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# “Unwanted in my own country”: Testimonies of identity and belonging-negotiations in a post-Trump America

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“Unwanted in my own country”:  
Testimonies of identity and belonging-negotiations in a post-  
Trump America

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Master of Migration Studies  
May 10, 2018

**“Unwanted in my own country”:  
Testimonies of identity and belonging-negotiations in a post-  
Trump America**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER IN MIGRATION STUDIES

by **Nadia Naghedi Baradaran Hajjar**

**May 10, 2018**

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:

  
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## **Abstract**

This research investigates the impact of Donald Trump's campaign during the 2016 presidential elections and the so-called, "Muslim" Travel Ban presidential executive orders, on communities of first and second-generation Middle Eastern, Muslim immigrant women in the Los Angeles area, and it is framed within the context of post 9/11-biases and racial discrimination. The ethnographic-like methodology for this research has been conducted with the use of 11 semi-structured in-depth interviews from 2017 that have been transcribed and coded. Findings from the interview data shows that there is a varied amount of responses from the 2016 Presidential Elections and travel ban, however, examples of themes explored are community, racial and ethnic identity. These findings suggest that there has been an impact of the lives of this population, however, the impact perceived is varied based upon the how the individual participants lived experiences.

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

In November 2016 Donald Trump was elected the 45th President of the United States of America. Throughout the presidential campaign leading up to the election, the rhetoric, comments, and beliefs espoused throughout his campaign created a divisive ripple-effect on communities across the nation, with special regards to Muslim and immigrant communities. Shortly after he took office, President Donald Trump signed an executive order publicly deemed the “Muslim Travel Ban.” Following the blocking of this ban by federal courts were three additional attempts to pass this same ban, but under different guises. As of December 4, 2017, the United States Supreme Court has ruled to uphold the executive order as it is being contested in the lower courts.

This study is intended to investigate the impact of Donald Trump’s campaign during the 2016 presidential elections and the travel ban on communities of first and second-generation Middle Eastern, Muslim immigrant women in the Los Angeles area within the context of life post 9/11. The purpose of this study is to document the lived experiences of these women, and to understand how current political discourses impact the daily lives of immigrant and Muslim communities in the greater Los Angeles area. This study incorporates interviews from first and second generation Middle Eastern, Muslim women who are of the ages of 19-65. The use of both first and second-generation women allows for a more well-rounded, and deeper understanding of these issues. By including first and second-generation participants, I was able to research if there was a generational differentiation in the lived experiences of these women. It was also interesting to note that while interviewing first generation Middle Eastern Muslim women, I was able to gain a greater understanding of how the terrorist attacks of 9/11 impacted their lives and communities.

Topics of interest include how participants self-identify, and if their identities caused an impact on their lived-experiences. Questions that were utilized in the research interviews relate to

how the participants reacted to 9/11, the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, and the travel ban executive orders. More in-depth questions would be asked of the participants if they felt that they did perceive an impact on their lives based on these political events. Such questions would be to inquire the level of impact, and their response of how they handled it.

Given that this research is regarding fairly recent political events, the aim of this research is to contribute to the field of migration studies by providing insight into this niche subject population within this current timeframe. This research is especially relevant to our present time given that Donald Trump's rhetoric and policies will most likely continue to have a direct effect on minority and immigrant communities. From 2016, the United States is currently going through a political shift, with political unrest in all forms erupting in ways that fuel division and discontent. In addition, this study is an opportunity to give back to my own personal community and to help bring the voices of these women to the forefront of migration studies. The research is influenced by ethnographic research with the use of 11 in-depth semi-structured interviews. Throughout data collection, I have found that there is a lot of distrust and hesitation within this target group regarding voicing their concerns, which led to difficulty in finding participants. Due to this difficulty, I decided to adjust this research to incorporate a wider target audience. During the Fall 2017, this research was expanded to include the participation of first generation Middle Eastern Muslim women in the greater Los Angeles area. Further information regarding this expansion will be found in the Methodology section of this thesis.



## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

The foundation of this research project is to demonstrate how the current political and social reality of the United States has been shaped by the effects of 9/11, the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, and the travel ban executive orders. This research evaluates current political policies set forth by the Trump administration, like the travel bans, and the role they play in the lives of first and second-generation Middle Eastern Muslim women, and to further research on the impacts within this specific immigrant community. The purpose of this research project is to identify if the 2016 U.S. Presidential campaign and the election of Donald Trump as president, along with all four attempts to pass the so-called “Muslim Travel Ban” Presidential Executive Order, have had an effect on the lives of first and second-generation Middle Eastern Muslim women and the extent of this effect.

This research project utilizes qualitative and ethnographic-like research methods with the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews. This method of research was chosen specifically to allow for the opportunity to speak with women about their experiences, and to provide a platform within academia where their voices will be heard. The decision to use qualitative research methods was based upon the nature of the 2016 political year with the campaigns and election. In addition, the use of qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews allowed for a way to adapt the interview questions based upon what the research participant was sharing.

It is imperative to consider how 9/11 shaped the conversations around issues of immigration, the Middle East, and Muslims in the United States, and on the way in which the current political context is reminiscent of the past 16 years. One feature of the legacy left behind is the heightened rise of Islamophobia. Islamophobia in the United States was present before 9/11. After 9/11, however, Islamophobia became a constant and ever-rising presence in the political and

social realms both in the US and abroad. Some examples of this can be seen in experiences of increased discrimination, hate crimes, and more recently, the Muslim Travel Ban. Within this research project, the issue of Islamophobia is highlighted and discussed with great detail, utilizing academic research, and collected interview data.

There has been a great deal of academic research on the effects of September 11th on immigrant communities in the United States. Although these effects touched all kinds of immigrant groups, the Middle Eastern immigrant community experienced the effects more deeply, which can be seen by the work utilized in this research project. This research is informed by academic research studies on Arab, Muslim-American, and Middle Eastern community life in a post 9/11 context across the United States (Jamal, Amaney A., and Nadine Christine Naber. 2008; Cainkar, Louise. 2009; Maira, Sunaina. 2009; Maira, Sunaina. 2016; Mir, Shabana. 2014; Abdulhadi, Rabab, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Christine Naber. 2011; Naber, Nadine Christine. 2012; Safi, Omid, and Juliane Hammer. 2013; Zahedi, Ashraf. 2011).

The post 9/11 studies cover a wide range of topics, such as gender, post-traumatic stress disorder, racism, discrimination, and religion. For this study, the focus is on religious and ethnic identities negotiated within the space and time limitations. I choose to focus the background research on lived experiences of Middle Eastern Muslims in the United States, paying attention to topics of gender, discrimination, religion, and culture/ethnicity. This research project explores how current political policies are affecting Middle Eastern Muslim women's lives due to broad societal issues like Islamophobia and xenophobia, based on their religious and ethnic identities.

Studies on second-generation immigrants are an important aspect for this research, with the research of Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut. This research is contextualized in past, and recent political events, to investigate the influence of specific politics and policies could have

within the lives of first and second-generation Middle Eastern Muslim women. It is crucial to first set up a historical frame to establish what are the commonplace experiences or sentiments of these Middle Eastern Muslim communities.

The topic of gender is also critical in this discussion and in my research. While formulating my research methods, I decided to focus only on the experiences of women in hopes of gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences that these women face in the United States. In the United States, Muslim women are severely criticized and looked at due to the conception of the role of women in Islam, and religious practice of wearing the Hijab. There is plenty of scholarship that describes this issues in particular: Al Wazni, Anderson Beckmann. 2015; Furseth, Inger. 2011; Mohibullah, Huma, and Christi Kramer. 2016; Perry, Barbara. 2014; Rahmath, Sabah, Lori Chambers, and Pamela Wakewich. 2016; Rangoonwala, Fatima I., Susan R. Sy, and Russ K. E. Espinoza. 2011; Tolaymat, Lana D., and Bonnie Moradi. 2011.

Some of the main works that are being utilized in this study are: the ethnographic research of Shabana Mir, *Muslim American Women on Campus: Undergraduate Social Life and Identity*, in which the author explores what it means to be a Muslim woman in post 9/11 America, and how one formulates and negotiates identity on college campuses; *Arab America: gender, cultural politics, and activism* by Nadine Naber; *Homeland insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American experience after 9/11* by Louise Cainkar; *Arab and Arab American feminisms: gender, violence, & belonging* by Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Naber.

*The 9/11 generation: youth, rights, and solidarity in the war on terror* by Sunaina Maira; *Race and Arab Americans before and after 9/11: from invisible citizens to visible subjects* by Amaney A. Jamal, and Nadine Christine Naber proves a collection of essays from various authors ranging from topics like racial formation, arab identity formation, citizenship, and racism.

In addition, I am employing numerous articles that study hijab identity, race, islamophobia, and citizenship: Abdurraqib, Samaa. 2006; Al Wazni, Anderson Beckmann. 2015; Furseth, Inger. 2011; Jasperse, Marieke, Colleen Ward, and Paul E. Jose. 2012; Maira, Sunaina. 2009; Mills, Gregory J; Mishra, Smeeta, and Faegheh Shirazi. 2010; Mohibullah, Huma, and Christi Kramer. 2016; Nagra, Baljit. 2011; Perry, Barbara. 2014; Rahmath, Sabah, Lori Chambers, and Pamela Wakewich. 2016; Selod, Saher. 2015; Sirin, Selcuk R., Nida Bikmen, Madeeha Mir, Michelle Fine, Mayida Zaal, and Dalal Katsiaficas. 2008; Tolaymat, Lana D., and Bonnie Moradi. 2011; Zahedi, Ashraf. 2011. These works cover a range of interdisciplinary approaches that help in formulating a deeper understanding of how history, politics, religion, ethnicity and identity fit together in researching how 9/11 influences and affects the individual and the current political sphere in the United States.

It is my hope that this research will fill the gaps within the academic field of Middle East, immigrant, and women's studies. Due to its timeliness, the research is set in the time frame of the 2016 U.S. presidential elections to present day. However, given that the policies and politics focused in this research are ongoing, I aim for this study to help build the gap within the literature of how current political and historical events are influenced the lives of my specific research population. The objective of this research is to document the challenges and issues posed by the current U.S. government's policies and politics, specifically from the events of 9/11, the election of the Trump administration, and the travel ban executive orders, and how that they have an effect on the lives of first and second-generation Middle Eastern Muslim women. It is my goal to bring awareness to the lived experiences of these women, and how they engage with negotiating their identities and communities due to current politics and policies.

As a researcher, I believe that my positionality of my own identity of being a second-generation Middle Eastern Muslim American woman would help me in providing cultural and religious insight to this research. Along with other implications this had on the study, further impacts on my own identity on this research is further elaborated on within the methodology section of this study.

### **Chapter 3. Methodology**

This ethnographically inspired research is set to focus on investigating the impact of the 2016 United States presidential election on first and second-generation Middle Eastern Muslim women in Los Angeles, California. The question, did the political rhetoric used by the Trump campaign make a difference in the lives of these women was one of the main inquires guiding this research. The location of Los Angeles, California was chosen due to the accessibility of research participants I had as a researcher. In addition, there is a significant Middle Eastern community in the Southern California, Los Angeles and Orange County area.

With regards to the scope and intentions of this study, ethnographic research methods were selected in order to gain of life stories of a select group of people. The data produced through life interviews allows for great and personal detail for the findings and analysis. Due to this form of research, the interviews ranged from a time period of 25 minutes to an hour and a half. Conducting interviews was a great tool that was utilized for this kind of research. Furthermore, this study is designed to promote awareness of the struggles and interactions these women face; by the use of semi-structured interviews, I am able to showcase their experiences and voices.

#### *Demographics*

Research participants in this study are women, geographically from or descendants of Middle Eastern countries currently living in southern California. Ages range from 19 years old to 65 years old. This age range was established in order to be inclusive of all willing and eligible participants. The first-generation of Middle Eastern women who participated came from the following countries: Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran. The second-generation participants were born and raised in the United States and have either one or both parents from the following countries:

Lebanon, Iran, and Egypt (one of the research participants had one parent from Mexico, and the other from Lebanon).

For this research, I decided to narrow the focus of the scope of this study to focus only on women, in order to provide a platform within academia for these women to express their own voice and life experiences. This decision was made due Muslim women being a central target for many Islamophobia and xenophobia-based occurrences, especially since within American society, Muslim women who wear the hijab are more visible than Muslim men. Unfortunately, with the increased visibility, also comes the increased probability of harassment and other forms of Islamophobic occurrences. In addition, in our society, Muslim women are seen as the cultural productions of their families, and therefore, I wanted this study to show the resiliency and other forms of resistance strategies of Middle Eastern Muslim women.

For contextual purposes, it is important to note that the majority of the women who participated in this study come from a middle-class background. In addition, the majority of participants have had some level of higher education, or educational degrees ranging from an associate to doctoral degree. Because of the privilege that these women hold, relative to immigrant communities in the US as a whole, it has most likely influenced the way in which they have been able to navigate within their own communities and general American society. However, not every participant holds the same degree of privilege. In addition, based on their societal standing, they could have had varied experiences of Islamophobia, specifically the way in which they encounter these difficult experiences and the kinds of people they experience it from. For instance, one of the research participants is a public high school teacher who experienced aggressions directly in her workplace in the form of students making Islamophobic comments directed at her because of her ethnicity. Societal class, educational standing, and career professions play an important role in

these women's lives, and therefore in the experiences that are based on these historical and political events.

One of the first things that I noticed while conducting the interviews was the differences between first and second-generation participants. When interviewing the older first-generation participants, I noticed that they were very animated and passionate with their responses. Some of the women became visibly emotional when discussing their experiences. When some of the women started crying, it was very hard for myself to not also get emotional. However, when these experiences happened, we were able to take a minute to process the emotions they were feeling, and when they were ready, we continued on with the interviews. However, I did not expect my reactions in moments like these. In one of the interviews, when the participant was tearing up when discussing how her encounters with hate crimes or discrimination did not matter to her per se, but what mattered was the effect the experience would have on her children. While discussing her children, she began crying, which then led me too also tear up and cry. I believe it was due to the vulnerability and rawness of this woman's testimony that made me see more of the human side of the racism and all other forms of discrimination Muslim women in the United States experience.

### *Recruitment*

Snowball sampling was the main source of recruitment used to find research participants for this study. The Los Angeles area was chosen for the location of this research study due to my own background. I was born and raised in the area, and due to myself being a second-generation Iranian American Muslim woman, I knew the area well. Through already established connections I had in within the community, I was able to discuss my research study with people that I knew, who then recommended others who might be interested in participating. Also, I reached out to women that I knew of who fit the study criteria, and would might be interested in speaking with



me. Another recruitment attempt was to contact a Muslim Student Association club at a local university. I emailed the student club explaining the research study and the requirements to participate, in hope of gaining a perspective of women who are in college.

Many challenges were faced in this part of the recruitment process. Some issues encountered with the people I interviewed were time and space. The women to be interviewed led busy lives, and the geographical distance of Southern California made meeting in person sometimes difficult. Thus, many of the interviews were conducted either through Skype or phone call. This limitation will be explained in greater detail in the next section that describes how the semi-structured interviews were conducted.

The biggest challenge I faced in this step of the research process was that many of the people I contacted never responded to my outreach messages. I attribute this difficulty to the sense of fear within the Middle Eastern and immigrant community due to the current political context of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric spreading from the White House, as well as to normal research participant recruitment difficulties. An extended discussion of the culture of fear will be discussed later in the complications and limitations section. In addition, the most influential limitation faced while being in the field for data collection has been the encounter with community members questioning and expressing their discontent with this research project.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Semi-structured life interviews were used in this research study in hopes of gaining a more holistic understanding of the research participants' lives, and how past and more recent political contexts have affected them. My interview questions are divided into four groups: biographical information, post 9/11, Trump campaign/administration, and additional questions.

The biographical questions were asked in order to understand the demographic scope of this study. It is important to recognize the potential similarities and/or differences that may emerge due to demographic issues like age or cultural identification. In this section of the interview guide, the difference in first and second-generation interview guides varied slightly. For example, in the first-generation interview guide, the biographical questions are as follows:

1. What year were you born in?
2. What year did you come to the United States of America?
3. When did you come to the Los Angeles, California area?
4. What is the highest level of education you have reached?
5. How do you identify religiously?
6. How do you culturally identify?
7. What is your nationality?
8. How long have you lived in the Los Angeles area?
9. What is your relationship status?
10. How many children do you have?

For the first-generation research participants, this section of the interview was geared towards finding out what country they emigrated from, and at what age. In addition, I inquired to the level of education they have reached, and how long they have been living in their communities. This was helpful to understand their positionality within their own communities.

For the second-generation interview guide section on biographical information, the main difference between from the first-generation interview guide was to ask where their parents were from. Here is a list of the interview questions:

1. What year were you born in?

2. Where was your mother born?
3. Where was your father born?
4. What is the highest level of education you have reached?
5. How do you identify religiously?
6. How do you culturally identify?
7. What is your nationality?
8. How long have you lived in the Los Angeles area?
9. What is your relationship status?
10. How many children do you have?

The next section of my interview guide consisted of questions regarding what it was like growing up in a post 9/11 United States of America. Some of the questions I asked my participants were:

1. How old were you when 9/11 occurred? Where were you living?
2. In what ways, if any, did your school life change after 9/11? After 9/11 were there any noticeable differences regarding your classmates, teachers, or academic performance?
3. In what ways, if any, did your social life change after 9/11? Were there any changes in which friends you socialized with, how often you socialized, or the activities involved?
4. In what ways, if any, did your personal/home life change after 9/11?
5. What societal issues have you recognized in post 9/11 USA and why do you think those issues are present?
6. Please explain the main differences in your experiences pre-and post 9/11.

7. Since 9/11 have you left and/or joined new social groups or organizations? Did 9/11 motivate your decision to leave or join these groups?
8. What kinds of clubs/groups were you involved in pre/post 9/11 and have you noticed any dynamic changes in these groups? If so, what? Do you attribute it to 9/11?
9. Tell me how your sense of yourself as being a Muslim, Middle Eastern, and/or second generation (or first-generation) immigrant changed or didn't change after 9/11.
10. How did being Muslim and Middle Eastern influence your experiences post 9/11?

Given that these interviews were semi-structured, I was able to adapt the questions depending on the interviewee themselves. For instance, one of my youngest participants did not remember September 11th occurring. In this instance, I was able to ask this younger participant if she remembered if her family talked about it, or what situations were like growing up when 9/11 was brought up in school or at home. Therefore, with the use of semi-structured interview questions, I was able to adapt the questions based on what was appropriate for the interviewees. The purpose of this section of the interview was to establish the pre- and post-life experiences of September 11th, and how the lives of the research participants were affected later on. With the older participants who have a better understanding of what life was like before 9/11, this part of the interview was an opportunity to share what they believed life was like before as a religious community, because villainized and criminalized for either being Muslim or of Middle Eastern descent. In addition, this is where the contextualizing of how 9/11 a crucial source of hatred against Muslims, Middle Easterns, and immigrants came from in the United States. For research participants who were too young to remember 9/11, or were still in their early twenties, they were

able to express how their life became politicized, or that they grew up always feeling as if their existence was politicized. For instance, one of the research participants expressed that growing up in Los Angeles, all she had known was what it is like to have her ethnic and religious background othered and constantly scrutinized in the media. It is experiences like this one that adds to the research of what exactly was the impact 9/11 had on the younger generations living a post 9/11 U.S. society. Furthermore, this part of the interview set up a context of how their experiences growing up in the United States has impacted how they experience and view current political trials and hardships.

With regards to the differences with first and second-generation interview questions, for the first-generation interviews, if the participant mentioned their children, I would ask if they noticed a change in their child's school performance, as an example. Based on what the interviewee said, I would slightly alter the question so that they would be better suited to ask them if necessary.

The next section of the interview guide is designed to explore whether or not the 2016 United States Presidential Elections had an impact on my research participants, specifically given the rhetoric and policies coming from the new presidential office. The questions were geared toward the campaign, elections, and some of the questions asked are:

1. Can you describe how you felt about the 2016 US presidential elections.
2. How did you react to Donald Trump being elected president?
3. In what ways, if any, did you notice your child's school life change? Were there any noticeable differences regarding your interactions with classmates, teachers, or academic performance?
4. In what ways, if any, did your social life change? Were there any changes in which friends you socialized with, how often you socialized, or the activities involved?

5. During the elections, how did your school, social, and personal communities react?  
How did they react after?
6. Describe how you noticed a change in your day-to-day life post elections.
7. Tell me how your sense of self as being a Muslim and Middle Eastern and first-generation immigrant changed or didn't after the 2016 presidential elections?

This part of the research interview was designed to inquire about the lived experiences of these women that specifically related to the growing societal issue of Islamophobia. In one way or another, participants touched upon how the United States presidential elections of 2016 had increased their perceptions and experiences with Islamophobia and xenophobia. This part of the interview also helps to address the differences and similarities they believe have occurred between the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the presidential elections. For example, later on in this study, one of the research participant states that she believes that with the rise of popularity of Donald Trump, came the rise of Islamophobia and the fear she feels living in southern California. This kind of testimony is significant within the research of American Middle Eastern and migration studies because it documents that people are feeling and witnessing hatred and fear on an increasing basis due to current political issues.

In this same section, I asked the research participant specifically on their thoughts and experiences regarding the nicknamed Muslim Travel Ban, which were presidential executive orders released soon after President Trump assumed office. Here are some of the questions inquiring about the travel bans:

1. How did you feel about President Trump's travel ban executive orders?
2. How did you react to these travel bans?

3. Can you tell me about how you noticed a change in your day-to-day life after the travel bans?
4. Tell me how your sense of yourself as being a Muslim and Middle Eastern and first-generation immigrant changed or didn't after the travel ban orders were put in place.

At the end of each interview, I would try to take a pause to ask the research participant to reflect upon the interview, and if there was anything they would like to add or change what they have previously had said. Here were my guiding questions for this past part of the interview:

1. Is there anything else I should have asked throughout this interview that I didn't ask?
2. What is important to you to mention when discussing President Trump and his travel bans?

This last section of the interviewer was highly beneficial while interview because it have the participant the opportunity to add their concluding thoughts on the issues we were discussing.

Depending on the responses of the participant, I asked follow up questions about what they said, and by doing so, received deeper and more thoughtful responses. As novice qualitative researcher, the process of the interviews became easier, almost second-nature, as I progressed in the amount of my interviews I conducted. For a full list of all interview questions, please refer to the Appendix section at the end of this paper.

The main challenge encountered with this aspect of the research study was the difficulty of scheduling the time of the interview. The research participants live in a wide geographical area within southern California, mainly in Los Angeles area. Thus, I had to rely on other means of interviewing; I was able to conduct interviews by Skype or by a phone call. Even though an in-

person interview is the most beneficial for ethnography, I was still able to have informative interviews with individuals through other means.

In regards to the interviews conducted in person, the location was mutually selected based on the most convenient place to meet. The majority of these interviews were conducted in local coffee shops. The interviews conducted over phone/skype were done in a private space. Depending on the responses of the research participants, interviews lasted from 25 minutes to 90 minutes.

Reflecting upon the differences in participants, there was a distinct difference between the first and second-generation participants: six of the interviews with first generation interviews, and five of second-generation interviews. The purpose of utilizing both first and second-generation interviews is to establish if there is, or is not, a difference in the experience of these two immigrant generational groups.

#### *Data Measurements, Procedures and Analysis*

After all the data was collected and cataloged, all the research participants were given a pseudonym to maintain privacy and confidentiality. The next step in this process was transcribing all of the interviews. All of the interviews were transcribed by myself. This was done in order to ensure that I would have the exact responses from the participants when quoting them. In addition, transcriptions were needed for the next stage of analysis, which was coding. After transcriptions, I then utilized methods of open coding through my field notes and transcriptions to look for emerging themes and connections the interviews make with one another. After the open coding, I proceeded to cross referencing codes to develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the data. After that process was completed, I organized my results thematically to begin the analysis section of this research.



### *Researcher Positionality, Complications, and Limitations*

My identity of being a second generation, Middle Eastern Muslim woman who was born and raised in Los Angeles County has impacted my positionality as a researcher in this project. Throughout the duration of my recruitment and data collection process, I encountered resistance and hesitation about the topic of this research. Some individuals in this community question my motives, and accountability and responsibility as a researcher conducting research on a topic that I personally am directly involved with.

While speaking with members of the community about my research and recruitment, I encountered a harsh backlash from certain individuals. My intentions and reasoning for this research was questioned. The hesitation encountered was out of fear for the community. People wanted to know exactly why I was researching this topic during a time of extreme political scrutiny and difficulty. Data collected and confidentiality methods were questioned; community members wanted to know the specifics of the data I wanted to collect, and in which ways I would be protecting the community. I explained to these community members that the safety and security of this community was my main priority, and that it was my intention to raise awareness to the American public of the struggles these women faced living in Los Angeles area. More importantly however, I went into detail about how I was taking precautions in protecting the privacy of my research participants. It was these confrontations with individual community members that made me decide to not even write down the real names of my research participants, and that the contact information I had was deeply coded and separated from all notes taken during the fieldwork. In addition, it was these encounters that provided me with a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how far the fear of the current political climate have become embedded within the community.

In addition, I believe that the gendered aspect of my research added to this backlash from the community. With my discussion with the aforementioned community members, the issue of this research pertaining to women was touched upon. Due to Muslim women, especially Muslim women who wear the hijab have become racialized and become the symbol of contemporary Islam in America, I believe that one of the community members did not want me to exploit these women for my own gain. Another reason for the issue with gender could be for how much of easy target Muslim women have become in the United States. Studies have shown that Muslim women who wear the hijab are the most to experience discrimination and hate crimes in post 9/11 United States. No matter what the exact reason may be, I believe the core of all this that the community members main priority is the protection for the women in their community, who already have to deal with enough, let alone an avoidable possible hinderance or negative experience.

This ethnographically informed study was conducted in the hopes of raising awareness within academia of the issues Middle Eastern and immigrant women are facing in the changing times of increased political tension and increased Islamophobia in the United States. I contribute my positionality to the ability to easily relate and sympathize with my research participants. In addition, given that I personally wore the hijab for more than half a decade, I was able to easily understand the cultural and religion context when participants spoke of the hijab. Reflecting back on the data collecting part of this research, I do believe that it would be extremely difficult for an outsider to gain access into this population, and to garner the same dialogue with the research participants.

Despite the difficulty faced from some members of the community, I experienced positive reactions to this research. Some of the research participants expressed their happiness that this research was being conducted at such a crucial time in history for our community, and that they

were happy to have participated in this research. In addition, I had the impression by the response of many participants that they felt comfortable speaking with me about such difficult and sensitive issues because I am a part of this community. Many of them expressed that they trusted me, and the research I was conducting with their help. As a researcher, this was especially important for me to receive such feedback, and to have their trust.

## **Chapter 4. Life Post-9/11**

The interviews conducted for this research revolve around the themes of identity and belonging, set within the frame of Islamophobia in the United States. For the remaining sections, findings will be discussed in three sections: life post 9/11, the impact of the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump, and the impact of the proposed “Muslim Travel Bans.” While many of the research participants did not equally experience the same level of impact from each of these events, all experienced some variations of impact in their lives.

The research questions designed for assessing life after September 11th was to explore if there was an impact on the lives of these women with regards to their sense of identity and belonging. Due to the research participants ranging of all ages, many of them experienced life after 9/11 in different ways. Evaluating the impact on the participants identity, topics of religion and culture were discussed, especially with the women who wore the Hijab. In relation to the participants sense of belonging, many of the women interviewed spoke of how their sense of belonging was affected within their home, school, and community life. In this section, Islamophobia is discussed in ways it has been increasing before and after 9/11, which helps to contextualize the frame in which these women are speaking about their lived experiences.

### **Identity**

Out of the eleven interviews, half of the participants spoke of how the terrorist attacks of September 11th had a direct impact on their identity, specifically with their cultural and religious identity. The participants discussed how 9/11 had a negative impact with regards to how they expressed their identity, and how it was directly related to the increased Islamophobic sentiments they have experienced. For example, one woman simply mentioned the only impact she could relate to 9/11 is the way in which she decided to practice her faith publicly. Broadly speaking, her

experience with not wanting to publicly practice her religious beliefs is connected with the social pressures of erasing Muslims from being visible. In which case, this erasure is harmful to the Muslim communities in the United States and contributes to the anti-Islamic tropes of what is a good Muslim and a bad one. However, many of the research participants expressed how 9/11 had a positive change within the community they were included in, and their sense of identity.

One research participant, Mariam, a 19-year-old second generation Iranian American college student shared her experience with how she negotiated with her Iranian and Islamic identity due to 9/11 due to fear and Islamophobia. She states,

I definitely for like a long time try to keep it a secret that I was Muslim because I was like people are going to find out they're going to be judgmental but then like as I grew up, I realized oh no, this is a really big part of who I am. This is my culture, this is my family, this is what I, you know, every day this is a part of my life. I can't just like that's not who I am, when it is. So I decided to like own it a little bit more and be like well this is who I am so I'm going to try to be as much of it who I am as possible. So, it's it's part of my identity. I went from being scared to say that I am I'm Muslim descent Iranian, to being like very very proud of it and very loud about it (Mariam. Personal Interview. 10 July 2017).

Mariam goes on to say that this fear growing up of not wanting to share her identity due to people's negative reaction impacted and shaped the way she approached social situations. However, as she was growing up, she decided on reclaiming her identity and being proud of her cultural and religious heritage. In addition, due to being so young when 9/11 occurred, she grew up in a post-9/11 society, and she never knew what it was like living in a society where she did not feel cautious about sharing who she was. This fear of publicly displaying her cultural and religious identity stems ultimately from society deciding on what kinds of people are citizens and not “others”, in which in a post 9/11 U.S.A., Muslim people were not accepted. The rise in Islamophobia while Mariam was growing up conditioned her to fear being proud of who she is as a person. Furthermore, she states, “I became more aware, like Islamophobia in public and is not just something on the news anymore, like it's actually part of my life which is strange when the news

crosses over into your life” (Mariam. Personal Interview. 10 July 2017.). Connecting her thoughts, her time concealing and being fearful of people’s reception to her identity was her way of dealing with this societal issue, until she decided that she had enough of hiding her identity. The more she became self-aware of the Islamophobia present around her, the more she recognized how it influenced her own life choices. This kind of experience was echoed throughout many other interviews for this research study.

Sara, a 23-year-old second-generation Mexican Lebanese college student, voiced her own experiences with how sharing her identity with non-Muslim people became problematic, and makes her feel that her life is heavily politicized,

I grew up with this, so I think what it is... it has made my life so politicized. All right, whether I like it or not, it's like I feel like I'm a Muslim female you know, Arab, Hispanic, it's like I'm so politicized whether I wanted to or not. I feel like when I meet non-Muslims and when I tell them, like they like all of a sudden like it becomes more tense. Like the whole situation and they want to change, they almost like want to have a conversation about ‘What you do think about ISIS?’ ‘What do you think about what's happening over there?’ And like sometimes, I don't even want talk about it. Like, you know I'm just a normal person. I'm not always thinking about that stuff (Sara. Personal Interview. 9 July 2017).

Sara’s experience on how sharing her identity with people who are not Muslim showcases an uncomfortable situation that many young second-generation Muslim women face. Many of the Muslim women interviewed shared how they feel as if they are representing Islam, and in doing so, has to be able to respond to situations like Sara mentioned. This experience Sara shares shows that there is an expectation of these women to act as an informative representative to mainstream American society, which not only is a burden to these women, but an unfair expectation that a post-9/11 society expects from Muslim women. For Sara, she expresses how having to constantly perform this political role is straining on her. Like she said, Sara feels like a “normal person,” who should not have to constantly become a politicized commodity.

Another research participant who shares her personal experiences with identity negotiation due to 9/11 is Neda, a 25-year-old second-generation Iranian American woman. While interviewing Neda, she was very passionate when speaking about how living in a post-9/11 society, which is saturated with Islamophobia, caused her to feel defensive and sometimes responsible to educate the people she interacts with at certain times. Neda shares that she feels as if there are two sides to her personality, the American one, and the Iranian one. She shared an experience where she was at a party talking to a guy who was asking her about her name and its origin. She went on to explain that the man then started to ask her questions about Sharia law and was making ignorant statements about Islam, and in response, she replied as going “full Iranian” and felt the need to talk it out with him. Neda goes on to say “9/11 definitely, definitely made that happen because if I had grown up without people fearing Middle Easterners, people with beards, people with hijab, like then I wouldn't have felt, I would never feel like I need to defend my culture” (Neda. Personal Interview. 11 July 2017). In addition to feeling the need to defend her culture and religion, Neda expressed in our interview that the Iranian part of herself feels the need to not interpret everything as negative but is cautious and defensive when she encounters people who speak negatively about her culture or religion.

On the more positive side, many of the participants spoke on how 9/11 caused a positive reaction with their sense of identity, and how they expressed themselves. Batul, a first-generation Iraqi educator at a private Islamic school, articulated that 9/11 made her reach out to her community to build more bridges, and that it strengthened her determination to be truthful to who she is. She states, “in a sense for me, it strengthened my determination of who I am and what my identity is.” (Batul. Personal Interview. 21 November 2017). As an educator, she was mindful to be a source of support for the students she interacted with and to remind them to have pride in their

culture and religion, despite the negative environment that was created around Muslims after 9/11. This kind of positive guidance was her way of guiding them to resist Islamophobia, and to not let society make them feel negative about their heritage. Another example of identity reinforcement was mentioned in the interview with Nawal, a first-generation Lebanese woman. When discussing the impact 9/11 had on her identity, Nawal expressed her thoughts regarding the Islamophobic atmosphere that was heightened after the attacks by saying, “actually, I had to make myself stronger, and [it] made me actually feel stronger in my beliefs because I felt cheated. I felt betrayed” (Nawal. Personal Interview. 21 November 2017.). Not only did this catastrophic event occur, but the aftermath it caused on her and her community made her solidify her religious beliefs and identity, as a way of surviving this difficult time period.

Another positive response that was brought up with collecting data was when research participant, Amal, a 24-year-old second generation Egyptian American woman, reflected that since 9/11, one of the ways she and her family coped with the aftermath of 9/11 was by feeling the need to engage more with other Muslim Americans, and that she felt closer to her religion. Amal states,

Since 9/11 we wanted to find our identity...We wanted to find people who were like us and we wanted to like kind of, I feel like being in America like post 9/11 made us closer to our religion because we felt like we were already I guess identify in a certain, I don't know how to describe it, but it's like it's kind of made us closer to our religion more because we didn't belong anywhere else (Amal. Personal Interview. 16 July 2017).

Amal’s experience echoed many other studies on Middle Easterners experiences that show that due to 9/11, there has been a shift of people wanting to identify closer to their religious or cultural identities and communities.

### *Hijab*

Since 9/11, Muslim women who wear the hijab have become a symbol of Islam in the United States. Several studies used to inform this research have documented that within the



Muslim immigrant communities, women who wear the hijab are often targeted for doing so. For example, two studies that discuss this are *Homeland insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American experience after 9/11* by Louise Cainkar and *Arab and Arab American feminisms: gender, violence, & belonging* by Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Naber. Throughout the interviews for this research, many of the participants have expressed that they felt that the women who they know that wear the hijab, have had a harder time dealing with living in an Islamophobic post 9/11 era. However, the research participants have provided for varied experiences regarding the hijab. In this section, I will talk about two women that exemplify the varied experiences.

Research participant Amal, who wears the hijab, expressed in her interview that recently she has encountered many people, who inquired about her hijab as if she is being forced to cover up. She provides an example of an encounter where a man was asking her what would happen if she was caught wearing short sleeves. Amal responded that she would not be in that situation due to her decision of choosing to wear the hijab. She continues to say that since 9/11, more people have been curious about the hijab and that she personally does not mind it, “it didn't really bother me because that means they're asking and I have the opportunity to tell them like how it is” (Amal. Personal Interview. 16 July 2017.). Regardless of the stereotypical questions Amal was asked, she didn't mind due to being able to use her visibility to clarify the ignorance surrounding her faith and Islam. In addition, during the 2008 presidential election with Barack Obama, Amal shared that her family felt a positive shift in American society that there would be an end to Muslims being marginalized. Due to this sentiment, Amal's mother decided to wear the hijab. When she asked her why she is wearing it, her mother responded by saying that she felt it was a changing country. Amal reflected upon this by stating that after 9/11, her family felt like it was at “the point where

like we were scared to wear the scarf...After 2008, we were like, okay things are changing and we [felt] more hopeful and more accepted” (Amal. Personal Interview. 16 July 2017.). For Amal’s mother, when President Obama was elected, she decided that she felt safe enough to start wearing the hijab. This shows a great difference in this family's perception and life since 9/11. Amal’s sentiments about wearing the hijab shifted with both political shifts.

Another type of reaction cited in many interviews for this research is highlighted with the interview with Dena, a first-generation Iranian woman. When speaking about how 9/11 an impact on her family, Dena specifically spoke about how the fear of Muslims and Islamophobic sentiments that stemmed from 9/11 caused one of her daughters to decide to remove her hijab, as a way for her to feel safe living her life. She goes on to say that throughout her daughter’s education, she wore the hijab and everything was okay, but it was not until her daughter started working that she felt fear out of wearing her hijab. She states that her daughter was attacked a few times when she got off of work and feared for her future if she continued to wear the hijab. More so, Dena voiced that she feels as if the Islamophobic sentiments are getting worse since 9/11. As for Dena herself and her decision to continue to wear the hijab, she states, “I want to hold down to my identity. The only reason I see it is because I want to fight for it. It's the only reason to fight for it. Fight it for me to wear it” (Dena. Personal Interview. November 2017). Her resistance to societal pressures of taking off her hijab is her way of resisting Islamophobia impact the very core of who is and the identity she holds. Because in recent year the hijab has become a symbol of resistance, and has had some positive media response, for example with the release of the Nike Hijab, the hijab has become more contested. Foe Dena, her wearing her hijab is an act of resistance to stay true to her identity. The majority of the research participants that wore the hijab shared similar sentiments regarding their decision to do so. This is important to highlight that 9/11 has

had a great impact on society with the dangerous increase of Islamophobia and xenophobia, however, Muslim women are fighting the stigma and fighting for their right to wear the hijab. Many of the women spoke about how they believe it is an act of resistance, and that it is their right to practice their faith in their way, regardless of the social treatment towards them.

## **Belonging**

Throughout the interviews conducted for this study, the theme of belonging was widely discussed amongst many of the interviews. Issues of belonging that was covered focused around schools, home life and people's sense of community. In half of the interviews, the research participants mainly focused on their sense of belonging in a school setting. Nina, a 37-year-old second-generation Iranian American high school teacher recounted an Islamophobic experience she faced while teaching within the past few years. One day while she was teaching, one of her students started to call out her name repeatedly when she was with another student. When she finally addressed this student, they started to screamed "Allahu Akbar" and started to pantomime a machine gun towards her, and then started laughing hard enough that they doubled over and were holding their side. During this exchange, Nina explained to the student that they could not be making these terroristic threats to her and that it was not a joke, then after they proceeded to do it again two more times. Due to this exchange happening on another occasion, the high school administration was able to view it on surveillance footage, and this student ended up being expelled from the high school. Upon reflecting from this experience, Nina shared, "I realized like the only thing that made that day any different is the fact that that kid did not have a gun in his hand, and I was clearly being targeted...I felt threatened. I felt threatened." (Nina. Personal Interview. 9 July 2017). From this interview, Nina clearly felt that she was being targeted due to her identity, and that it was not the first time her students had expressed Islamophobic rhetoric towards her. Some

of the students that are friends with the aforementioned student have recently expressed to Nina that they have been in contact with them, and that student wanted her to know that they will be returning to the school next year. In response, she asked her students if the expelled student was making another threat and proceed to relate the information to the school administration. She was assured that the student in question would not be returning to the school the following year. In addition, on the topic of her sense of belonging in her school, Nina continues to share that on several occasions, some of her students would yell “BARG” repeatedly towards her, insinuating that “BARG” was their shortened version of “Allahu Akbar”. As a public-school teacher in Southern California, this is a glimpse into Nina’s school life and the interactions with some of her students.

When speaking about how 9/11 had an impact on their home life, many of the first-generation research participants recounted experiences of either them or their families being nervous or fearful of society right after the attacks. As for the younger second-generation participants, their responses varied with age on how they perceived the impact within their home life. While speaking with Nawal about how 9/11 impacted her home life, she vivaciously went into detail about how her husband was more afraid for her safety than she was. In response, Nawal’s husband, who supports fully supports her decision to wear the hijab, suggested that maybe she should remove it for the time being until they felt safer. Nawal understood why he was suggesting this, however, she was adamant that what they were experiencing was not going to change the way she personally decided to practice her faith. Later on, in the interview, Nawal shared her biggest fear of living in a post 9/11,

I would feel scared for my kids because I thought, I was willing to accept whatever what happened to me. If somebody was going to knock me out, hit me, or whatever, because I wanted the hijab, really, I was willing to take it. But it always scared me if my kids were with me, because how is that going to affect them? Not cause I was only afraid, maybe

they'd get physically hurt, but I did not want my kids to be afraid to be known you know, as Muslims. I don't want them to be afraid just because they're Muslims. You know what I mean, I don't want them to have to hide their identity because they are afraid. That that was a big thing for me. So, I always pray if, if anything were to happen to me, somebody went to attack me, that my kids would not be with me because I would not want them to get scared and start hiding or whatever. That's was a great thing, the big fear for me (Nawal. Personal Interview. 21 November 2017).

For Nawal, she is willing to face society with wearing the hijab, however, her fear with wearing it was linked to the safety and wellbeing of her children. She was adamant that she did not want their children's sense of belonging and identity to be affected due to her wearing the hijab.

The events of September 11th had a profound impact on the United States. The effects of 9/11 have had a greater impact on all immigrant communities for years to follow with the increased criminalization of immigrants. Specifically, 9/11 had a direct impact on the Muslim and Middle Eastern immigrant communities from the way in which the government and local society has treated them. The Islamophobic sentiment and treatment that this population has endured has shaped the way in which people identity, and their sense of belonging. In this chapter, Muslim Middle Eastern women from have shared their story of how 9/11 has had an impact on their life, from directly after 9/11, until recently. Lastly, this historical event has had an impact on how they view and identify themselves, and how they view their place in society.

## **Chapter 5. Impact of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Elections**

*“March 29, 2016: During a town hall in Wisconsin, CNN’s Anderson Cooper asked Trump: ‘Do you trust Muslims in America?’ Trump responded: ‘Do I what?’ Cooper again asked: ‘Trust Muslims in America?’ Trump responded: ‘Many of them I do. Many of them I do, and some, I guess, we don’t. Some, I guess, we don’t. We have a problem, and we can try and be very politically correct and pretend we don’t have a problem, but, Anderson, we have a major, major problem. This is, in a sense, this is a war.’” (Johnson and Hauslohner)*

*“Every year we bring in more than 100,000 lifetime immigrants from the Middle East and many more from Muslim countries outside of the Middle East. A number of these immigrants have hostile attitudes.” (Johnson and Hauslohner)*

When Donald Trump was elected president of the United States in November 2017, he shocked communities across the nation. During the campaign, his hateful speech and rhetoric towards immigrants, Muslims, and many people of color, sent fear rippling through these communities. His campaign strategy of being xenophobic, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant helped propel his popularity for presidency to the frontline, and eventually is what got him elected. It is no surprise that his actions as an elected official has not only enabled his followers to feel empowered by his rhetoric, but also by providing a pathway for other people to follow his actions and to spread Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric and sentiments throughout the United States. This claim is reflected in this section of this research study. Here, I will discuss what the research participants have shared regarding their thoughts and experiences of how the 2018 U.S. Presidential election has impacted their identity and sense of belonging, and how this more recent political event is has a similar yet different effect than 9/11 had of this community.

## **Identity**

Of the research participants that spoke about how the most recent presidential elections impacted their identity, the main issue was with the perceived impact on how they needed to conduct themselves religiously and culturally. The sudden rise of Islamophobia surrounding the campaign had a direct impact in the way in which some of the participants decided how to present themselves in society. Similar to life after 9/11, this uptick in hatefulness towards Muslims and immigrants deliberately changed the way some of the research participants lived their lives out of with regards to their safety, and sense of identity. However, for instance, research participant Neda generally spoke about how due to the elections, she needed to become a stronger person in order to be able to be a good representation of Islam. For her, she decided that she wanted to be a positive response to the hateful rhetoric surrounding Muslims, and that she wanted to combat this on the micro level by being a resource to the American people. Reflecting upon the elections, she shared, “it changed my identity in the sense that I needed to not be ignorant of my own culture. I needed to make sure that I knew, I knew the right things”

(Neda. Personal Interview. 11 July 2017). She continues on to say that she has been educating herself with learning more about Islam, and about political issues regarding Islam and Muslim people. Furthermore, she shares that she feels like she has the responsibility to be knowledgeable of the facts for when she encounters people who hold ignorant views regarding Islam.

Neda’s experience is similar to the general response what the research participants spoke about. The majority consensus about how the participants felt after the election was that it made them want to be a stronger person. Meaning, the elections had a direct impact on their sense of who they are fundamentally as a person. This is also showcased in many ways, one being Neda’s example of wanting to be a better representative of Islam in American society, and therefore, she

took it upon herself to learn more and educate herself on matters connected to Islam. Identifying closer to Islam and wanting to learn more about Islam was another a common reaction amidst the research participants. In my opinion, this is one way the Muslim Middle Eastern immigrant communities in the Los Angeles area are fighting back against Islamophobia the American society and Trump Administration is perpetuating. Like Neda mentioned, women in this community want to be able to be a better example of what Islam is, and to be able to be a source of knowledge when people inquire about their religion. This is also important to recognize that currently, Muslim women are at the forefront of many of the negative and Islamophobic sentiments in this country.

Specifically, with regards to Islam, research participant, Khadija, a first-generation Lebanese American, shared that within her community, she knows that many people were very hesitant after the elections due to fear of what could happen, and the rise of Islamophobia, which this reaction is similar to what happened after 9/11 in her community. With the women she knows who wear the hijab, they were more fearful due to being a bigger target in society for negative or harmful situations. Khadija shares that some of the women she knows decided to remove their hijab due to the fear of being targeted. For her personally, Khadija expressed that the elections did not have an impact in the way in which she identified with her religious and cultural beliefs in a negative way. On the contrary, she became more self-assured and proud to be a Muslim woman who wears the hijab. When people approach her to ask her questions regarding her hijab, or about Islam, she welcomes the interactions due her religious beliefs and practicing as being a source of pride and comfort.

With regards to cultural and ethnic identity, Yasmin, a second-generation Iranian American woman, shares her opinion on how with the rise of Islamophobia and xenophobia rhetoric in the media and campaign affected her. In our interview, Yasmin explained that she felt as if this election



was different to prior elections due to it being heavily focused on villainizing her religious and ethnic identities as a direct result of the increased Islamophobia. In addition, for the community in general, she believes that they became more vulnerable, and that it felt as if they were becoming more of a second-class citizen in the United States. Furthermore, she believes that with the elections, came conversations that were not happening prior, like having to defend their right of existence and respect living in this country, or to defend why the United States should accept and resettle Syrian refugees. Yasmin's experience and emotional reaction to the elections clearly showed that the recent presidential election had a direct impact on people's sense of identity and belonging.

## **Belonging**

One of the main topics discussed throughout the research interviews was the topic of belonging. More specifically, how the Trump administration and presidential election campaign influenced their sense of belonging living in the United States. When discussing the election of Donald Trump, research participant, Sara, reflected on in her place in society. She shared her opinion on when she encounters people whom to tell her to 'go back to your country'. As she reflects in our interview, she said, "we have just as much right to be here...one thing I hate so much when people say, 'why don't you just go back to your country'...You know, it's sort of like this white privilege kind of statements" (Sara. Personal Interview. 9 July 2017). Sara's comment on this kind of statement came up in several other interviews I conducted for this research, specifically on the topic of life after the 2018 presidential elections. Many of the women interviewed expressed that these kinds of interactions are commonplace, and that they all responded in the general likeness to Sara's response.

One of the youngest participants, Mariam, a 19-year-old second-generation Iranian American woman spoke about how since the elections, she has become more vigilant and aware of what goes socially around her. In addition, she elaborates that due to being able to participate in the political scene, she is trying to keep herself aware of discrimination and prejudice, “I observe as much as possible. I try and see things, like, because you know my view points are based on my reality. So, I definitely try to keep my eyes open and see what's actually happening” (Mariam. Personal Interview. 10 July 2017). Further on in the interview, Mariam talks about how the elections has an impact on how her she presents her identity publicly. She states, “I definitely became even more proud of my Heritage and definitely was more inclined to just be loud and proud” (Mariam. Personal Interview. 10 July 2017). Mariam’s way of dealing with her sense of belonging is by becoming prouder of her culture, and more so, no to be afraid to hide who she is. She expresses this by saying that she is a Muslim American, and “I inhabit the space too without negatively impacting anyone's life” (Mariam. Personal Interview. 10 July 2017). This kind of response it crucial to highlight, that regardless of what negative interactions might espouse, it is important to be reminded that these women have every right to be here and exist in this country.

### *Home*

Throughout the interviews when discussing the impact of the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections with first and second-generation Middle Eastern Muslim women, there were many topics relating to their sense of belonging, one of them being the impact on their home life. Research participants Nawal and Dena specifically talk about this. Nawal, a 49-year-old first-generation Lebanese American woman, expressed how the elections had a negative impact on her family’s sense of belonging, specifically with her youngest son due to the campaigned xenophobic rhetoric. Throughout the campaigns leading up to the elections, Nawal noticed her youngest son watching

CNN and one day he told her that he hopes that Donald Trump does not win the elections. When she asked him why, he responded “Because he wants to kick out everybody who wasn't even born in the country, even if they have their passports and everything and I'm afraid he'll kick you and daddy out” (Nawal. Personal Interview. 21 November 2018). In response, she asked him who told him this, and he responded by saying that he heard it on the news days beforehand. Nawal continues to tell me that throughout the elections, she would find her son sitting alone in her room watching the news and the political debates, and “I don't think he he understood most of it, but I think he was just so riveted and so scared that he needed to follow up” (Nawal. Personal Interview. 21 November 2018). The elections had a clear impact on Nawal's son and his sense of his family's belonging in the U.S. based on what Donald Trump was saying throughout the elections. It is clear that with this historical event, the xenophobic aspect of the elections had a profound impact on immigrant families. The fear of immigrant families being separated due to politics is not just echoed within the Middle Eastern immigrant communities, but throughout all immigrant communities in the United States. This prospect of separated families is heightened with people how have Deferred Action for Child Arrivals status, and the prospects of being separated from their families.

Another participant, Dena, a 53-year-old first generation Iranian, compared how the recent elections made her feel too similar to how she felt after 9/11, explicitly with her sense of belonging here in the United States. Dena discloses that for her, the election has an impact on how her sense of safety and belonging. She states,

Exactly the same thing after 9/11. Exactly the same thing. More skeptical to go out, especially at night when it gets dark unless I have somebody with me and we go out with whatever even to go to the supermarket. Other than that, I'm just concerned, just concerned, even going to shopping and even going to walking in the mall I'm more concerned. (Dena. Personal Interview. November 2017).

For Dena, she felt concerned for her safety after the elections due to the kind of rhetoric the elections stirred up in society. Due to this fear, she took precautions on how she presented herself in public. This similarity between 9/11 and the 2016 U.S. presidential elections is key to highlight due to there being the same kind of emotional responses on this community. Furthermore, this goes to display that even though there are some people who felt there has been progress in American society since 9/11, there are instances where people are feel just as much fear for the safety like they did with living in the aftermath of 9/11. This type of insecurity and fear within people's lives is detrimental to their livelihood and overall health.

### *Community*

Another topic relating to participant's sense of belonging was the impact on their community. Amal, a 23-year-old second-generation Egyptian American woman touched on how the elections had a positive impact on her sense of belonging within her community. In our interview, Amal stated that she believed that the elections did have a direct impact on her sense of belonging, and she felt that she became more connected to her community due to being singled out in the elections. She further explains that “I felt like because we were singled out we just needed, I needed to feed off of the community for support” (Amal. Personal Interview. 16 July 2017.). Due to Trump’s focus on Middle Easterners and immigrants, Amal felt that her community was being singled out in a negative way. In return, it made her want to connect to her community more because of it as a way of dealing with the negative sentiments surrounding her community. The way in which she acted on this was by making an effort to go and be in community with those who are in a similar situation, “I remember having this like oh I just want to go to all these Muslim functions, and all I just want to go to mosque every Friday now. I just wanted to be with people who like were like me” (Amal. Personal Interview. 16 July 2017.). Amal’s reaction to wanting to

be closer to her community is representative to many of the other participants reaction to how the presidential elections impacted their sense of belonging within their community, and that this reaction is a form of resisting the harshness of Islamophobia present in mainstream U.S. society.

### *Positive Change*

While it has been stated within the media and here in this research that there has been plenty of negative outcomes on immigrant communities due to the election, many of the research participants shared how there has also been a positive reaction or outcome due to the elections. In my opinion, this is representative of how Muslim and Middle Eastern immigrant communities are fighting against the negative sentiments stemming from the elections. Research participant Nawal shares her perspectives on this matter by speaking generally about how since the elections, she has come into contact with many American people who go out of their way to be kind and approach her to express that their political opinions differ than those of Donald Trump's opinion. She shares that since the elections, she felt as if people are more aware of her (in addition to her wearing the hijab), and that "people would really be scared, genuinely scared for me...They see you in a shop, in a store, in a cafe, in a restaurant, they strike up conversation with you. You would actually feel their fear for you" (Nawal. Personal Interview. 21 November 2017). She goes on to explain that she believes that there are two kinds of individuals she encounters. People who try to talk to her in a positive way to share solidarity with her. And the people who react negatively to her presence and express xenophobic sentiments towards her. Nawal's perception of how Americans react to her presence since the presidential elections also encompasses the general sentiment of other participants, and their reactions with American people.

In this chapter, the 2016 U.S. presidential elections was discussed in detail about how it impacted research participants sense of identity and belonging in southern California. The women who were interviewed for this study spoke about how the campaign and elections had an impact on their lives during and after the elections. Some of the themes that were explored in this chapter relate to their home life, community life, and their sense of belonging. The objective of this chapter was to explore in what ways did the elections affect this highly specific group of women living in southern California. Lastly, within this part of the study, key differences and similarities between how the women reacted from 9/11 and the elections are discussed in detail. This aspect of the research data is pertinent to document within academia because it shows that there is a pattern within American history of key political and historical events having a great impact on these specific research participants and their communities.

## **Chapter 6. “Muslim” Travel Bans Influence**

*“Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what the hell is going on” ( Martin).*

*“This could be the greatest Trojan horse. This could make the Trojan horse look like peanuts if these people turned out to be a lot of ISIS,’ Trump said of refugees from war-torn Syria in an October 2015 interview.” (Rucker)*

### **The Travel Ban**

Leading up to the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, some of the rhetoric the Trump campaign espoused were negative sentiments regarding refugees, immigrants, and people from the Middle East. In addition, the Trump campaign rallied for a legal ban of these groups of people from entering the United States. Once President Trump took office, that is exactly what he attempted to do, four times. On January 27, 2017, President Trump signed the first travel ban executive order banning all nationals from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. In addition, this executive order halts the U.S. refugee resettlement plan. The terms of the ban were to ban these nationals for 90 days, 120 days for refugees, and indefinite ban for Syrian refugees. Weeks later, this ban was halted, which led to the second version of the ban.

The Travel Ban 2.0 banned nationals from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen for 90 days. For refugees originating from the designated countries, they were banned for 120 days. This ban was halted by the Supreme Court on June 26, 2017 on certain issues but allowed for the ban to be implemented for those who do not have familial ties in the United States.

The Travel Ban 3.0 was issued on September 24, 2017, which targeted people from Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, and government officials from Yemen and Venezuela

from indefinitely entering the country. This version of the ban was allowed to go into full effect by the Supreme Court on December 4, 2017.

The latest version of this executive order, Travel Ban 4.0, was issued on October 24, 2017, imminently after the Supreme Court dismisses the case of *Hawaii vs. Trump*. This version of the ban barred all refugees from the following countries for 90 days in order to undergo extreme vetting: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mali, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen. The ban also proposed for a 90-day ban for nationals from these selected countries. A few months later on December 23, 2017, the District Court in Seattle allowed for an amendment to the ban to allow refugees who have a bona fide relationship in the United States to enter the country.

The travel ban has gone through four revisions; however, the main goal is the same: to keep Middle Eastern Muslim immigrants and refugees from entering the United States. From the very beginning of the travel ban, it was publicly labeled the “Muslim Travel Ban” by the media and the American people due to the majority of countries that were targeted being primarily Muslim countries, like Iran and Syria. When the executive order was first released, people across the country swarmed in protest to airports, protesting this anti-Islamic discriminatory and xenophobic policy.

In this section of this research study, the objective is to explore if the Muslim Travel Ban had an impact on the lives of first and second-generation Middle Eastern Muslim women living in the greater Los Angeles, California, and if so, as to what was the perceived impact. Generally speaking, it was in this part of the study that the research participants had more of a varied response, it being dependent on whether or not they were from one of the banned countries. With regards to sentiments relating to identity, some of the women spoke about how the travel ban influenced the way they see their existence in society, with relating to whether or not they felt like



society deemed them acceptable to live in the United States. This issue is directly related to the other aspect of Islamophobia, and the xenophobic sentiments that this particular immigrant group did not belong or was not compatible with U.S. society. Other issues that were discussed in the interviews were their sense of belonging, and their reactions to the airport protests.

## **Identity**

While interviewing research participant Sara, a 22-year-old second-generation Mexican Lebanese American woman, she passionately spoke about how her identity did change with the travel ban. She recounts how being raised in the United States, she feels as if she has been hearing anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments all her life. She states that she does not know what it is like to not have part of her identity of who she is contested and victimized. She states, "...having a mother who is from Mexico, having a father whose Arab and Muslim and being Muslim myself, it almost felt like what they were arguing was are you people compatible? Compatible with US society? Can we trust them?" (Sara. Personal Interview. 9 July 2017). Sara's comments on how the political conversations surrounding immigrants from both the Middle East and Mexico, and around Islam, have made her feel like she is at the core of anti-immigrant and Islamophobic political debates. Sara further on states that she believes that with the way politics are heading with the Trump administration and the travel ban, she feels that politics deem her to be the problem. She elaborates, "I was feeling hurt by the whole thing, I'm not included in this discussion, but I'm the central focus of the discussion, my identity at least, when it was never a problem for me before. I've never had a problem growing up here" (Sara. Personal Interview. 9 July 2017). For Sara, the elections and travel bans have made her feel like a central component to what is being negotiated, with her not having a voice within the political discussion. Thus, not only des Sara feel the effects of xenophobia and Islamophobia caused by her ethnic and religious identities, but she feels

voiceless in relevant political discussion. She later on explains that as a direct response the way politics have made her feel, she has become more defensive to people when they ask her about their ethnic and cultural traditions as a way of dealing with her hurt feelings,

I became more defensive like if people who were not in my community would ask me what I was, I would almost answer them like 'do you have a problem with that?' Almost like that because I felt like people were going to attack me at every corner. I felt like not necessarily at school, but anywhere people who are going to be like 'ooh you're you're one of those' that kind of... I almost felt like I was ready to fight at every corner like no, okay, I'm gonna stay here. I have just as much rights, just as much right to be here as you, and you just have to deal with that. You just have to deal with my existence that you hate so much. I think I just became way more defensive, and almost ready to get my claws out at any opportunity. (Sara. Personal Interview. 9 July 2017).

For Sara, her way of resisting was to become more defensive towards people who inquire as to what is her identity. This defensiveness is a direct result from how Trump, the travel ban, and an overarching fear driven society, have made her feel like she did not belong in the society she lives in. Specifically, with regards to the travel ban, she expressed that she was not surprised by the ban, and that she was expecting the Trump administration to propose such a policy. However, with the xenophobic and Islamophobic rhetoric surrounding the ban, it caused Sara to express her issues with the ban. She states, "I've heard that before, I've been hearing that my whole life. I've been living here my whole life, and that people have been telling me that I'm not compatible with this society almost constantly. It's almost like I'm the walking irony of that" (Sara. Personal Interview. 9 July 2017). The experience that Sara shared is important to remember when thinking about Trump and his travel bans, because on such a basic level, there is an impact for some people. Sara's testimony is a clear example that the historical event of such a discriminatory policy put into place by the President of the United States, does have an impact on how some of the research participants view their own positionality in in the communities that they are involved with.

Another research participant, Mariam, a 19-year-old second-generation Iranian American woman, shared her experiences based on the travel ban by stating that for her, it caused her to be more true to herself and outspoken. She believes that many of these issues connected to Trump and the travel ban are derived out of prejudice, and the only way to rise up against prejudice is through personal experiences. In addition, because of the travel ban, she shared in our interview that to help make her feel better, she finds “more solace in my community because these people are feeling exactly the way I am. They are experiencing life the way I am in this moment, so it made me connect to my community more” (Mariam. Personal Interview. 10 July 2017). For Mariam, a way for her to deal with what is happening politically and socially is turn to her own community for support. This type of response has also been documented in this research with how other research participants have dealt with 9/11 and the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. Mariam’s experience is also important to recognize that through all these political issues, ethnic communities are a source of comfort and care against societal issues like xenophobia, hatred, and Islamophobia, and that in times of need, people band together to form a stronger community.

## **Belonging**

While discussing the possible impact the presidential executive orders could have on themselves, many research participant touch upon their sense of belonging. Research participant Neda, a 25-year-old second-generation Iranian American woman spoke directly about the travel ban, and the experience she had with it. Neda was set out to travel to Iran just weeks after the travel ban was first put into place with her mother. During that time, both of them were extremely nervous about the traveling and were unsure whether or not they should be traveling. Due to older grandparents still living in Iran, Neda was determined to go to visit, however, remained anxious for her mother to be traveling out of the country during that time. When generally discussing the

travel ban, Neda shares that one of her Iranian friends were getting married, and their elderly grandfather came all the way to the United States, just to be sent back to Iran when the travel ban was first introduced in January 2017. This was especially upsetting for her and her friend due that visit most likely being the last time he would have been to the states to visit his grandchildren. Many other participants shared in their interviews that this was common, that they knew of many people who already were planning to come over, and when they arrived, they were sent back to their country of origin. Upon reflection regarding how the travel ban made her feel, Neda shares, “I just feel incredibly unwanted in my own country” (Neda. Personal Interview. 11 July 2017). Feeling unwanted in their own country was reflected in almost all of the interviews where the research participant did feel a personal impact based upon the travel bans.

Dena, a 53-year-old first-generation Iranian American woman was directly impacted by the travel ban. During the same time, one of her daughters was getting married in California, and they had lots of family and friends from Iran who were planning on coming to the wedding. Their friends had already had gone through the lengthy and expensive process of getting a visas or green cards, and all the trip preparations like booking their flights, and when the travel ban was introduced, Dena insisted to everyone coming from Iran to not risk coming to the United States. She did not want to risk the possibility of them getting stuck in the airport, and all the subsequent outcomes that would have happened based upon this racially discriminatory policy. She shares, “I was so upset I didn't know what's going on. I was worried about that incident myself, and seeing the people not coming out again even though they had the green card, it doesn't make sense to me at all” (Dena. Personal Interview. November 2017). For Dena, this time period was supposed to be a happy and loving one, being reunited with her friends and family from Iran for her daughter's wedding, however, the travel ban caused her a great deal of stress worrying about her loved ones.

She reflects on this time period by saying, “it was crazy, it was crazy, it was crazy. I don't know where we are going from here, honest to God. I can't even see anything the right direction, so far every day is up and down, up and down, it's like a rollercoaster coming” (Dena. Personal Interview. November 2017). For Dena, she feels as if the Trump administration and the policies that are being set forth are like a rollercoaster. Dena’s experience with the travel ban shows documentation on how such a policy like the travel ban, which is rooted in xenophobic and Islamophobic sentiments, can have a devastating impact on individual people's lives.

### *Islamophobia*

When discussing the travel bans, some of the research participants specifically expressed their beliefs that the travel ban has its roots based in Islamophobia. Research participant Yasmin believes that the travel ban was perceived much worse due the label, “Muslim” travel ban. She states that with the Muslim label the ban, “Stayed in your head, you remember it. These things you know, in a long time, people think ‘oh yeah’ or not going to let any Muslims to come in ... that that label itself is is kind of triggering” (Yasmin. Personal Interview. 16 July 2017). When thinking about the goals of what Islamophobic sentiments are set out to do, normalizing this kind of hatred is key for keeping Muslim people as subordinate, and to further othering of Muslims in society. This is the what Yasmin is referencing: the possibility of normalizing the exclusion and the banning of Muslim people, due to their culture and beliefs, in the future.

When the travel ban was first implemented, research participant Mariam, a second-generation Iranian American, felt outraged because she believes that the Trump Administration’s goal for the travel ban was aimed at banning Muslims from entering the country. In our interview, she reflected on the travel ban by stating,

It angers me because in my eyes, it was just definitely racial profiling and Islamophobia in action in the White House...I think it is a product of Islamophobia and so people in the White House, who influenced the executive order, they definitely were acting on Islamophobia. And the thinking and the thought process Muslims equal terrorists, and so in their eyes, yes it was a ban on and it was like another act on the war on terrorism. But in reality, it was a prejudice Muslim ban that that was aimed at Muslims because there was a clause that was like, the exception for these countries is that religious minority which would be Christians, so it was it was pretty much directly at Muslims in these countries traveling (Mariam. Personal Interview. 10 July 2017).

According to Mariam, the travel ban put out by the Trump administration had a clear intention: to cease the entry of Muslim immigrants into the United States. One aspect that she articulates clearly as to why the ban is troubling for many, is her belief that the people who were creating the travel ban were thinking of doing it strictly for a security standpoint, to protect from terrorists from entering the country. Therefore, like Mariam said, because it is clearly targeting Muslim people, the people who drafted the travel ban were equating Muslims to be terrorists. This kind of belief that all Muslim people and immigrants equates to terrorists is highly dangerous thinking and is also perpetrated by Islamophobia. This is the key element on the dangers and damage of Islamophobia to the Muslim immigrant communities in the U.S.

### *Protest at Airports Reaction*

Many of the research participants shared positive comments on the protests that occurred across the nation at international airports to protest the travel ban when it was first introduced. Research participant Mariam believed it to be a good show of support for the Muslim community and helped garner attention of the travel ban being xenophobic and Islamophobic. Another research participant who talked about how she felt about the airport protests was, Amal, a 24-year-old second-generation Egyptian American woman. Amal expressed how surprised at how many people showed up, and that she was grateful for it. For her, the biggest positive change the airport protests brought was around prayer, especially since the act of prayer has become heavily

politicized. Amal elaborates, “Muslims are getting love and they could pray in the airports, and not be looked at in a weird way. I always joke like, oh my God, we can finally pray at an airport and it's not seen [as] weird” (Amal. Personal Interview. 16 July 2017). Being able to pray at an airport and have it not be seen as weird or uncomfortable is a an important act for many Muslims in the United States, including for Amal. Not only so that prayer become normalized in an accepting way, but that it is a form of resistance to the stigma around Islam and praying.

Lastly, Nawal, a 49-year-old first-generation Lebanese American woman also expressed her sentiments regarding the travel ban protests. In our interview, Nawal shared that she felt the impact of the travel ban deeply because she was about to travel to Lebanon around the same time. When the travel ban came out, she and many others in her community were surprised that Lebanon was not on the list, and feared that maybe in the next version, it would be. Due to her going back to Lebanon around that same time, her community was worries that for some reason, she would not be able to get back into the country, or that while she was in Lebanon, that Lebanon would be targeted by the travel ban. This constant state of fear, once again, due to Islamophobia, her Lebanese community had shown that regardless of certain countries not being listed on the travel ban, there is some level of impact across different Middle Eastern immigrant communities. However, when she was returning to the United States after her trip to Lebanon, she was able to get back into the country without any problems, despite all the anxiety and fear felt around her return by her family and community. Nawal goes on to comment that when she returned, she would watch the news and keep up with what was going on politically. Specifically, with the protests at the airports against the travel ban, Nawal shares one of the protests that really impacted her,

It was prayer time and a bunch of the guys who are there protesting, one of them got up on a high level... he did of the adhan. He did the call for prayer, and they decided to line up in the freaking airport to pray. And all the Americans stood around them. That was the best thing I've ever seen, and I'm like, Trump, thank you. No one would have thought you'd

have Jumu'ah prayer in a freaking American Airport. If it wasn't for him, nobody would have done it. (Nawal. Personal Interview. 21 November 2017).

Like Nawal said, Muslims praying in airports have become a politicized act of resistance in the United States. For these Muslim protesters to pray so publicly, it was a show of resilience and political resistance that Nawal believed to be one of the best things she has ever seen. Nawal also goes on to talk about how she prays in an airport, and that she does not get scared to do it, but she tries to find a neutral corner out of people's way.

Throughout our interview, Nawal goes on to comment about how when there is something negative, there is usually a positive side, and that she believed the travel ban have,

Whatever happens there is always going to be the negatives and positives. So part of it is make people conscientious. People dig deep, maybe conscientious people maybe who weren't hate foreign things, but they just stood on the sidelines. They made them get up and say no, no this is unacceptable. Just like the Muslim terrorists don't represent these Muslims, Trump don't represent me, and I want people, I want the world to know they felt attacked in their identity, in their humanity. So that was important. That was, that was a positive thing (Nawal. Personal Interview. 21 November 2017).

For Nawal, seeing the non-Muslim American people stand up, while the Muslim protests were praying, was a positive sign of solidarity and resistance in the face of both, the travel ban and the Trump administration. While conducting the research for this study, at the end of the interviews, the majority of the women touched on this aspect of positive outcomes. This kind of resilience and strength to see the good and positive in these difficult political times is important to recognize and highlight.

Throughout this chapter, we have heard the testimonies and stories of women who were impacted by the Muslim Travel Ban in some form or another. The objective of this part of the research is to inquire exactly how first and second-generation Middle Eastern Muslim women felt and experienced that travel ban with regards to their identity and their sense of belonging. In addition, another research goal was to inquire whether or not there was a different level of impact



perceived on the participants sense of identity and belonging based on the travel bans, in comparison to the political events of 9/11 and the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. Generally speaking, the women who did feel an impact on their lives from the travel bans said that it had an impact on their sense of belonging in the United States, and how they felt like their existence was not welcomed in mainstream U.S. society. Lastly, the general consensus about the protests that occurred at airports across the nations due to the travel ban were that the protests were a positive sign of solidarity and resistance with Muslim communities, and that the American public recognized that the travel bans values and goals are based in Islamophobia and xenophobia.

## **Chapter 7. Conclusion**

This research is an ethnographically informed study that investigates the nature to which significant political events in the history of the United States have impacted the lives of first and second-generation Middle Eastern Muslim women living in the greater Los Angeles area. The interview data collection occurred throughout the year of 2017 and consists of 11 in-depth semi-structured life interviews. The interviews cover three distinct topics within U.S. history: the aftermath of 9/11, the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, and President Trump's "Muslim" travel ban executive orders. The interview time ranges from being 25 minutes, to 90 minutes, it being dependent on the interviewee. The framework of which this research is positioned in is examining what is the role of racial and ethnic discrimination have on the lives of this particular niche community. Themes that were covered in the research interviews were topics relating to participant's ethnicity and religious identities, and their sense of belonging, both also touching upon the xenophobic and Islamophobic pressures felt within their communities.

The research data show that due to each of the three historical events, there was a perceived personal impact felt within the participant's lives. However, the level of impact varies person to person, based up many factors, mainly being how much, they follow the news and social issues. In addition, the great the impact felt by participants directly relates to the increasing Islamophobia that issued after each political event, mainly with the events of 9/11 and the 2016 presidential elections. In addition, the research shows that there is a direct correlation between the increase of Islamophobia, and the increase the participants sense of ethnic and religious identity. Generally speaking, the more one participant felt the effect of the 2016 elections, the more they wanted to connect and identity with their ethnic and religious identities. This trend occurring between life after 9/11, the elections, and the travel ban is significant finished for the field of migration and

Middle Eastern American studies. This finding is important due it showcasing that this is their way of surviving the society that they live in. Finding ways in which to survive critical political and historical event like the three presented in this study provides for an in depth look at how exactly this is achieved and what are people saying about this survival strategy.

This research was intended to fill the gap within migration and middle eastern American studies by documenting how fairly recent political events with the 2016 presidential elections and the so-called “Muslim” travel ban have had an impact on this niche community in southern California. Due to my own positionality as a researcher, was able to navigate these communities of people, and get a personal look as to exactly how these women are living their lives, and what are their strategies for coping with such political events.

It is also important to note that this research touches upon a community that I am personally involved in, as I myself am a second-generation Iranian American woman who was raised in southern California. When designing this research study, I wanted to utilize my own privilege of getting a Master's degree. My objective was to share my own platform within academia, to have the voices of these women to be heard and listened to. Throughout this study, I intentionally used plenty of quotes, long and short, in order to have the research participants voice to come through in the research, rather than my own. This is of particular intention for me, as I want this to be a tribute to the resilience and strength these women are living their life with.

Throughout some of the interview I conducted, some of the research participants asked me to share my own life experiences regarding the topics covered within the interview. As a researcher, I had to refrain from doing to, in order to be as objective as possible throughout the data collection. However, because this research is on people who are just like me, I found his to be extremely difficult at times.

There were moments throughout the interview collection where it was emotionally difficult to remain objective due to what the women were sharing with me. On one specific occasion, I was unable to do so. The research participant started to get emotional while speaking about how 9/11 affected her home life, and she started to cry. Unable to stop myself, I too started to cry a little due to what she was saying, and it having a profound impact on myself. However, these little moments that occurred generally throughout all the interviews, are what I believe to show the most vulnerability and quantity of exactly how much these political events have shaped their lives. For me, this research has significant importance, and has shaped my understanding of not only my community and the way that we are a resistance, but that there are micro level effects that occur based upon massive scale political decisions.

When reflecting upon my own identities and life experiences that were impacted by 9/11, the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, and the travel ban, I feel as if this study is my own way of resisting mainstream xenophobic and Islamophobic American society. When the 2016 U. S. presidential elections were occurring, I felt the need to respond, to resist, to fight. Given my position of being a graduate student, I felt like conducting this study would be my way of fighting back. The entirety of this research has been a challenge, and sometimes emotionally difficult while combing through the interview data. However, I am proud to have done this study, and I am so grateful for the research participants for not only believing in me, but also believing this in this research.

## Appendix

### Appendix 1- Second Generation Interview Guide

#### Second Generation Interview Guide

- I. Biographical Information
  1. What year were you born in?
  2. Where was your mother born?
  3. Where was your father born?
  4. What is the highest level of education you have reached?
  5. How do you identify religiously?
  6. How do you culturally identify?
  7. What is your nationality?
  8. How long have you lived in the Los Angeles area?
  9. What is your relationship status?
  10. How many children do you have?
  
- II. Post 9/11 Effects
  1. How old were you when 9/11 occurred? Where were you living?
  2. In what ways, if any, did your school life change after 9/11? After 9/11 were there any noticeable differences regarding your classmates, teachers, or academic performance?
  3. In what ways, if any, did your social life change after 9/11? Were there any changes in which friends you socialized with, how often you socialized, or the activities involved?
  4. In what ways, if any, did your personal/home life change after 9/11?
  5. What societal issues have you recognized in post 9/11 USA and why do you think those issues are present?
  6. Please explain the main differences in your experiences pre and post 9/11.
  7. Since 9/11 have you left and/or joined new social groups or organizations? Did 9/11 motivate your decision to leave or join these groups?
  8. What kinds of clubs/groups were you involved in pre/post 9/11 and have you noticed any dynamic changes in these groups? If so, what? Do you attribute it to 9/11?
  9. Tell me how your sense of yourself as being a Muslim, Middle Eastern, and/or second generation immigrant changed or didn't change after 9/11.
  10. How did being Muslim and Middle Eastern influence your experiences post 9/11?
  
- III. President Trump's Administration
  1. Can you describe how you felt about the 2016 US presidential elections.
  2. How did you react to Donald Trump being elected president?
  3. In what ways, if any, did your school life change? Were there any noticeable differences regarding your classmates, teachers, or academic performance?

4. In what ways, if any, did your social life change? Were there any changes in which friends you socialized with, how often you socialized, or the activities involved?
5. During the elections, how did your school, social, and personal communities react? How did they react after?
6. Describe how you noticed a change in your day-to-day life post elections.
7. Tell me how your sense of self as being a Muslim and Middle Eastern and second generation immigrant changed or didn't after the 2016 presidential elections?
8. How did you feel about President Trump's travel ban executive orders?
9. How did you react to these travel bans?
10. Can you tell me about how you noticed a change in your day-to-day life after the travel bans?
11. Tell me how your sense of yourself as being a Muslim and Middle Eastern and second generation immigrant changed or didn't after the travel ban orders were put in place.

IV. Additional questions

1. Is there anything else I should have asked throughout this interview that I didn't ask?
2. What is important to you to mention when discussing President Trump and his travel bans?

## Appendix 2- First Generation Interview Guide

### First Generation Interview Guide

- I. Biographical Information
  1. What year were you born in?
  2. What year did you come to the United States of America?
  3. When did you come to the Los Angeles, California area?
  4. What is the highest level of education you have reached?
  5. How do you identify religiously?
  6. How do you culturally identify?
  7. What is your nationality?
  8. How long have you lived in the Los Angeles area?
  9. What is your relationship status?
  10. How many children do you have?
  
- II. Post 9/11 Effects
  1. How old were you when 9/11 occurred? Where were you living?
  2. In what ways, if any, did your school life change after 9/11? After 9/11 were there any noticeable differences regarding your classmates, teachers, or academic performance?
  3. In what ways, if any, did your social life change after 9/11? Were there any changes in which friends you socialized with, how often you socialized, or the activities involved?
  4. In what ways, if any, did your personal/home life change after 9/11?
  5. What societal issues have you recognized in post 9/11 USA and why do you think those issues are present?
  6. Please explain the main differences in your experiences pre-and post 9/11.
  7. Since 9/11 have you left and/or joined new social groups or organizations? Did 9/11 motivate your decision to leave or join these groups?
  8. What kinds of clubs/groups were you involved in pre/post 9/11 and have you noticed any dynamic changes in these groups? If so, what? Do you attribute it to 9/11?
  9. Tell me how your sense of yourself as being a Muslim, Middle Eastern, and/or first-generation immigrant changed or didn't change after 9/11.
  10. How did being Muslim and Middle Eastern influence your experiences post 9/11?
  
- III. President Trump's Administration
  1. Can you describe how you felt about the 2016 US presidential elections.
  2. How did you react to Donald Trump being elected president?
  3. In what ways, if any, did you notice your child's school life change? Were there any noticeable differences regarding your interactions with classmates, teachers, or academic performance?
  4. In what ways, if any, did your social life change? Were there any changes in which friends you socialized with, how often you socialized, or the activities involved?

5. During the elections, how did your school, social, and personal communities react? How did they react after?
6. Describe how you noticed a change in your day-to-day life post elections.
7. Tell me how your sense of self as being a Muslim and Middle Eastern and first-generation immigrant changed or didn't after the 2016 presidential elections?
8. How did you feel about President Trump's travel ban executive orders?
9. How did you react to these travel bans?
10. Can you tell me about how you noticed a change in your day-to-day life after the travel bans?
11. Tell me how your sense of yourself as being a Muslim and Middle Eastern and first-generation immigrant changed or didn't after the travel ban orders were put in place.

IV. Additional questions

1. Is there anything else I should have asked throughout this interview that I didn't ask?
2. What is important to you to mention when discussing President Trump and his travel bans?



## Appendix 3 -Second Generation Consent Form



### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECT**

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. If you agree to participate, I will ask for your signature or oral agreement. I will also leave you a copy of this form for you to keep.

My name is Nadia Naghedi Baradaran Hajjar and I am a graduate student in the Department of Arts and Sciences at University of San Francisco.

#### **WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:**

This study attempts to research if the 2016 United States Presidential Election and the Muslim Travel Bans have had an impact on the daily lives of young, second generation Middle Eastern immigrant Muslim women in Southern California. Given that these political events are fairly recent, I hope to use this study to better understand and document some of the experiences of these women in the current post 9/11 era. Findings from this study will inform future research to address the impact of President Donald Trump's presidency on Muslim immigrant communities in the United States.

#### **WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:**

In this interview, I'll ask you questions and record your answers, but I will not record or report your name. Your participation is completely voluntary and confidential. If there is any question you don't wish to answer for any reason, you may skip it. If there are issues you think I should be asking you about but do not, please feel free to share your views with me. I am first and foremost interested in what you have to say. This interview will be audio taped, but your name and the audio recording will not be released. You of course have the option of choosing to not be audio taped and still participate.

#### **DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:**

Your participation in this study will involve answering questions and should take you approximately 45 minutes.

#### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:**

You should not experience any risk or discomfort at all in this interview. You are free to end the interview whenever you choose to. If you agree to let me record the interview, you can always ask me to turn off the audio recorder at any time.

#### **BENEFITS:**

You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study.

**PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Because you will not be providing any information that can uniquely identify you, the data you provide will be anonymous.

**COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:**

There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:**

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

**OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:**

Please ask any questions you have. If you have questions later, you may contact me, Nadia Naghedhi Baradaran Hajjar at (909) 538-2384 or [nnaghedibaradaranhaj@dons.usfca.edu](mailto:nnaghedibaradaranhaj@dons.usfca.edu). If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact my supervising professor Lois Lorentzen at [lorentzen@usfca.edu](mailto:lorentzen@usfca.edu) and/or the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at [IRBPHS@usfca.edu](mailto:IRBPHS@usfca.edu).

**I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.**

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**I CONSENT TO MY INTERVIEW BEING AUDIO TAPED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT MY NAME AND RECORDING WILL NOT BE MADE PUBLIC.**

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*PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE, MARK, or INTERVIEWER NOTATION THAT ORAL CONSENT HAS BEEN GIVEN & DATE*

## Appendix 4- First Generation Consent Form



### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECT**

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. If you agree to participate, I will ask for your signature or oral agreement. I will also leave you a copy of this form for you to keep.

My name is Nadia Naghedi Baradaran Hajjar and I am a graduate student in the Department of Arts and Sciences at University of San Francisco.

#### **WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:**

This study attempts to research if the 2016 United States Presidential Election and the Muslim Travel Bans have had an impact on the daily lives of first and second generation Middle Eastern immigrant Muslim women in Southern California. Given that these political events are fairly recent, I hope to use this study to better understand and document some of the experiences of these women in the current post 9/11 era. Findings from this study will inform future research to address the impact of President Donald Trump's presidency on Muslim immigrant communities in the United States.

#### **WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:**

In this interview, I'll ask you questions and record your answers, but I will not record or report your name. Your participation is completely voluntary and confidential. If there is any question you don't wish to answer for any reason, you may skip it. If there are issues you think I should be asking you about but do not, please feel free to share your views with me. I am first and foremost interested in what you have to say. This interview will be audio taped, but your name and the audio recording will not be released. You of course have the option of choosing to not be audio taped and still participate.

#### **DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:**

Your participation in this study will involve answering questions and should take you approximately 45 minutes.

#### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:**

You should not experience any risk or discomfort at all in this interview. You are free to end the interview whenever you choose to. If you agree to let me record the interview, you can always ask me to turn off the audio recorder at any time.

**BENEFITS:**

You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study.

**PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Because you will not be providing any information that can uniquely identify you, the data you provide will be anonymous.

**COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:**

There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:**

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

**OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:**

Please ask any questions you have. If you have questions later, you may contact me, Nadia Naghed Baradaran Hajjar at (909) 538-2384 or [nnaghedibaradaranhaj@dons.usfca.edu](mailto:nnaghedibaradaranhaj@dons.usfca.edu). If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact my supervising professor Lois Lorentzen at [lorentzen@usfca.edu](mailto:lorentzen@usfca.edu) and/or the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at [IRBPHS@usfca.edu](mailto:IRBPHS@usfca.edu).

**I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.**

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**I CONSENT TO MY INTERVIEW BEING AUDIO TAPED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT MY NAME AND RECORDING WILL NOT BE MADE PUBLIC.**

---

*PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE, MARK, or INTERVIEWER NOTATION THAT ORAL CONSENT HAS BEEN GIVEN & DATE*

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