focused on the context of Muslims in white settler colonies, it is significant that we are mindful of the Muslims unjustifiably killed by western imperialism in the global South as well.

Recently, Statistics Canada (2018) has announced new figures stating that attacks against Canadian Muslims are more than doubling. Hate crimes against Muslims in Ontario alone have increased by 207% which indicates the significance of engaging in research on the Muslim community (Statistics Canada, 2018). These numbers in addition to recent events such as the New Zealand mosque massacre emphasizes the dire need for us to educate the community on combating Anti-Muslim sentiments. I am focusing on young Muslim men as they are a generationally specific gendered category that remains an under-researched field of inquiry (Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 2018). Muslims make up 8.2% of Toronto's population (Canada Population, 2018) thus making it significant for social work practitioners to be well equipped with the appropriate skill set to provide support for the specific needs of young Muslim men. Additionally, the Muslim population in Canada is expected to triple over the next 20 years with Canadian Muslims being younger than other racialized groups with an average age of 28 (Wong, Macpherson, Vahabi & Li, 2017). There is minimal research available on the narrative resistance of young Muslim men in the GTA resulting in a massive gap in social work research on them. Narrative resistance can be defined as a concept that attends to power and oppression and provides a platform for tangible applications to support people's efforts to resist harmful stories of their lives (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017). In the context of my research, narrative resistance was used to include young Muslim men who challenge problematic discourses of Muslim men to shift the existing perspective on them. Dr. Barakat, a Muslim woman whose younger brother, sister-in-law and sister-in-law's sister were murdered in Chapel Hill due to anti-Muslim bigotry in 2015, discusses the significance of reclaiming our narratives, or we will be complicit in continuously being painted in a false manner (Richardson, 2018). There are consequences such as microaggressions, bullying, and violence that we are going to continuously

experience until we represent the ordinary Muslim narrative which is professional, community-service oriented and kind (Richardson, 2018). It is crucial that social work practitioners are aware and critical of the context that surrounds young Muslim men when working with them. After conducting an extensive literature review on young Muslim men, I have concluded that they have unfortunately been dismissed and ignored from social work research. This further indicates the significance of my research as these stories of resistance would bring forward stories that challenge the popular narratives that prevail about young Muslim men. While social work is critical of the marginalization of vulnerable groups, it should be called on to take a role in supporting young Muslim men.

The overall purpose of my research was to contribute to a broader understanding of young Muslim men in the GTA and challenge social work practitioners to be more critical about their own preconceived notions about young Muslim men. Sanghera et al. (2012) states, since 9/11 young Muslims have been talked at and talked for; they have not been talked to. Therefore, I gave young Muslim men the opportunity to reclaim their distinct stories by bringing forward their voices to shift the existing narrative about them. The specific objectives of my research include: contributing a critical piece of literature to social work research by providing narratives of young Muslim men who challenge problematic discourses surrounding them, understanding the challenges they have experienced in their journey and discussing how social work practitioners can best support young Muslim men. The major areas I explored when interviewing participants include, how they continued to thrive regardless of the problematic notions that surround them, the strategies they used to navigate to be successful and their perception about themselves.

Overall, in this chapter I have discussed the significance of my research especially with our current political climate in which hate crimes against Muslims are rising. This paper is intended to challenge one's implicit bias on young Muslim men and was used as a platform for voices that have quite often been dismissed.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter analyzes the existing literature pertaining to young Muslim men. I discuss the findings of the research studies, limitations of the existing research and situate my research within these gaps. There are four prominent themes in the literature reviewed: Muslim masculinity, effects of the political context on the lives of young Muslim men, the Muslim identity and the lack of contribution from the field of social work to the Muslim community. The literature reviewed mainly comprises of qualitative studies from a predominantly British context with a few research studies conducted in the Canadian context. Disciplines present in the literature include: International Migration & Integration, Sociology, Communication, Social Work, Geography, Interventions, Ethnicity and Nationalism.

Muslim masculinity

The first theme that was most prominent in the literature was around Muslim masculinity. Dwyer, Shah, & Sanghera (2008) state that their findings offer a “varied and contextual understanding of British Pakistani masculinities”. Their findings demonstrate Pakistani Muslim masculinities are defined in relational terms, to other ways of being Pakistani men and to being men in general, as well as to Pakistani femininities. Additionally, for these young men a firm grounding in their faith provides a foundation for their masculinity, which is both religiously observant and conformist. Sanghera et al. (2012) state, young Muslim women are engaged in a social criticism that entails reflecting on particular notions of men and masculinity within their community, by using education and faith as resources to challenge dominant representations of British Pakistani Muslim men. However, their critique is situated in their everyday experiences, and not influenced by political and media agendas; indeed, they are deeply suspicious of the

media and the state. This is not to say that the young women do not have an agenda because they do. The agenda is about resistance; they recognize how the behaviour of co-ethnic men affects them and their community. Hopkins (2006) discussed the understandings of the multiple natures of youthful Muslim masculinities. They concluded how in different settings and at different times, the young men performed hegemonic Muslim masculinities, thereby placing emphasis on patriarchy and aggression, yet at other times the young men displayed masculinities that were sensitive to the importance of various markers of social difference and respective of their parents' lives. Lastly, Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2018) identified the negative impact of neoliberalism on young Muslim men's educational experiences in relation to young men's negotiation of urban masculinity and the processes of gendering within schooling contexts.

Impacts of political context

The second theme in the literature is the role of the political context and how it impacts young Muslim men, specifically the state and the media. Pihlaja and Thompson (2017), discuss that the media has been a driving force behind negative stereotypes about Muslims, and this resulted in pressure on Muslims to present themselves in non-threatening and welcoming ways to others, despite being subjected to covert and overt discrimination which participants felt in various contexts. Moosa-Mitha (2009) found that western, secular welfare states such as Canada are severely restricted in their abilities to recognize, and thus address the social needs of faith-based communities such as those of Canadian-Muslims. Without wishing to fall into the trap of Muslim "exceptionalism", the political context particularly since the tragic events of 9/11 make it even more difficult for Canadian-Muslims to fully integrate as full and equal members of Canadian society. Hopkins (2007) draw on young Muslim men's reactions of the global, nation

and state following 9/11 and the subsequent war in Iraq. He also spoke about their experiences with mainstream politics, voting behaviour, membership of and/or opinions about political parties, entities, and events, as well as concerns about participation and understandings of these different situations. Hopkins (2007) seeks to create a dialogue between political participation and the geography of religion by exploring young Muslim men's views about the world of politics. Hussain and Bagguley (2013) discuss the changing experiences of British Pakistani Muslims after the July 7, 2005 London bombings which was a heightened focus of media and popular concern about 'terrorism' and suicide bombings. Many of the participants who were interviewed felt that they experienced the impact of a change in the attitude or mood of many non-Muslims towards them. Furthermore, Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2015) discuss that the Gulf War in 1991, 9/11, the London bombings in 2005 and numerous failed bomb plots have all continued to fuel fears about extremist Muslims, and the discourse conflates the issue of violent Muslim gangs. More specifically, European and British political commentators conflate educational underachievement, criminality and the Islamification of Europe through the notion of a Muslim underclass. These three issues form a dominant cultural narrative of young Muslim men that claims they are responsible for their own marginality.

Muslim identity

The third theme was the discussion around the Muslim identity. Amin (2014) states, the original action of challenging stigmatization of a given identity and its exclusion from the national imaginary (Muslim) has led to the fostering of multiple new identities (in this case, liberal Muslim, secular Muslim, progressive Muslim), which impose not only on the categorical group identity, but also on transforming the national imaginary further. The premise here is that

Canadian Muslims have rights, prior to the identification of their being Muslim, as Canadian citizens; as such, those rights cannot be denied on the basis of their difference in being Muslims (Amin, 2014). Isakjee (2016) states, the findings suggest that the identities of young Muslim men in Birmingham were not explained by a conflict between 'Britishness' and the Muslim faith. Instead, their sense of belonging was characterised by a contrast between their everyday lives, which are underpinned by attachments to local spaces and emphasise their inclusion, and the divisive political discourses that they encountered, which marked out the potential for their exclusion. Baer and Glasgow (2010) findings suggest that young Muslims negotiate their identities in their cultures, their countries and their Muslim lifestyles. They go on to discuss the idea of using young adult literature in education that accurately portrays Muslim cultures to introduce and shed light on learning critical elements of Muslim cultures. As students interrogate texts for Islamophobia and critically examine their own identities, they move beyond viewing cultural diversity as problems to be overcome toward seeing them as resources crucial to our society's ability to survive and thrive in a global society (Baer and Glasgow, 2010). Schmuck, Matthes and Paul (2017) reveals that right-wing populist ad exposure increases perceived discrimination, which in turn decreases young Muslims self-esteem and national identification. They also discuss, as young Muslims often face problems with competing social identities and discrimination due to their religion in Western societies, the developmental task of identity formation in the stage of early adulthood often represents a bigger challenge for them compared to non-Muslim members. Nagra and Maurutto's (2016) findings discuss how Muslim identities have become the new targets of the architecture of security, placing Muslims in precarious positions as they navigate through airports and borders. Borders in North America are sites where Muslim identities become targets of political processes that compromise humanity, human

rights and principles of liberalism. Lastly, Litchmore and Safdar (2015) argue that the Muslim identity is notably complex and Muslim traditions often differ depending on the cultural context, religious and ethnic group membership.

Lack of social work contribution

The last theme from the literature discussed the lack of contribution from the field of social work to the Muslim community. Graham, Bradshaw and Trew (2009) state, there is a deficiency of literature that examines Islam and social work. Only a few journal articles exist that have examined the influence of Islam on social work in relation to prayer, traditional healing, social transformation and Islamic conceptions of charity/social welfare. According to Kahn (2015), although social work literature has begun to explore the psychological and social needs of gender role non-conforming migrants in North America, to date, no social work studies related to the Islamic faith with this particular subset of Muslim migrants have been conducted. Further, Kahn has suggested to enhance understanding of the experiences of gender role non-conforming persons from the Muslim community in order to develop culturally responsive, spiritually competent practice and policy interventions with this often 'hidden' population. Barkdull, Khaja, Queiro-Tajalli, Swart, Cunningham and Dennis (2011) discuss that, there is a need for social workers to acknowledge and validate the many losses that have been experienced in Muslim communities since 9/11—losses that include disorienting shifts in social location and assaults on various facets of personal identity. Cunningham and Dennis (2011) participants encouraged social workers to find ways to reach out to Muslims in their own communities and to play an active role in partnering with Muslims through roles such as community developers. Cunningham and Dennis (2011) also state, social workers must take leadership in fostering a broad awareness of the stigmatization of Muslims and in framing this phenomenon as a social

justice issue. According to Scourfield, Warden, Gilliat-Ray, Khan and Otri (2013) a small body of literature has focused specifically on social work with Muslims, highlighting their service needs and suggesting how 'Islamic perspectives' may be integrated into practice. Overall, since there is relatively little work published in this field; the authors assert that there is a need for more social work texts dedicated to illuminating the needs of Muslim families in social work intervention. Shier and Graham's (2013) findings discussed that a few studies have looked at how community-based organizations that work with Muslim service users have responded to the changing sociopolitical context post 9/11. They also discussed that social work education could train students to better recognize and adapt to the implications of locality. Lastly, Graham, Bradshaw and Trew (2010) discuss how social service agencies risk becoming yet another instrument of western colonialism if they lack awareness, sensitivity, and competence around cultural nuances and complexities for the Muslim community. They also discuss how no one method will suit every Muslim client, so it is necessary for agencies working with Muslim clients to use a number of different approaches in service delivery while simultaneously educating and connecting clients with the broader community.

Limitations

There are many limitations of the knowledge produced from the epistemological paradigms and theoretical frameworks. Graham et al. (2009) state, the experiential-phenomenological model suggested here for culturally competent multicultural practice can of course be applied to other cultural groups as well. This statement is very problematic as firstly, Muslims are not a monolithic group, there are many sub-communities (i.e. Queer Muslims) amongst Muslims. To assume that some knowledges can be applied to other cultural groups is

grouping them as the same, when the experience of one Muslim subculture is not the same as the other. The second limitation was much of the literature further perpetuates the stereotype around young Muslim men. For example, Hopkins (2006) states, the young men performed hegemonic Muslim masculinities, thereby placing emphasis on patriarchy and aggression. This notion feeds into the stereotype of orientalism challenged by Said (1979) when he argues, the web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding Muslims is very strong indeed. It is dangerous to continuously frame young Muslim men around the notions the media perpetuates and we should instead be critical of the historical process which initially framed Muslim men as problematic. Lastly, half of the literature was written by white non-Muslim researchers. Baer and Glasgow (2010) state, “As a caveat, we want to explain from the beginning that we are white, middle class, non-Muslim women and thus understand that some might question our motives or ability to present these ideas” (p.24). Baer and Glasgow (2010) further give an example to defend their place as outsiders with the help of an example of a Muslim academic who had the opposite experience when teaching an undergraduate class called Understanding Islam: Religion and Politics. Some of their students said, “They would rather learn about Islam...from a person who does not have a stake in it, like an atheist” (Baer & Glasgow, 2010, p. 24). “So, knowing that there may not be a perfect way to teach these cultures, we nonetheless present our ideas” (Baer & Glasgow, 2010, p.24). I find this statement from white researchers problematic as they are stating that their knowledge is more valid because they can be more objective since they do not belong to the Muslim community. This erases the real lived experiences of Muslim researchers such as myself, which is harmful. White researchers need to be more critical of their positionality on this topic and especially their relation to it, instead of discrediting Muslim academics. Lastly, Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2015) discuss

how a key limitation was the extent to which the concept [Islamophobia] served to disconnect the Muslim community from a wider anti-racist movement and the historical benefits of a broader understanding of racialization. The process of the Muslim male being represented as an over-generalized racial ‘other’ is not contemporary as Islamophobia suggests, it has a historical context to it that must be mentioned.

The main limitation of the data collected by these research studies is the lack of diversity in terms of the individuals recruited. Majority of the participants recruited identified as South Asian. Hopkins (2006) was the only researcher to recruit a queer Muslim man, while Kahn (2015) was the only researcher to dedicate their article on the experiences of gay and lesbian Muslims. There were no voices of Black, trans or non-binary Muslims which is problematic. Ignoring the gender and ethnicity of participants further feeds into the narrative of young Muslim men solely being constructed as heterosexual, South Asian or Middle Eastern, when there is a diverse range of young Muslim men. Another limitation is that these researchers collected data without engaging with their participants prior to their study. Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera (2008) discuss the resistance of some of the young Muslim men in the interview process. One of the researchers in this article was challenged and assumed to be an undercover police officer. Additionally, a limitation Schmuck, Matthes, and Paul (2017) discussed that their sample underrepresents lower-educated young Muslims. Majority of the participants recruited from the literature are post-secondary students and professionals. This is a major limitation as it does not include the voices of those who do not have access to education, and further privileges “educated” voices. Lastly, there is also a lack of literature in the context of Toronto, with only three articles including Toronto into their research. I find this limitation particularly concerning because of the high numbers of Muslims living in Toronto.

Gaps in existing knowledge

There is no research available on the counter narratives of young Muslim men in the Greater Toronto Area. Therefore, in this major research paper I created new knowledge in the following ways: First, I focused on bringing forward narratives of young Muslim men who have been successful in the current context despite the prevailing stereotypes against them. My research questions include: How can the master narrative that perceives young Muslim men as problem-oriented which has a negative impact on how they are framed, be reconstructed in social work? How do young Muslim men resist these master narratives in their life? Second, I have used the framework of Orientalism that is specific to Muslim men. Said (1979) describes the Orient as: “Orientals are thereafter shown to be gullible, “devoid of energy and initiative,” much given to “fulsome flattery,” intrigue, cunning, and unkind to animals; Orientals cannot walk on either a road or a pavement (their disordered minds fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately, that roads and pavements are made for walking); Orientals are inveterate liars, they are “lethargic and suspicious,” and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race” (p.46). This framework allowed me to establish that the master narrative surrounding Muslim men is historical and grounded in Anti-Muslim sentiments in addition to a dangerous amount of prejudice towards Muslim men. Third, I contributed new knowledge by incorporating a diverse range of Muslim men’s voices. I hoped to recruit young Muslim men who are not Pakistani or Arab as most of the studies had participants that are ethnically Pakistani or Arab.

Overall, there is a common finding that has emerged from the literature that has stated the urgent need of comprehensive research that engages young Muslim men. In conclusion, the

literature review has also shown us that there is an urgent need to shift paradigm of anti-Muslim racism through reclaiming narratives that speak to our strengths.

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I am read by many people as a champion of Islam, which is complete nonsense. I wasn't trying to defend Islam. I was simply talking about a very specific form of activity: representation. (Edward W. Said, 2014, p. 500).

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework that informed my study and explains the relevance of the framework to my research. The theoretical framework that has been used to inform this research study is Orientalism. Thompson (2016) states, Said's Orientalism remains the most famous and influential critique of discourse about Islam. Orientalism can be defined as a framework that is used to make the peoples of the Middle East and Muslims appear different and threatening (Said, 1979, p.9). Orientalism explores the question of why, when we think of young Muslim men, we have a preconceived notion of who they are, their beliefs and how they inherently act. The central argument of Orientalism is that the way we acquire knowledge is not innocent or objective, rather it is the end result of a process that reflects certain interests. Said argues that the way the West, Europe and the U.S. looks at Muslim men is through a lens that distorts the actual reality of these people (Jhally, 2005).

As Said (1979) has stated, there is a particular discourse around the people of the East: "The East has been signified as a danger/threat; the orient is viewed by films, T.V, media, standardized mold, cultural stereotyping" (p. 27). This is a prime example of how Muslim bodies, particularly young Muslim men, are deemed as the orient, outcast or other in the public, and how these false ideologies and assumptions have eventually led to how mainstream society constructs the image of young Muslim men. Said (1979) also states, the web of racism, cultural

stereotypes, political imperialism and dehumanizing ideology towards Arabs and Muslims is very strong indeed (p. 27).

In this major research paper, Orientalism was used to understand and explain the foundation of how young Muslim men have been constructed as problem-oriented by the dominant group and the detrimental impact it has had on them. It is significant to understand the historical roots of where this notion emerged from. Meer (2014) states, historically, vilification of the Prophet and of the Muslim faith is central to how the West has expressed hatred for Muslims and has led to violence and expulsion on a large scale. This was a common tactic that was also used to justify the war on terror. Secondly, Moosavi (2015) states, stereotypes are often historic such as that Islam/Muslims are violent, barbaric and oppressive. These stereotypes are unfortunately still very much present today. Lastly, Thompson (2016) stated that the history of Western thought about Muslim society had been fundamentally shaped by its ties to imperial culture. Said (1979) went on to describe 'Orientalist bias': Muslim culture/religion is seen in contrast to Western and Judeo Christian culture/religion, as a means of exerting Western dominance. The idea of Muslims being the 'other' has been an ongoing justification for treating young Muslim men unjustly.

As per the discussion and statements I have stated above, Orientalism is significantly relevant to my major research paper. The rationale for having used Orientalism as my theoretical framework instead of Islamophobia is because Said's work has demonstrated that the historical process of Anti-Muslim bigotry has existed well before 9/11 took place. Meer (2014) states, Orientalism has often been translated into Islamophobia across literatures that span the recent proliferation of writing on Islamophobia. As Saeed (2019) states, the term Islamophobia as a

concept lacks depth, as it does not encompass the entirety of the experience of anti-Muslim bigotry. It does not help us understand how that bigotry is expressed through popular culture and the media, in addition to how ubiquitous distrust and fear of Muslims and Islam actually is (Saeed, 2019). Therefore, it would be a disservice for me to use the framework Islamophobia when anti-Muslim bigotry has been alive well before the Middle Ages; Christian crusaders massacred Muslims in the aftermath of capturing Jerusalem in July 1099 (Fernando, 2017). Lean (2014) also states, “This historical treatment, though not detailed, is valuable in revealing the dark underbelly of European (and later American) discourses on Islam and Muslims. It configures contemporary policies within a long arch of self-serving initiatives, all of which were aimed at advancing Western influence and securing Western interests” (p. 146). Examples of literature that has been reviewed for this paper that discusses the concept of Orientalism includes Sanghera (2012), Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2018) and Barkdull, Khaja, Queiro-Tajalli, Swart, Cunningham, & Dennis (2011). Orientalism is the only theoretical framework that is critical of the historical context that allows Muslim men to be demonized presently. Furthermore, it explains the process of why in the current context young Muslim men are being constructed as problem-oriented.

Overall, it was most appropriate to use this framework for my research as it authenticates the narrative resistance of young Muslim men. Additionally, this framework allowed me to critically comprehend the lived experiences of young Muslim men and the strategic ways they resist the master narrative that surrounds them.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research design, approach of inquiry, sources of information, recruitment/sampling techniques, data collection methods/instruments, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Approach of inquiry

Grounded in qualitative methodology, this research used narrative inquiry; specifically, the approach of narrative resistance. I decided to use a qualitative methodology because as Lewis and Granzka (2016) state, “Qualitative methods enable researchers to construct questions that seek to explore the complexities of individuals lived experiences and situate their experiences in a cultural context” (p. 45). The purpose of my research was to not only understand the complex experiences of young Muslim men, but also their distinct narratives. I used a narrative inquiry because, “A narrative inquiry fits with an epistemological stance in a way that impacts a person’s life by scrutinizing power and structure. Storytelling is a compelling strategy used by marginalized groups to understand a person’s life” (Bell, 2017, p. 1137). The popular narrative surrounding young Muslim men has vilified and dehumanized them. If a narrative is repeated often enough it is solidified in the minds of the masses and perceived as being truthful (Muslim Public Affairs Committee, 2019). Braddock and Dillard (2016) conducted a meta-analysis in relation to the impact of stories and what effect they have on people. The findings revealed that narratives can indeed impact the audience’s beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviours (Muslim Public Affairs Committee, 2019). Slater and Rouner (2002) conducted research in relation to the extent in which narratives can influence people’s opinions and attitudes (Muslim Public Affairs Committee, 2019). The outcome was that the more people identify with a character, the more likely they will accept opinions expressed by the character as being truthful. The rationale behind

using a narrative resistance was because it provides a platform to support people's efforts to resist harmful storying's of their lives (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017). Young Muslim men are marginalized individuals whose narratives are not heard of in research which is why a narrative resistance best suited my major research paper. In the context of my research, the narratives of young Muslim men can plant ideas, change minds and reveal the truth about them (Muslim Public Affairs Committee, 2019). Muslims were and are great inventors, intellectuals and contribute heavily to society on a daily basis, but the Anti-Muslim narrative does not allow society to acknowledge this (Muslim Public Affairs Committee, 2019). Therefore, the purpose of my participants narratives was to reclaim their own stories of overcoming the stereotypes that exist about them and being successful in their life.

Source of information

This major research paper was based on primary source of information, which was information based on young Muslim men. The purpose behind using primary source of information was that I wanted to bring forward the voices and stories of resistance of young Muslim men as the literature revealed that there is very minimal research available on young Muslim men in the Greater Toronto Area.

Recruitment and sampling technique

The sampling technique that was used was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used as it is the deliberate process of selecting respondents based on knowledge of a population with some predetermined characteristics in mind and their ability to provide the needed information (Padgett, 2017, p.67). This form of sampling best fit this research study as the participants provided rich descriptions and authentic counter-narratives of their experiences. I selected specific participants who identify as young Muslim men, between the ages of 18-29, are

from the Greater Toronto Area, identify as Canadian citizens and have been successful in challenging the mainstream perceptions about them. This was revealed through the progress they have made in their career. I am focusing on young Muslim men who are 18-29 years old as the experiences of youth are often overlooked, and young men are generally deemed as rebellious, careless or irresponsible based on their age. The sample size was two participants for the interviews.

Recruitment was conducted informally through flyers in Muslim dense areas including mosques, Islamic centres, organizations that serve the Muslim community, the prayer room at Ryerson University, Islamic conferences and Islamic schools. Interested participants were provided with my email address and were able to contact me by their preferred method. This method provided an initial consent by participants to share contact information with me and for them to ask any further questions. Further written consent was followed upon agreement to participate in an interview. Please refer to the recruitment material that is attached in the appendix.

Data collection methods and instruments

The data collection method I used was a narrative interview which was a very informal conversational method of eliciting participant stories and allowed the participants to define on their own terms their distinct narratives. The interviews ranged from one to one and half hour. Interviews were audio recorded with consent from the participant. I also used probing questions to guide the conversation to elicit the narratives.

The data collection instrument I used was a qualitative interview guide. Although there was a list of probing questions involved; interview guides allowed there to be room for the conversation to be adapted to the current interview taking place. An interview guide was best suited for my major research paper because this topic and the approach being a narrative resistance, fits a conversation style instead of answers to structured questions. I also tailored the questions to the participant once I established rapport with them in order for them to be able to tell their counter narrative in their own way.

It was significant for me to pay attention to the process of rapport building especially when asking such personal questions to individuals who belong to the same community as me. Additionally, I ensured I remained culturally appropriate especially being a young Muslim woman, it was significant for me to sit at an appropriate distance from the participant and have another member from our community close by. Data collection instruments are attached in the appendix.

Data analysis

Data analysis is about representing an issue or a community and how they get treated as we represent them (Creswell, 2013). Transcribing the interview provided me with the opportunity to insert explanations or clarification and obtain timely feedback. Participants were given the opportunity to review/edit their interview transcripts to change/approve the information being used for this research study via email. Transcriptions were left in their original wording as the participants had the right to have their stories without any editing.

The method of data analysis that was used is thematic analysis. A thematic analysis involves focusing on the content, of ‘what is said’ and reviewing each transcript (Riessman, 2008). After each transcript has been reviewed, the researcher identifies the themes and codes the data (Riessman, 2008). Selected parts of the narratives can be chosen to show the patterns in the research and allow for the different stories to be compared (Riessman, 2008). A thematic analysis has been chosen for this research study because it provides a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of the data (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013) which would be the most appropriate approach since I will be only interviewing two participants. Clearly, thematic analysis involves the search for and identification of common threads that extend across an entire interview or set of interviews (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013).

Ethical considerations

I ensured that both of my participants attended on the basis of voluntary participation in my research study. I transcribed the interviews as they were audio-recorded, and the participants were given pseudonyms. I also made sure that the participants completed a consent form and the participant was aware of what information will be obtained and how it will be used and published. Additionally, I ensured that research participants have been fully informed about the possible risks and procedures that are involved in the research. I maintained privacy and confidentiality, ensuring that the study does not reflect any identifying information of the participants, and pseudonyms were used in exchange for real names.

In conclusion, I have discussed how I used a narrative resistance, a primary source of information, purposive sampling, a narrative interview/interview guide, a thematic analysis to analyze the data and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 5. MAJOR FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the profile of my participants, major findings, and themes based on the two interviews I have conducted. Four major themes emerged from the data on the participant's narrative resistance of being young Muslim men. The first major theme was religion as a foundation of life. The second major theme was the influence of parents as role models. The third major theme that emerged was a sense of responsibility and accountability. The last major theme that emerged was being an active member of community.

Profile of Participants

The first participant, Ahmed, was a Canadian citizen in his late twenties who was ethnically Sri Lankan. He has a bachelor's degree and is currently working towards becoming a chartered professional accountant. He lives and works in the Toronto area. He also takes part in a podcast with his cousin where they have discussions on different topics. He shared his story of resistance through grounding himself in Islamic teachings.

The second participant, Jaleel Southwell, was a Canadian citizen in his late twenties who was ethnically Indian. He has a master's degree and is currently a manager. He lives and works in the Etobicoke area. He also enjoys being involved in sports. He shared his story of resistance through grounding himself in taking a high degree of responsibility and accountability for himself.

Major Findings

I present below the major findings gathered from Ahmed and Jaleel Southwell thematically.

Religion as a foundation of life

Prior to interviewing participants, the first few questions were related to demographic information. One of the main themes identified in the data analysis was religion. This was described by both participants in different ways. One of the participants explicitly stated how he used Islamic teachings to ground himself while the other participant unknowingly described values that align closely with Islam. When asked about how they thrive regardless of the stereotypes that exist about Muslim men, Ahmed stated the following:

“With regards to my life, I've sort of used these Islamic teachings to negate those stereotypes. So basically, especially with regards to the prophetic teachings, like acting, like how the Prophet peace be upon him, acted with regards to other people or other races and religions, he actually acted with a pretty kind demeanor, and he was so calm in his speech. And that's kind of how I sort of think about whenever I act with other people, I always sort of have a smile on my face, I always think before I act. I've never really encountered any problems in like doing those, when following through with those Islamic teachings ... I think just having that strong foundation, and then really knowing your religion and not, not adopting like some of the negative...not internalizing it, but knowing your religion enough to know what's right, and what's wrong... knowing that, like the terrorism is wrong, because some people fall into that trap to right.”

When Jaleel was asked the same question, he stated the following,

“Having a good deep-rooted value system, which allows you to, on a long-term basis allows you to thrive and allows you to create healthy communities, healthy families, foster good relationships, and have good partners, is what my definition of thriving is.”

Ahmed was able to explicitly state how he used Islamic teachings as a form of resistance and provided me with solid examples. Jaleel described on many occasions values that strongly align with Islam. It was until I provided him with this correlation that he was aware of how what he described is also aligned with strong Islamic values. Jaleel also stated:

“I still consider my life and my path, my relationship with my religion to be in continuity. I'm always trying to find a different way to be a better Muslim itself. But I try to remind myself that the problem is really bigger than that.”

Ahmed clearly identified Islam as being a form of guidance and foundational for him, while Jaleel was applying Islam into his life, it had to be brought to his notice. Additionally, Jaleel stated,

“I may be a Muslim man with problems, but I'm not the only man with problems. And I'm not, and I don't necessarily have problems, because I'm a Muslim man, but I have problems because everybody has problems, and everybody has challenges.”

Jaleel normalized his experience as not being distinct to his identity of being a Muslim man but being a human being in general. It is important to note that Islam is fluid and the journey between both participants are different. Overall, Islam is a lifestyle and strength that both participants have used to navigate their resistance.

Influence of parents as role models

During both interviews, the participants repeatedly discussed the significant role their family, specifically the roles their parents played for them. They discussed family in many aspects of their life such as how it impacted their work ethic and their relationship with their partners. Jaleel mentioned observing the strong role his mother took which was very influential for him. Ahmed mentioned how his parents have both played a strong role for him. When asked about who they deem their role models, Ahmed stated the following,

“To me personally, my parents are pretty good role models. I feel like they do their best to shine a positive light on Islam and the image of Muslims/Islam in general because to me, I know that it's all about Muslim men...but behind every man is a woman. I think my parents do, like, they defend me, as well, as they know, their perspective, they've gone through life. They lived their life here. My dad grew up in England, so they know their perspectives. They know how to act with other people, and they know, different sides of the coin. And that sort of propels me to learn about this to navigate the stereotypes and sort of dispel them as well.”

Jaleel went on to answer the same question by beautifully stating:

“You know my only true role model in my life has been my mother, I have a high level of respect for my mother, because of the way she was able to morph into a sort of alpha female figure for me. Whether she wanted to be that or not, she demonstrated an impeccable level of work ethic, she demonstrated a high level of high degree of resolve in her life. She was creative. And she set the bar very high for me, when it came to making something out of myself. And when I observed her making so many sacrifices, in her own life, and going through what she did, immigrating. And really, every single time she fell down, she landed back on her feet. And it really gave me no excuse. Because when I look back at my mom, an immigrant woman from the South Asian community, with no support whatsoever, from her partner, and I see how resilient she was, it gives me no excuse to believe that I can never land on my feet, or that I have no opportunity to do the same. If not way better.”

These two quotes highlight the significant role families play in the lives of these young Muslim men. Jaleel spoke quite often about the example his mother played for him in his life throughout his interview. Their families example of resiliency have propelled them with the support and foundation they needed in order to succeed.

Sense of responsibility & accountability

One of the recurring themes I have observed in the interviews with both participants is the accountability they place on themselves in being heavily responsible for their actions. This applies to carrying themselves as young Muslim men and in terms of how they managed to be successful. Ahmed stated the following when asked what he would suggest for other young Muslim men:

“The first thing, the most important thing is, again, to just be courteous. Don't think everyone is being out to get you. Because they probably just have their own views. And just to understand the other person's views, you have to like, you have to talk to them actually you can't just say, this person is just against me, because I'm Muslim. People sort of need to make the effort and say, Okay, why don't you like me? Or why don't you agree? Or why do you have this stereotype against me as a young Muslim man? Rather than saying, okay, you just hate me? [Laughs]. Trying to strike up conversation, just with any, any person just to see how their day is going. That could really strike a chord with somebody, and then they probably may be able to resonate with you. Let's change their perspective on Muslims in general... I feel like I do, hold myself accountable. I guess. Just to

change sort of, to be able to change the way the political landscape is, maybe we have to start at the grassroots level or anything like that.”

Jaleel stated the following when asked the same question:

“What I always preach to younger men in general, not just younger Muslim men is a high sense of responsibility for the decisions you make, being conscious of not just making the right decisions and choices but being conscious of the inactions and, lack of decisions you make as well. Because it's really up to any individual, in my opinion, to really take responsibility for themselves. When people start to place blame, outside of themselves and try to look for things to assign accountability to, they remove themselves from the problem. They remove themselves from the responsibility they have, towards themselves, towards other people, towards your society, their community, their family, their partners. And that just starts to become the norm. And in my experience that was, that becomes the norm, that becomes the standard. And I think not enough people that have that thought process, come naturally, because I think that really allows you to set goals for yourself, kind of look to the future. And think of who you want to be. And think about what you want to strive for. That's what I was trying to go for. It all comes from like this, this thought process of not being complacent.”

This shows how instead of both participants expecting larger structures such as the Anti-Muslim industry and structural racism to change, or even holding them accountable, their form of resistance is through their behavior- by focusing on conducting themselves in a responsible way. This high level of responsibility they place on themselves has allowed both participants to do exceptionally well in their career.

Being an active member of community

The final theme that emerged from the participant's interviews was the significant role of the community in terms of going back to the community for support and in return positively contributing to the community. Ahmed stated the following:

“Talking to different, talking to friends and family about how to deal with the stereotypes, because they also have come back, maybe they've gone through similar situations. And maybe they understood that perspective. Like, for example, say, there are a lot of incidents in England, where there have been, like, anti Muslim riots and stuff. And maybe somebody has gone through or somebody has seen that firsthand. And they, maybe they know, the other side of the story. Maybe they know one side. And you can try to piece it together to see how to sort

of react or how to navigate those stereotypes...There are so many skills that we need other than just knowing our religion to live in this world, right and to contribute to society. And the contribution to society is what's going to challenge it [stereotype] too. Right? If they see Muslim men in all these positions of power for one, like being part of the political climate. And like, parliament and stuff like that. And then just regular roles, even if it's government or like bank, retail, whatever, they know, we're human too, [Laughs]. And not just like, it humanizes us, right. And yeah, just thinking we are not just one stereotype, it gives them a different image of who we are as a person.”

The second participant stated the following:

“If you raise the value of somebody else and make them better, they're going to make it better during the game. And that makes everybody better. Yeah, everybody becomes better, you know what I mean? If you're not conscious of that, that you can add value to the people around you, whether that's your family, whether its your co workers today. That's just something, this is such an important lesson. For you to be aware, if you can, you need to stop and find the time. I really want to foster great relationships, I want to foster, you know, not just short-term wealth, but wealth that supersedes generations and really allows people to thrive as not just on a family level, but within their own immediate society.”

It is clear that contribution to communities is significant to both participants as they both see the significance of lifting others up in addition to the importance of learning from them.

When participants spoke about their own personal narratives, their interpretation and understanding of stereotypes around Muslim men were vastly different. Ahmed’s interpretation was through the stereotypical images the media portrays around young Muslim men. Jaleel interpreted it through cultural stereotypes of Muslim men, such as Muslim men being authoritative towards their families.

To conclude, findings in this study indicate that the two participants interviewed are confident in themselves which was the overarching foundation that allowed them to be resistant against the stereotypes that surround young Muslim men. Their strong grounding in religion allowed them to identify as young Muslim men which in turn, did not allow them to be impacted

by what mainstream society falsely accuses Muslim men of being. Their positive role models in their families inspired them and as the second participant stated, set the bar very high for him, which then led him on the path to success. Both participants have a high degree of self-awareness and critical thinking skills which allowed them to make positive decisions in their life and then excel in their professions. Lastly, supporting others in their community came from a place of them wanting others to do well and learning teachings from individuals in their communities.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

This chapter will be discussing the findings, implications for social work practice and on self. The aim of my research was to bring forward stories that challenge the popular narratives that prevail about young Muslim men. My research has focused on how young Muslim men continue to succeed despite the stereotypes that surround them. The theoretical framework that I used was orientalism. The central argument of orientalism is that the way we acquire knowledge is not innocent or objective, rather it is the end result of a process that reflects certain interests.

Discussion of findings

My findings critically challenge the historical and contextual perception of young Muslim men by showing that they are in fact community service oriented, kind and successful contributing members to society. When we reflect upon why, is it that young Muslim men have been constructed through such a distorted lens historically and presently as the literature discusses, it is because it is easier to dehumanize a group of Muslims when there is an (inaccurate) justification to support it. For example, when we are to look critically at the war on terror and its impact on largely Muslim bodies, the justification for invading Iraq was to find weapons of mass destruction (Centre for feminist foreign policy, 2017). Today's evidence has proven that these weapons of mass destruction do not exist and that this persistence to colonize predominantly Muslim countries has been built upon a plethora of myths and fabricated narratives (Centre for feminist foreign policy, 2017). Therefore, my findings bring forth the real narratives of young Muslim men as stated by them and challenge the mainstream master narrative which has been put forth in order to benefit certain interests.

My findings support only two of the articles from the literature reviewed in addition to orientalism. Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera (2008) findings state, “our study illustrates the significance of family in the lives of young British Pakistani men and the different ways in which they negotiate their understandings of familial gender relations” (p.131). Graham, Bradshaw and Trew (2010) stated, as a result, a number of respondents indicated that agencies and practitioners should explore the role of family for individual clients and respect the significance placed on the family structure to the greatest extent possible. These two articles in addition to my findings reiterate the significant role families play in the lives of young Muslim men. With regards to the rest of my findings, the literature did not discuss the significant role Islam plays for young Muslim men, the high degree of responsibility/accountability young Muslim men place upon themselves in addition to the significant role community plays for young Muslim men.

Said argues that the way the West, Europe and the U.S. looks at Muslim men is through a lens that distorts the actual reality of these people (Jhally, 2005). My findings strongly support Said’s framework orientalism as my participant’s narratives clearly portray an image of Muslim men that are hardly acknowledged- successful and confident professionals who are making a positive contribution to society. My findings also go beyond the existing literature and authenticate the arguments Said has been making about Muslim men through orientalism. They seek to understand how they navigate within their identity and political context, but not how they have been resistant and their many positive contributions. The new knowledge my major research paper offered was the raw lived experiences of young Muslim men, with no individual speaking on behalf of them. Although my major research paper only focused on two individuals, their narratives provide significant insight about the influences and supports social work practitioners could be providing to Muslim youth they may be engaging with in their agencies. In

doing so, the findings also provide social work practitioners with the opportunity to be more critical about their own implicit biases on young Muslim men.

Implications for social work education

With regards to social work education, I would argue that the Bachelor of Social Work program should offer a course on Anti-Muslim racism which discusses the history of Anti-Muslim bigotry, how it has manifested into our current context and how we are implicated in it. This would allow social work practitioners to be critically aware of their own biases around the Muslim community.

Implications for social work practice

As one of the major themes from the literature has stated, there is a lack of contribution from the social work field to the Muslim community. Cunningham and Dennis (2011) make an excellent point by stating, participants encouraged social workers to find ways to reach out to Muslims in their own communities and to play an active role in partnering with Muslims through roles such as community developers. With Muslims making up 8.2% of Toronto's population (Canada Population, 2018) it is vital for social work practitioners to be well equipped with the appropriate skill set to provide support for the specific needs of young Muslim men.

With regards to social work practice, there are many Islamic centres and worship places that offer programming to the Muslim community; social workers who work with a high demographic of Muslims should connect with these organizations and ask them what support they can provide them with. Additionally, there are organizations such as Rivers of Hope who offer Anti-Islamophobia workshops for high school students and community organizations.

Education is the most effective strategy that would allow people to be more critically aware around their own Anti-Muslim biases.

Implications for social policy

Lastly, on a policy level there have been motions brought forward such as M-103 which aims to call on the government to condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism/religious discrimination. This motion asks the government to recognize the need to quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear and requests the commons heritage committee to study how the government could develop a government-wide approach on reducing or eliminating systemic racism and religious discrimination (Harris, 2017). With an absurd amount of backlash, this motion was passed in 2017. Social workers who claim to be anti-racist and are working towards social justice must take part in condemning Anti-Muslim racism on a macro level.

Overall, according to Ipsos Public Affairs poll that was released in May 2019, three out of ten Canadians stated that they believe the stereotypes about Muslims (Dangerfield, 2019). This proves that a significant amount of Canadians lack awareness and a critical analysis around the Muslim community. Additionally, when we have individuals on the justice committee such as conservative MP Michael Cooper quoting the Christchurch shooter to a Muslim witness during a parliamentary hearing, we must hold these unethical individuals accountable (The Canadian Press, 2019). Social work education, practice and policies need to be reformed in order to end Anti-Muslim bigotry and especially the misconstruction of young Muslim men. We must also be critical of the intersection of anti-black racism, the LGBTQ community, and undocumented Muslims as young Muslim men are impacted by a variety of intersections. My

research which is bringing forth stories of resistance around young Muslim men is a start in moving forward.

Implications on self

My research journey has been bittersweet. As a young Muslim woman, I am passionate about writing on a topic that is so personal to me and am mindful of the privilege I hold with this opportunity. Alternatively, it has also been very difficult for me to read statistics about the hate crimes and injustices that have been committed against the community I belong to. Most recently, a white man who murdered three young Muslims has been jailed for life (BBC News, 2019). He has not been charged with hate crimes despite the fact that they were targeted for their religion (BBC News, 2019). The continuous minimization of Anti-Muslim violence is disheartening and reiterates which bodies are deemed as valuable. When reading about cases such as this where young Muslims have been murdered for the simple fact that they identify as being Muslim, makes me concerned for the men in my community I care for such as my younger brother, cousins, grandpa and nephews. It makes me worry about their safety and the loss that Muslim families have experienced is unfathomable for me.

When I witness the accomplishments that the young Muslim men I know have made; graduating from university, maintaining excellent professions, their support and kindness towards me, I always hope that others can witness their contributions. The purpose of this research was not to normalize or humanize young Muslim men through a lens of whiteness, my goal was to take back the narratives that are being written about us. The findings in this research are not to reinforce an alternative narrative of model minority; but instead, if we do not construct our own stories, we are going to face the insufferably consequence of others (inaccurately) writing it on behalf of us.

Therefore, my rationale in selecting these participants was to provide a positive example for other young Muslim men. My intention was to show that we as Muslims can speak for ourselves and it is unacceptable for folks to make false accusations against us or speak over us. I have learned that there is an exceeding amount of potential within our community, that our tool kit to thrive is grounded within our religion and if we are privileged enough, following the role models within our families. To conclude, this research is only a step in moving forward as there is a substantial amount of work to be done.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

While reflecting on my concluding thoughts on this research, my initial incentive was driven by my own personal experience of being Muslim and witnessing unjust treatment towards the young Muslim men I have worked with. The existing literature did not encompass the positive narratives that I personally and professionally know of young Muslim men. As well, the literature available that included the narratives of young Muslim men was problematic as it further perpetuated stereotypes around them, in addition to half of the literature being written by white researchers who did not identify as being apart of the Muslim community.

The purpose of my research was to create a space where voices that are often spoken for could share their narratives and contribute to current literature to centre their lived experiences as young Muslim men. Although this research only consisted of two participants, my intention was to highlight the importance of reclaiming our own narratives and why more research in this area is needed. Both participant's narratives belong to them and cannot be generalized to all young Muslim men. The results of this research tell us that when working with young Muslim men it is significant to understand that all Muslims are different and when working collaboratively with them as social work practitioners we must keep in mind their distinct experiences. I hope that in the future there is further research completed within various Muslim ethnic groups as this research was limited to South Asian Muslims.

My findings highlight the significant role religion plays, the importance of positive role models in families, how young Muslim men hold themselves responsible/accountable and the learnings we can acquire from communities. What is important for future research in this area is to ensure that the narratives of young Muslim men are seen as valid locations for knowledge, in addition to not generalizing their narratives to other cultural groups. We all hold implicit biases

about young Muslim men and we must be critically conscious of it. To end, I ask you as a reader to critically analyze your own biases; what is the narrative you believe about young Muslim men?

APPENDIX

Recruitment Email

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well.

My name is Huda Hussain. I am a graduate student at Ryerson University in the Social Work Department. I am contacting you to see if you might be interested in participating in a research study.

This research is being done as part of my master's project with my supervisor, Dr. Purnima George. The focus of my research is to give young Muslim men the opportunity to share their stories by bringing forward their voices to challenge the negative stereotypes about them. Current research has focused on media representation, how young Muslim men are problem-oriented and "othered" by society. Through this research, I hope to contribute to a broader understanding of young Muslim men in the GTA and how social workers can work towards a more inclusive practice with this demographic.

To participate you need to be a young Muslim who identifies as a male between the ages of 18-29, resides/works in the Greater Toronto area and a Canadian Citizen. Additionally, potential participants will need to perceive themselves as questioning the negative mainstream perception of Muslim men.

If you agree to volunteer, you will be asked to participate in a one-time interview for 2 hours. In appreciation of your time, you will receive a \$20 CF gift card and reimbursed with a monetary fund for TTC. Location of the study will be determined by the participant or provided by the researcher at Ryerson University.

If you are interested in more information about the study or would like to volunteer, please feel free to reply to this email. Please note, participation is completely voluntary and will not impact participants' relationship with myself, Ryerson or anyone who has relayed you this message. The research has been reviewed and approved by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. The research file number is 2019-016.

2

Warmly,

Huda Hussain

MSW Student, BSW, SSW

Demographic Survey

The following information will contribute to this research study in considering the diverse experiences of participants. All information collected will be generalized and no identifying data will be present in the final publication. The purpose in stating your email address is solely for communication purposes based on the study between the participant and the researcher.

1. Age:
2. Citizenship/immigration status:
3. E-mail Address:
4. Education level:
5. Ethnicity:

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Reconstructing the narratives around young Muslim men

Are you:

- A young Muslim who identifies as a male, between the ages of 18-29 years old who lives or works in the Greater Toronto Area?
- A Canadian Citizen who questions the mainstream perception of Muslim men?

If you answered yes to the above noted question you may volunteer for this study. The study will give young Muslim men in the GTA the opportunity to bring forward their experiences and voices.

What does this study involve?

You will be asked to participate in a one-time individual interview for 2 hours. Your participation is completely voluntary. You will be compensated for your participation with a \$20 CF gift card and a monetary fund for TTC. Location of the study will be determined by the participant or provided by the researcher at Ryerson University.

Please note: This research is being done as part of my master's studies

If you are interested in participating, in this study, or would like more information, please contact:

Huda Hussain, Master of Social Work Student
Email: huda1.hussain@ryerson.ca

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board [2019-016]

Interview Guide

1. Tell me your story of how you thrive regardless of the stereotypes that exist about Muslim men?
 - Was there any incident that happened in your life when you made a conscious effort to do well?
 - a. What happened – example-
 - b. How did it impact you?
 - c. How did you respond?
 - d. Then what happened?
2. What strategies do you use to navigate the stories/stereotypes that surround Muslim men?
 - What is your source of motivation?
 - Are there any role models you have?
3. What would you suggest for other young Muslim men?
4. How do you see yourself currently in relation to the stereotypes that exist about Muslim men?
 - In what ways does this help you?

Ryerson University Consent Agreement

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

RECONSTRUCTING THE NARRATIVES SURROUNDING YOUNG MUSLIM MEN

INVESTIGATORS:

This research study is being conducted by Huda Hussain, under the supervision of Dr. Purnima George from the School of Social Work at Ryerson University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Huda Hussain or Dr. Purnima George located at 350 Victoria Street or email huda1.hussain@ryerson.ca or p3george@ryerson.ca.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

Currently, studies on young Muslim men has focused on negative media images, how young Muslim men are a problem and “othered” by society. The focus of this study is to give young Muslim men in the Greater Toronto Area the chance to bring forward their voices to change the current stories about them. There are two participants who will be recruited for this study. The eligibility criteria will include: being a young Muslim who identifies as a male, between the ages of 18-29, from the Greater Toronto Area, and a Canadian Citizen who questions the common image of Muslim men. This research is being completed by Huda Hussain, a Master of Social Work Student in partial completion of her graduate degree. The results of this study will contribute to her major research paper.

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO:

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

- You will be asked to participate in a one-time interview for 2 hours at a location of your choice that is secure and allows for privacy. If you are unable to provide such a location of your own, the Student Learning Centre room at Ryerson University will be provided by the researcher.
- The type of questions that you will be asked include, how do you see yourself?
- The demographic data that will be asked of you is your age, citizenship/immigration status, e-mail address, education and ethnicity
- Research findings will be available and uploaded to the Ryerson Digital Depository upon completion at the following link:

https://digital.library.ryerson.ca/islandora/search/*:*?f%5b0%5d=mods_extension_degree_department_ms:%22Social%20Work%22

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

There will be no direct benefits to you for being involved in this project, even though your contributions will help the researcher to complete her degree requirements and possibly contribute to filling a gap in social work literature.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOU AS A PARTICIPANT:

The potential risks are very low. There can be a low psychological risk of feeling anxious or uncomfortable. Before the interview you will be reminded that you can take a break or stop the interview permanently as well as withdraw from the study up to the point of the analysis. You may also skip answering questions if you feel uncomfortable. After the interview, the researcher will check-in with you and you can contact the researcher at any time for information about potential support services if needed.

There is also a low and minimal risk of your personal identity being revealed. No personal information of your identity will ever be included in the completed research publication as all identifying information will be generalized. All demographic data you provide will be stored securely in password protected files and destroyed in a timely manner. The risk of identifying you in the published paper is extremely low. A fake name will be used instead in the publication to minimize the risk of you being exposed.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The process that will be taken to ensure your identity will remain confidential is by making sure that the study does not reflect any identifying information of you. The research design will make sure your identity will not be revealed by ensuring privacy will be maintained between you and myself. Fake names will be assigned unless you would like to disclose your real name in published material.

You will be given the chance to review/edit your interview transcripts and recordings as well as change/approve the final research paper to ensure that you are comfortable with the information being used for this research study. After transcribing, I will send the recording and transcript to you to review or edit if you would like to do so via email. The audio recordings will be password protected on the audio device and uploaded to password protected audio files. These audio files will be deleted once the transcriptions are completed. At this point, the transcriptions will be kept as password protected files up until the final draft of the paper is completed and submitted to the school of Social Work of Ryerson University. Once the paper is submitted to the School of Social Work at Ryerson University (which is anticipated to be mid-August 2019) the transcriptions will be destroyed. The transcriptions are only kept until final publication for the researcher being able to review them and write their paper. Only the researcher will have access to the raw and transcribed recordings which are solely being used for educational purposes.

INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION:

The incentive that will be offered to you is a \$20 CF gift card and a monetary fund for TTC. If you choose to stop participation, you will still be provided with the gift card and monetary fund whether or not you complete the research.

COSTS TO PARTICIPATION:

Reimbursements for travel will be provided with a monetary fund for TTC.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If any question makes you uncomfortable, you can skip that question. You may stop participating at any time and you will still be given the incentives and reimbursements described above. If you choose to stop participating, you may also choose to not have your data included in the study up to the point of the analysis. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University or the investigators Huda Hussain and Dr. Purnima George involved in the research.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY:

If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact either Huda Hussain, Master of Social Work student, 350 Victoria Street and email huda1.hussain@ryerson.ca. You may also contact the research supervisor, Dr. Purnima George, 350 Victoria Street, 416-979-5000 ext. 7146 or email p3george@ryerson.ca.

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact:

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042
rebchair@ryerson.ca

RECONSTRUCTING THE NARRATIVES SURROUNDING YOUNG MUSLIM MEN

CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate up until the analysis. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to be audio-recorded for the purposes of this study. I understand how these recordings will be stored and destroyed.

Signature of Participant

Date

Please check this box off if you would like your real name to be disclosed in published material

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