

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Kent Norris for the degree of Master of Science in College Student Services Administration presented April 18, 2011.

Title: Middle Eastern Student Perceptions of Mattering and Marginality at a Large American University

Abstract approved:

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This study aimed to explore the relatively undocumented experiences and perceptions of mattering and marginality among Middle Eastern students attending a large American university, it also sought to inform higher education administration about the unique characteristics of this rapidly noticeable student population and it attempted to narrow the knowledge gap in existing literature regarding this underserved population of Middle Eastern students.

In-depth looks at the relationship between the United States and the Middle East revealed an ugly past. Even before 9/11, Middle Easterners faced persecution in North America. But today, persecution, discrimination, and stereotyping have reached dangerous levels that make it harder for Middle Eastern students in U.S. colleges and universities today. After exploring Schlossberg's (1989) mattering and marginality in an Anonymous University located in the Pacific Northwest, three themes were found that contribute to Middle Eastern students feeling marginalized at U.S. colleges and

universities: a) Lack of recognition as a cultural group, b) a lack of representation within student services, and c) classic signs of discrimination: serious misconceptions.

These three themes lead to recommendations that seek to accommodate Middle Eastern students more. Colleges and universities need to come to a better understanding of what Middle Eastern students are going through, and accommodate accordingly.

Keywords: Middle Eastern Students, Middle East (History of), Muslim, marginality, mattering, politics, and college campuses.

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Middle Eastern Student Perceptions of Mattering and Marginality at a Large American
University

by
Kent Norris

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APPROVED:

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Kent Norris, Author

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Middle Eastern Student Perceptions of Mattering and Marginality at a Large American University

Chapter One: Introduction

There is no doubt that the 9/11 terrorist attacks had a significant impact on the United States. The attacks brought North America together in strength and unity. However, amongst the tragedy that was 9/11, problems worsened as many Americans took out anger and aggression against Middle Easterners living in the United States.

Take for example the story of Abdulla Al-Mosallam, who felt devastated and frightened after 9/11. Just hours after the attacks, Al-Mosallam was walking on the campus of Arizona State University and heard someone yell at him, “Why did you guys bomb New York and DC?” (McMurthie, 2001). Later that day, Al-Mosallam, couldn’t concentrate on a test because of the verbal abuse he received earlier. As a result, he failed the test. After hearing rumors of civil unrest against Middle Eastern students, this senior from Qatar shaved his head to make him look more Latino rather than Middle Eastern in an effort to protect himself. His attempt to change others’ perception of his nationality failed as persecution continued and Al-Mosallam headed home to Qatar a couple weeks after 9/11 (2001). Many other Middle Eastern students shared al-Mosallam’s insecurity about his wellbeing. Several students from Middle Eastern nations evacuated the United States because of racism and racial profiling. Ultimately, the United States became a place they didn’t want to be, and they felt safer in their home countries, even though many of those countries would later become political and military targets for the United States.

The history of American and Middle Eastern relations has not always been peaceful. The first act of conflict with the Middle East came with the passing of the Immigration Act of 1917. This act prohibited anyone from Asia or the Middle East from immigrating to the United States. This act was soon repealed, but it certainly was not the end of conflict in American and Middle Eastern affairs.

In the 1970s the Middle East placed an oil embargo on the United States, which sent the country into a fear of domestic oil shortages (Gettleman & Schaar, 2003). But even more provocative in American-Middle Eastern relations was the Iran Hostage Crisis of 1979. Several revolting Iranians stormed the American embassy in Tehran, Iran, tearing down walls, overcoming all security, and quickly taking all Americans hostage. Due to poor diplomacy and tough demands from the revolutionary-led Iranians, America was unable to secure the hostages' release until 444 days later.

Conflict continued on April 18, 1983 when war broke out in Beirut and a car bomb destroyed the front half of the American embassy and killed 63 Americans. In the same year, a man drove a car bomb into an airport hanger holding soldiers in Beirut and killed 241 American men and women (Farber, 2005).

In addition to these events, America has fought against Middle Eastern countries during several wars or skirmishes, which were directed by three different United States presidents. After this, there seemed to be mostly minor skirmishes between the United States and the Middle East until September 11, 2001, when four American commercial airplanes were hijacked. Two airplanes were flown in to the World Trade Center, and one into the Pentagon. The other crashed in Pennsylvania with only speculation of where it was headed. The men who hijacked the planes were identified as Middle Easterners and

as radical Islamic terrorists. Americans saw images of people in Middle Eastern countries celebrating. And several days later, Osama Bin Laden, illegally hiding somewhere in the Middle East, sent video messages to the world, claiming responsibility for the planned attack.

Outraged, the United States responded by declaring a war on terrorism, and as a result sent troops into Afghanistan and later Iraq. Whether or not the United States has been successful in this war is still debatable. Currently the United States still has a military presence in Iraq, and is waging a war in Afghanistan, with several attacks taking place in Pakistan and Libya. Additionally, President Obama has placed political sanctions against Iran because of a rumored nuclear weapons program. As a result, America may be facing an additional war with Iran (Baker, 2010).

Significance and Purpose of Study

This research focused on perceptions of mattering and marginality of students who identify as Middle Eastern. For the purpose of this study, Middle Eastern students are defined as any student who self-identifies as Middle Eastern, which typically means all Arab nations (Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, etc.), and several other nations that aren't considered traditional Arab nations such as Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Armenia, and many others.

Mattering and marginality among Middle Eastern students is largely unexplored in academic circles. However, several studies (Wingfield & Karamon, 2002; Merskin, 2004; McMurthie, 2001; Mueller, 2009; Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003) have shown the struggles Middle Eastern students in America have faced since 9/11. By using the tag phrases of "Arab" and "Muslim," these authors discovered that this

underrepresented student population feels discriminated against in the United States. Additionally, authors have found that Middle Eastern international students were affected by political sanctions after 9/11 that made it harder for them to enter the country (Mueller, 2009; Pyszczynski et al., 2003). However, none of these authors have looked closely at Middle Eastern students within the context of marginality, nor have any previous studies looked at Middle Eastern students within the light of Nancy Schlossberg's (1989) theoretical concepts of mattering. However, the concept of mattering has been explored within the context of other underrepresented student populations. These studies have found insufficient levels of mattering and high levels of marginality among many underrepresented populations, without explicitly referencing Schlossberg (1989).

Theoretical Framework

This study uses two theoretical concepts commonly used in academic and educational writing: mattering and marginality. The concept of marginality was introduced in 1928 in Robert Park's "Human Migration and The Marginal Man." But his work didn't focus on the concept; instead, he discusses the struggles immigrants face as they try to be accepted by two different cultures. Using the Jewish culture as the example, Park (1928) says,

The Jew is a cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct places, never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice in the society in which he now sought to find a place. He is a man of the margins of two cultures (p. 892).

This laid the foundation for the study and concept of marginality. Later, researchers such as Stonequist (1935) added that if marginalized individuals didn't properly

assimilate into their own culture or the dominate culture, they would show dysfunction.

Goldberg (1941) added that as long as individuals did what was normal for their societies, their chances of dysfunction greatly decreased. These studies prompted the academic world to explore this concept further. Now the word *marginality* can be heard at almost every university and institution.

Schlossberg (1989) argues that, “every time an individual changes roles or experiences a transition, the potential for feeling marginal arises” (p. 7). This is due to individuals finding themselves “suspended awkwardly between their old role and the new one” (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988, p. 59). This duality (Cooper, 1997) is a major part of marginality, which plays an important role as the antithesis to mattering. Mattering is the opposite of marginality and is described this way,

Mattering is a motive: the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego extension exercises a powerful influence over our actions (Rosenberg and McCullough, 1981, p. 165).

Further with mattering, Schlossberg (1989) found that, attention, importance, ego-extension, dependence, and appreciation all contribute to feelings of mattering.

Schlossberg concludes that if students feel as if they do not matter, more needs to be done to ensure that students feel they do matter. She suggests that more student services need to be readily available, and a more inclusive atmosphere must be fostered. This balance between mattering and marginality acts as the backbone to this thesis and research.

Research Questions

The primary question this study explores is: does Schlossberg’s (1989) mattering vs. marginality theory describe Middle Eastern students’ experience on American campuses? Subsidiary questions include: what effects have America’s past relations in

and with Middle Eastern countries had on Middle Eastern students' ability to study in United States today? Are there enough services available for these students? Are they still facing types of discrimination, and what does that look like? What political action jeopardizes the connectedness students from the Middle East feel on American campuses?

This study is significant because (a) it aims to explore the relatively undocumented experiences and perceptions of students who identify as Middle Eastern, (b) it seeks to inform higher education administration about the unique characteristics of this rapidly noticeable student population, and (c) it attempts to narrow the knowledge gap in existing literature regarding this underserved population of contemporary Middle Eastern students.

Chapter Two: Historical Context and Contemporary Issues

This research explores the perceptions of mattering and marginality of students who identify as Middle Eastern. Built into this question are the larger concepts of post-9/11 impacts on Middle Eastern students, political foreign policy and actions against terrorism, and the college student services available for students from the Middle East. Despite the fact that no work on mattering and marginality of Middle Eastern students has been published, there is a lot of history between America and the Middle East. This chapter will explore the relatively recent political and social history between the United States and the Middle Eastern region of the world, and will discuss the current issues faced by Middle Easterners, Muslims, and Middle Eastern students. The history between the United States and the Middle East is critical to understanding Middle Easterners experience with mattering and marginality. Understanding the histories of the Middle East and the United States give insights on the attitudes and opinions each region of the world have about each other. The following perspectives is from an American standpoint, but this angle is important to understand how Americans have treated Middle Easterners, and perhaps will treat them in the future. This chapter also seeks to establish that there is a growing mistrust and fear against Middle Easterners in the United States, countered only by some who are defending and protecting society's image of Middle Easterners.

Political History

In 1979, America was shocked when 55 American citizens were taken hostage by young Iranian students at the American embassy in Tehran. The event was quickly broadcasted into American homes. U.S. citizens followed this issue closely, and after about a year and a half, the hostages were released. As result of this long crisis and the

anti-American attitudes of revolutionary Iranians, Americans' view of Iran and other Middle Eastern countries declined (Farber, 2005).

This crisis marked the first real political and theological problem America faced with the Middle East. David A. Farber (2005), author of the in-depth book *Taken Hostage*, writes, "The Iran hostage crisis came suddenly, claiming the attention in the midst of all the other worries of a difficult era" (p. 12). America was captivated and watched the first reports of the crisis with both intrigue and bitterness. As America watched, they learned:

On the morning of November 4, 1979, a mob rallied outside the American embassy in Tehran. There were thousands of people; they appeared to be students, mostly men but women, too. The women were in black, shrouded in chador. A small group cut the thin chain that secured the main gates and filed into the twenty-seven-acre embassy compound. Hundreds, then thousands, followed them, swarming over the eight-foot fence that guarded the embassy grounds. Iranian police, supposedly there to protect the American property, offered no resistance, called for no assistance, and received no support from other Iranian security forces. Compared to its heyday just a year earlier, the embassy was nearly deserted. And the few dozen who were still there were no match for the angry mob. They were grabbed and blindfolded. Their captors tied their hands behind their back. The 444 days of captivity had begun (Farber, 2005, p. 12).

Night after night, day after day, news programs in America showed images of Iranians in revolt holding anti-American banners and chanting anti-American slogans (Farber, 2005). As the days went on, the images became more firmly impressed on American minds. Even Walter Cronkite reminded the American people of the situation every night by following his phrase, "and that's the way it is" with the date and number of days "Americans were hostage in Iran" (Farber). Americans grew frustrated with the hostage situation, and Cronkite's reminders every night also served as a reminder of America's leaders' complacency in handling the issue.

When the news of the hostage situation arrived in Washington, DC, a task force

was instantly created, and attempts to contact the proper authorities in Iran were made. America assumed Iranian government officials would settle this student-led revolution and release the hostages, but Washington discovered that things in Iran were a lot more complicated. As a result, and after a failed rescue attempt, the political standoff ended. It ended the day President Carter was succeeded by Ronald Reagan.

Despite the eventual resolution, public opinion of the Middle Eastern countries declined. This issue made more people aware of Middle Eastern culture and political issues, and perhaps painted a picture of a hostile Middle East. Even Time Magazine covered the issue, depicting blindfolded hostages on the cover. The story was even more telling of how America felt,

Meanwhile, a wave of anger spread across the U.S. (see box). On campuses, Iranian flags were torched and the Ayatullah Khomeini was burned in effigy. In Beverly Hills, an anti-Shah demonstration by Iranian students turned into a near riot, with onlookers shouting obscenities at the Iranians. In New York City, at the close of an Iranian student demonstration, a Columbia University undergraduate shouted: "We're gonna ship you back, and you aren't gonna like it! No more booze. No more Big Macs. No more rock music. No more television. No more sex. You're gonna get on that plane at Kennedy, and when you get off in Tehran, you're gonna be back in the 13th century. How you gonna like that?" The Iranians, who stared back glumly, did not respond (Time Magazine, 1979, para. 3).

More skirmishes with Middle Eastern countries arose following the Iranian hostage crisis and further worsened the United States' opinion of the Middle East. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon, and Iran sided with Lebanon. The United States was stuck in the middle of the issue. President Reagan tried to get Israel out of Lebanon and restore Lebanese political order. But,

Radical Islamists in Lebanon believed that the United States was siding with Israeli-allied Lebanese Christian factions. After four Iranians were seized by a Lebanese Christian militia group, Iranian

linked militants retaliated by kidnapping a U.S. Citizen, the president of the American University of Beirut (Farber, 2005, p.185).

Because of U.S. involvement with Israel, a terrorist group called Islamic Jihad sent a suicide car-bomber to attack the American embassy in Beirut on April 18, 1983. The explosion destroyed the front half of the embassy, killing 63 Americans (Farber, 2005). The United States was now in a de facto war with the extremists and revolutionaries responsible for the attack. Additionally, to the shock of many, on October 23, 1983, “an Islamic Jihad suicide bomber drove a large truck filled with explosives into a large building in a Beirut airport” (Farber, p. 185). The explosion killed 241 American military personnel who were sleeping at the time of the attack. Lebanon claimed they trained the people who drove the cars, but didn’t plan the attack (Farber, p. 185, 2005). As a result the United States was upset with Lebanon, but Ronald Reagan was determined to not act aggressively or impulsively. Instead he turned his efforts to helping Middle Eastern countries who were being attacked by America’s nemesis during the 80s—the Soviet Union. With the aid of the United States, countries such as Afghanistan were able to stave off Soviet invasion.

The skirmishes following the Iran hostage crisis halted in the late 80s. However, the general public opinion of Middle Eastern countries was already tainted, and a political prejudice had already set in. This prejudice set the United States down a path that only resulted in more wars in the Middle East.

The Gulf Wars. The first Gulf War was the result of border clashes between Iran and Iraq. The clashes were a consequence of Iran’s summoning of Iraq’s Shia Muslims to join in Iran’s revolution and overthrow the leader of Iraq, Saddam Hussein. In September 1980, Iraq launched an air and ground attack against Iran, which shares a 780-mile border

with Iraq. The war lasted eight years. It is still the longest conventional war of the 20th and 21st centuries. In the fall of 1990, another war broke out when Iraq attacked Kuwait. This time the United States got more involved by sending troops to Kuwait in its defense, and placing UN-backed sanctions on Iraq. The conflict didn't last long and in late February, Iraq accepted UN resolutions and withdrew from Kuwait (Gettleman and Schaar, 2003).

Terrorist Attacks and America's Backlash

Outstanding political and social issues between the Middle Eastern regions and the United States have created challenges for Middle Eastern populations in the United States. Heightened awareness of Middle Eastern affairs and America's vulnerability came directly after the first attempt to bomb the World Trade Center in 1993 (Mohammad, 1995). But nothing was done then to discourage future attacks from terrorists groups (Oren, 2007). The United States felt even more vulnerable when on September 11, 2001, the World Trade Center actually came down. Like Abdulla Al-Mosallam, many students from the Middle East have faced an increase in discrimination after 9/11. Here are other examples of the experience of some Middle Eastern students after 9/11:

A mosque in Texas was firebombed, speeding cars rammed mosques in Indiana and Ohio, and death threats were phoned in to the Islamic Center of New England. A New York man tried to run over a Muslim woman in his car and two Muslim women were beaten at an Illinois college. Not surprisingly, many Islamic Americans reported being afraid to go out on the streets after 9/11.... Many colleges across the nation have witnessed a drop in enrollment of students of Arabic descent. The American University in Lebanon decided to extend enrollment deadlines to accommodate the many Arab students who have decided to return to places closer to their homelands to avoid the threat of possible persecution in the United States (Pyszczynski et al., 2003, p. 105).

It's obvious there was a lot of turmoil in the United States after 9/11. Although conditions have improved, political strife still exists, and prejudice, bigotry, and persecution against students from the Middle East still plague the United States (2003).

Negative media. Before 9/11, broadcast journalism and newsprint was laced with anti-Middle Eastern images (Kamilipour, 1995). Additionally, the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) and Wingfield and Karaman (2002) blame the media and Hollywood for creating unrealistic stereotypes of Arabs. The ADC, which has been a loud voice for equality for Arabs, commissioned Wingfield and Karaman (2002) to explore negative stereotypes of Arabs and research the effects these stereotypes have in the classroom. Wingfield and Karaman (2002) blame Hollywood for supporting negative stereotypes in the following movies: *True Lies*, *Back to the Future*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and Disney's *Aladdin* to name a few. In Disney's *Aladdin* for example, the original lyrics to one of the songs read, "Where they cut of your ear if they don't like your face." Only after Arab-American groups like the ADC protested it did Disney change the line to "Where it's flat and immense and the heat is intense" (Oren, 2007, p. 571). The ADC and other concerned groups fear that stereotypes promoted by such lyrics encourage people to vilify Arabs:

The construction of all Arabs as terrorists and all Muslims as Arab terrorists—Through political rhetoric reducing vast populations in to a single dark image—has significant consequences not only for the civil rights of individuals living in the United States but also for many other citizens of the world (Merskin, 2004, p. 172).

Although most of the media have been negative towards Arabs, there have been a few bright spots in this area after 9/11. For example, ESPN covered a Fordson High School football game (the high school has the highest percentage of Middle Eastern

students of any high school in the U.S.) very “favorably” and conducted a special on Arab-American athletes (Wingfield & Karamon, 2002, p. 135). Also post-9/11, “Politicians made it clear that anti-Arab behavior and bigotry would not be tolerated” (2002, p. 133). Despite the good however, Middle Easterners still face problems that are spurred on by the media. The media, of course, are not the only ones to blame, but there has always been a connection between media and politics.

Politics after 9/11. After the 9/11 attacks, stricter border entry and tougher visa regulations enacted by the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act (EBSVERA) increased discrimination and racial profiling (Mueller, 2009). Mueller (2009) explored enrollment rates between the United States and Canadian universities and found that foreign student populations were significantly down in the United States, but were significantly up in Canada following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. According to the Center for Education Statistics (2007), the Middle Eastern international student population in the U.S. peaked in 1980 at 84,710. In 2007, that number had dropped to 17,806 (necs.ed.gov, 2007). Mueller (2009) blames the EBSVERA. The EBSVERA makes it harder for students to get into the country. The main reason is that section 306 of the EBSVERA,

proscribes the issuance of a nonimmigrant visa to an alien from a country designated as a state-sponsor of terrorism. A state-sponsor of terrorism is defined as any country the government of which has been determined by the Secretary of State under any of the laws specified in paragraph (2) to have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism. (EBSVERA, 2002, Section 306)

Simply put, the U.S. has the ability to proscribe, or prohibit, anyone from gaining access to a visa based solely on the grounds of citizenship in a country determined to be a state-sponsor of terrorism. These stringent foreign relations are evidence of a nation

frightened of terrorism. While protecting the United States and protecting its universities is vitally important, it shouldn't be at the cost of rights guaranteed citizens, international students, and immigrants under the constitution.

The enactment of the EBSVERA is depriving the higher education system of the benefits of allowing foreign students to study in the United States. Fareed Zakaria (2008), a renowned journalist, believes one of the few things the United States has going for its economic future is its higher education. He states that education is one of the few things that will keep the United States competitive with international markets. If higher education is one of the few things the United States has left to compete with world markets, then the fact that international student populations are down from 84,710 in 1980 to 17,806 in 2007, should be alarming (necs.ed.gov, 2007).

No congressionally passed act has been more scrutinized than the American Patriot Act (2001). After 9/11, it took Congress 43 days to construct and pass this bill that decreased the confidentiality of Middle Easterners, and largely denied them rights guaranteed under the amendments to the Constitution. The primary amendment affected is the Fourth Amendment, which protects against illegal searches and seizures. This breach makes the first section of the Patriot Act seem ironically hypocritical. It says, "Arab Americans, Muslim Americans, and Americans from South Asia play a vital role in our nation and are entitled to nothing less than the full rights of every American" (Patriot Act, Section 102, A., 1. p. 8). This statement says Arab Americans need the full rights of every American, but later the act allows legal searches and seizures of Middle Easterners. Additionally, sections 507 and 508 of the Patriot Act amend the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA, the act that protects students'

information from government and non-government agencies. The Patriot Act amends FERPA and allows information to be given to any district attorney's office that is requesting information in conjunction with terrorist investigations. The Patriot Act also makes it a felony for universities to give,

any kind of assistance (including, for example, cash assistance, lodging, communications equipment, facilities . . .) to an individual who has been designated a "terrorist." There is no requirement that the assistance be intentionally given (Harrison, n.d., p. 19).

Making it a felony to give any assistance to a suspected "terrorist" jeopardizes college's ability to perform student services to Middle Eastern students without bias or suspicion.

There is no doubt that the Patriot Act and the EBSVERA have changed the dynamic of American universities by prescribing tougher entry requirements and increasing penalties for universities who may accidentally give support to terrorists.

Current Issues in Understanding Contemporary Middle Eastern Students

Before 9/11, Arab and Muslim students were invisible as an ethnic group. Many circles in and out of academics didn't recognize Middle Eastern Americans as an entity, which left the group underrepresented (Salaita, 2005). After 9/11, people and institutions started recognizing them as an ethnic group. Salaita (2005) explains, "Arab Americans evolved from invisible to glaringly conspicuous" (p.149).

Although 9/11 has forced academia to recognize Middle Eastern students, services and resources for these students appear dismally similar to pre-9/11 days. And currently, Middle Eastern student services are at a standstill; most colleges and universities have Middle Eastern and Muslim student associations, but services stop beyond these groups. Oregon State University (OSU), a public university in the Pacific

Northwest, is an example of how student services for Middle Eastern students are at a standstill. There are four cultural centers on the OSU campus: The Native American Long House, the Centro Cultural Cesar Chavez Center, the Lonnie B. Harris Black Cultural Center, and the Asian and Pacific Cultural Center. This is a typical pattern for Northwest institutions. Many Northwestern schools have similar centers. There are also a slew of additional student services under the umbrella of intercultural student services at OSU: American Indian Initiatives, Asian Pacific American Education Office, Casa Latina/o de OSU, LGBT Outreach and Services Office, Ujima (African, African American) Education Office, and Women's Advancement and Gender Equity Office. OSU also has two resource centers: the Women's Center and the Pride Center. There are clearly no services or centers for students from the Middle East. Although OSU has prescribed the Asian and Pacific Cultural Center as one Middle Eastern students can use, very few if any actually use the center. It is easy to see why: there are major cultural differences between someone from Iraq and someone from French Polynesia, for example. OSU does have services available for international students, but the services available for them do not even compare with services offered to other students of color and culture. Not all students who identify as Middle Eastern are international. There are thousands of American born Middle Easterners.

Today, Middle Eastern students face a number of challenges. Quran burnings, fire-bombings of Mosques, protests over an Islamic center near Ground Zero, terrorist plots, and continued skirmishes and wars taking place in Middle Eastern countries create unique challenges for Middle Eastern students.

In the summer of 2010, a proposal for an Islamic center two blocks away from Ground Zero, the empty space left vacant by the World Trade Center after the 9/11 attacks, upset some U.S. citizens, particularly some in New York City. As ABC news reported,

Retired New York Fire Department Deputy Chief Jim Riches, whose 29-year-old son Jim, a firefighter, was killed on 9/11, said he wasn't opposed to the mosque. But don't build it so close to ground considered sacred by many New Yorkers, he said. "There are still 1,000 bodies that haven't been found," he said of remains of the 2,752 people killed in the attacks. "They're still finding little bits and pieces of the victims. And these people want to build a big 12-story mosque with a swimming pool." Riches called the Islamic center proposal "a slap in the face of the families."

"To me, it's a religion of hate," he said of Islam. "There might be some good ones. I don't know them but they haven't stood up and knocked the other ones down. I don't want to go down there on the tenth anniversary of 9/11 and see 2,000 Arabs outside. Maybe they'll start cheering" (Shancez, 2010, New York Times, para. 3)

Many New York citizens have given statements similar to the ones above. The New York Times reported that 67% of New Yorkers are opposed to the Islamic center being so close to Ground Zero (Barbaro & Connelly, 2010).

Recently, Stop Islamization of America (SIOA), and the American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI), a one-sided human rights and advocacy organization that has been central in the fight against the Islamic center, have produced a documentary, "The Ground Zero Mosque: The Second Wave of the 9/11 Attacks." As Pamela Geller, the executive director of both organizations said,

This is the first documentary that tells the whole truth about the Ground Zero mosque. Be prepared to be shaken to your core. This movie rips the mask off the left wing media and the malevolent role they play in advancing and propagandizing the objectives of America's mortal enemies (Geller, 2011, para. 5).

Gellers comments and the production of the movie indicate that the United States is growing a fear of terrorism, and along with it a fear of Islam.

In similar fashion to the New York protests, there have been protests of mosques around the country. In Temecula, CA, protests over a mosque being built next to two established churches are causing controversy. This controversy is perhaps more heated because of the location's close proximity to Camp Pendleton, a United States Military camp used by political and military officials (O'Leary, 2010).

One day after Thanksgiving in 2010, a report of a sting operation terrorist plot by 19-year-old Mohamed Osman Mohamud added another reason for Americans to be angry.

Mr. Mohamud, a 19-year-old naturalized American citizen from Somalia, was arrested Friday by federal agents and charged with plotting to set off a bomb at a Christmas-tree-lighting ceremony in downtown Portland. The device the authorities say Mr. Mohamud sought to detonate was a fake bomb supplied by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents who had orchestrated a sting operation (Mckinley & Yardley, 2010, para. 4–5).

After many investigations and news of the attack emerged, people learned that early in the fall of 2010, Mr. Mohamud was taking classes at OSU in Corvallis, OR, and attended some events at a local mosque. After news of the reported connection between Mr. Mohamud and the Corvallis mosque came out, someone threw a firebomb into the window of the mosque that set the building on fire and caused significant damage to the mosque. As a result, Muslim students at OSU were hesitant to return to classes after news of the backlash was confirmed (Hogue, 2010).

From protests in California and New York about mosques to fire bombings in retaliation for alleged terrorist plots, it is clear that many U.S. citizens are uncomfortable

with Muslims. Americans are showing that there is a discriminatory gap between Muslims and people who identify as Middle Eastern and other Americans. Any number of factors may be at the root of the problem, including the long negative history between the United States and the Middle East, 9/11, terrorist attempts, negative media portrayals of Middle Easterners as villains and Islamic extremists, and omitted services for Middle Easterners. But there are some who are calling for more to be done to protect and defend Middle Easterners. Take for example the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), who is “committed to defending the rights of people of Arab descent and promoting their rich cultural heritage” (ADC, 2007). Even the current president of the United States has called for more civility. In a White House address, the president shared his feelings about the New York City mosque,

But let me be clear: as a citizen, and as President, I believe that Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as anyone else in this country. That includes the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in lower Manhattan, in accordance with local laws and ordinances. This is America, and our commitment to religious freedom must be unshakeable. The principle that people of all faiths are welcome in this country, and will not be treated differently by their government, is essential to who we are. The writ of our founders must endure (2010).

Despite the rising animosity against Middle Easterners, there are some, such as President Obama, whose words reflect the growing resurgence of collaboration with and understanding of Muslims and Middle Easterners.

Marginality vs. Mattering

Students from conflict nations are bombarded by anti-Middle Easterner messages. It has become increasingly important to consider the impact these actions have on them, and on their ability to learn and feel comfortable on campus. Schlossberg (1989) is best

known for her work with students in transition, but her work in transitions led her to substantial discoveries in mattering and marginality. Marginality can be described as a concept or feeling that one is on the outside, instead of feeling included.

The concept of marginality was introduced in 1928 in Robert Park's "Human Migration and The Marginal Man." In the article, Park relates the experiences of migrating to marginality. He spoke little of the concept during the article; he only referenced the challenges immigrants faced as they were confronted by two cultures at the same time. Using the Jewish culture as the example, and as used earlier in Chapter One, Park (1982) says, said that the "Jew was a cultural hybrid" and that Jewish immigrants were faced with living in both their culture, and a new one found in America. This dual way of living placed them on the "margins" (p. 892).

In 1935, Stonequist added his insight to marginality by building on Park's foundation. According to Dunne (2005), Stonequist studied assimilation of "natives," and concluded,

That if the desire for assimilation was great and the rejection fairly complete, the native was likely to experience bitterness and confusion that could result in forms of mental illness, criminal actions, or other expressions of personal dysfunction. This became known as the Park-Stonequist framework of marginality (p. 12).

The Park-Stonequist framework laid the foundation for the study and concept of marginality, and it is still widely accepted today. In 1941, Goldberg added to the theory by finding that as long as people did what was normal for their society, even though they were encompassed by another culture, they would not show expressions of personal dysfunction (Goldberg, 1941). These studies fueled a frenzy of research on the topic, and it has become a popular part of academic genre.

Schlossberg (1989) made a significant contribution to this subject with her work. She argues that when individual “changes roles or experiences a transition” they have the potential to experience marginality (p. 7). This is due to individuals finding themselves between old roles and new ones (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988). Consequently, students making transitions may develop anger, increased sensitivity, self-consciousness, and feelings of inferiority (Schlossberg, 1989). Such could be the case for students from the Middle East—in a significant way—because students from the Middle East are, as Park (1928) says, “living and sharing intimately in the cultural life of two distinct peoples” (p. 892). These outcomes are obviously detrimental and should be combated for anyone making transitions.

Additionally, students may feel marginal because they focus on the classifications that divide them from other people. They may be “preoccupied with feelings of inadequacy and incompetence” (1988, p. 59). Everyone can feel marginal. Marginality can also be a personality type, thus making it a permanent condition. For others it’s a temporary condition.

To combat feelings of marginality, Schlossberg (1989) researched four areas of transition: situation, self, support, and strategies. She used these as a way to diagnose and then combat these feelings.

Mattering, on the other hand, is the opposite of marginality and is described this way: “Mattering is a motive: the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego extension exercises a powerful influence over our actions” (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 165).

Like marginality, Schlossberg (1989) found five areas that contribute to feelings of mattering: attention, importance, ego-extension, dependence, and appreciation. Any one of these, or a combination of any, can develop feelings of mattering.

Schlossberg's (1989) study on mattering vs. marginality provides the theoretical backbone to the research described in this paper. Because students from the Middle East make a significant transition when they come to the United States to study, they need to be considered in light of Schlossberg's theory.

Transitions, as Schlossberg (1989) describes, are an area that is most at risk for feelings of marginality. Therefore, as mentioned previously, students who identify as Middle Eastern, and especially international students from the Middle East, are at high risk for feeling marginal. Schlossberg concludes that programs and policies need to be put into place to help people feel as if they matter as they transition into new experiences and roles. She states that student services serve as a good way to prevent feelings of marginality (Schlossberg, 1989). These services certainly should not be limited to international students; Schlossberg's (1989) work points out that any culture or race outside of the societal norms has the ability to feel marginal during transitions.

Additionally, Schlossberg found connections between rites of passage and mattering. Rites of passage, or rituals, help an individual's transition from one stage in life to the next, and can have a powerful impact on a student's ability to feel a sense of mattering. Theoretically, if students have all three (rituals, proper student services, and efficient programs and policies), their chances of feeling marginal would be dramatically reduced, and their chances of staying engaged in the learning process will be heightened (Schlossberg, 1989). This concept of rituals, proper student services, and efficient

programs and policies will act as a guide to understanding this study, and will be used as an evaluation tool.

Mattering and Marginality in Underrepresented Cultures

While this research focuses primarily on Middle Eastern students, there is a lot to gain from similar studies exploring other student populations. Jacqueline Cooper (1997) studied mattering and marginality among African American students. She found that African American students attending predominately white institutions often live in isolation and alienation. Additionally, Cooper (1997) found that,

On one level, African American students search within the African American community on campus and the surrounding community for sources of comfort and a sense of belonging. The other level finds African American students searching for a sense of belonging within the non-minority campus environment (p. 16).

Cooper (1997) discovered that African Americans feel levels of duality, a feeling that one has to live and be accepted in two cultures. Because of this duality, student affairs professionals need to work hard at accommodating these students. Her suggestions include accommodating unique requests that are specific to the African American culture, including things like “Black cultural centers, Black art, ...speakers, lectures, and concerts that are of particular interest to African American students” (p.18). These accommodations are only part of making other cultures at predominately white institutions feel less marginal. These suggestions are based on one guiding principle: inclusion. Cooper (1997) concludes that, “By creating and nurturing a college campus environment that actively supports inclusion for all students, opportunities to feel marginal will decrease, especially for African American students attending predominately White institutions” (p.17).

Cooper (1997) also argues that if student affairs professionals don't actively seek to accommodate African American students, then these students will be at risk for leaving school.

Other authors have used Schlossberg's work in mattering to develop evaluation and assessment tools. Gosset, Cuyjet, and Cockriel (1998), used mattering and Schlossberg's discoveries of attention, importance, ego-extension, dependence, and appreciation to create a survey to evaluate mattering amongst African Americans at large predominately white institutions (PWI). The survey they used found that African Americans at PWI's were experiencing discrimination. Gosset, Cuyjet, and Cockriel's (1998) work on was used as an evaluation and assessment tool in this study as well, and will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

Cooper (1997) and Gosset, Cuyjet, and Cockriel (1998) work with African American students shows just how at risk students from the Middle East are. It is fair to conclude that a Middle Eastern student attending a predominately white institutions could also feel alienation, isolation, duality, and be at risk for leaving. It could also be concluded that actively trying to accommodate Middle Eastern students could prevent those feelings. As Schlossberg (1989) suggests, schools that try to accommodate to rituals, proper student services, and efficient programs and policies of underrepresented student groups will feel less marginalized.

A study by Cole and Ahmadi (2003) that explores perceptions of Muslim women who veil their faces, or wear the Hijab, a Muslim dress code that promotes modesty, is perhaps more related to Middle Eastern students. In this study, several Muslim women were asked to share their feelings about wearing veiling and about others' perceptions of

the women while they were wearing it. Researchers found that women who veil often feel high levels of discrimination stemming from stereotypes. The study states, “Common misconceptions and stereotypes encountered...usually stem from a lack of cultural and religious exposure [from the non-Muslims]” (Cole and Ahmadi, 2003, p. 58). The study found that a university’s inability to educate and expose non-Muslim students to that culture only maintains hurtful and dangerous stereotyping and misconceptions about Muslims.

This study also explored why some Muslim women wear the veil and some don’t, and found that some Muslim women stop wearing the veil because of misconceptions and stereotypes they face as they leave the social support of a home and enter university life where people look at them differently (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003).

The preceding study about Muslims veiling informs this thesis and provides important insights as to what Muslim Middle Eastern students go through. As it discovers, leaving supportive, culturally-centered homes often presents problems for minority students. Some students feel so alienated that they fall out of previously held beliefs.

Summary

Over the past century the history between the United States and the Middle East has not been one of peace. In the early 1900s America banned all Asian and Middle Easterners from entering the country. Later, the United States and the Middle East went through decades of turmoil. Their relations worsened as a result of the Iranian Hostage Crisis in 1979. America was extremely affected by news coverage of the crisis. Soon after the Iranian hostage crisis came the Gulf Wars. On September 11, 2001, came what

has become the most memorable of all conflicts between America and Middle Eastern groups: terrorists recognized by the media as Middle Eastern hijacked four planes and flew them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania.

The events of 9/11 renewed the animosity toward terrorists based in the Middle East that may have been ebbing after a peaceful period during the late 1990s. The direct results of 9/11 were things like the Patriot Act, which took away freedoms from anyone who look Middle Eastern. It legalized heretofore illegal searches and seizures, and gave government agencies the right to racially and ethnically profile. But the biggest result of 9/11 was the United States' declaration of war against terrorism, which immediately gave America the motivation to send troops into Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Troops are still there, fighting a war that doesn't seem to be ending.

With all the fighting that America has done with the Middle East, it is no wonder that the media usually does not portray Middle Easterners in a fair light. Many movies, news programs and publications, television programs, and books show stereotypes about Middle Easterners, often portraying them as villains or terrorists. These negative images only promote discrimination.

All of these wars and regulations have had serious effects on students from the Middle East. As a result, it has become important for academia to explore how these factors influence levels of mattering and marginality for Middle Eastern Students.

This literature review suggests that student officials need to produce an atmosphere for Middle Eastern students that emphasizes mattering. As Schlossberg says, "We will discover that mattering is important all throughout life—people need to feel that they count, they belong, they matter. When this is so, they no longer feel marginal" (1989, p.

11). This unfortunately has not been the case for students from underrepresented cultures on American campuses. As they were found to affect African American students, feelings of alienation and isolation can dominate Middle Eastern students' experiences on campuses.

Chapter Three: Research and Design

The ultimate goal of this research is to gather a meaningful and comprehensive knowledge of how students from the Middle East feel about their time spent on American campuses in the light of mattering and marginality. Students from the Middle East are underrepresented within the academic sphere (Salaita, 2005). There are several factors that make research on the experience of Middle Eastern students increasingly important, including the United States' current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and its political struggles with and sanctions on Iran, as well as the increasing levels of discrimination towards Middle Eastern students. These factors make it important to develop research that considers the larger scale of student services, and ultimately use it to help students who identify as Middle Eastern.

Research Questions (Review)

The primary question this study explores is: Does Schlossberg's (1989) *Mattering vs. Marginality* describe Middle Eastern students' experience on American campuses?

Subsidiary questions include the following: What effect has America's past relations with Middle Eastern countries had on Middle Eastern students studying in America today? Are there enough services available for these students? And are they still facing discrimination, and what does that look like?

Methods

Nancy Schlossberg's work on mattering and marginality (1989) provided the theoretical framework for the study; the methods developed for the study are consistent with that theoretical frame. Past authors that have explored mattering and marginality have done it with combined efforts of surveys (Gosset, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998) and

interviews (Copper, 1997, and Schlossberg, 1989).

To best gather the right kind of information, the researcher interviewed 8 students identified as Middle Eastern. These interviews were broken up into two interview sessions.

Before interviews were given, it was decided that conducting group interviews was the best way to gather this type of information. By looking at what past authors have used to gather answers about mattering and marginality (Cuyjet, 1998, Cooper, 1997, and Schlossberg, 1989), it was determined that interviews, and a shorts surveys would allow the research questions to be answered. Group interviews provide a free forum-like setting that allows participants to speak freely about their experiences. Additionally, Creswell (2009) said that qualitative research is emergent, which allows research designed to be adjusted to meet a need. According to Creswell (2009), this type of research allows the researcher to find the meaning behind students' experiences, and allows a deeper connection to the material.

The group interviews were broken up into three parts. Participants completed a short entrance survey at the beginning, moved to a group interview phase after the surveys are completed, and then were thanked at a conclusion to the interview.

Sampling and participants. Because this study focused on students' perceptions and sought to draw out meaning from the student, it conducted two group interviews with no more than five students in each interview session. The researcher chose to interview groups to get a large sampling size of both male and female participants without jeopardizing religious requirements based on personal autonomy (some female Muslims will not be alone with a man other than their husbands).

Site selection. Participants of the study consisted of currently enrolled undergraduate and graduate students at a medium-sized four-year public land-grant university in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. In the paper and defense, the university will be referred to as Anonymous University (AU). The interviews took place in a neutral classroom on campus.

Participant population. This study sought to recruit 8-10 students who identified themselves as students from the Middle East. It was agreed that if more than 10 students wanted to participate, a random selection would take place in order to keep the number of participants to no greater than 10. It was also agreed that the researcher was to meet with no more than six students at a time, and was to conduct two group interviews.

Subject identification and recruitment. All recruiting was done through faculty suggestions via email forwarding (initially sent by the researcher) to the International Student Services office, and two cultural and geographical student associations on campus. Faculty understood that prospective participants should not feel obligated to participate based on their suggestions. The faculty's *only* role was to pass along emails that explained the research and asked for volunteers. Faculty knew that they were not to suggest or recommend participation. The recruitment email had two times designated for participants to attend. The email also had a copy of the informed consent form, and participants were encouraged to read through it before attending. All emails are attached as Appendices B–D.

Informed consent process. Through the recruitment email, participants were asked to read a consent form before participating in the research. A consent form was distributed to them before the study commenced, and ample time was given to them to reread and sign the

form before beginning. When the research was concluded, participants were given a copy of the informed consent form, as well as the researcher's contact information so they could contact the researcher if questions or concerns arose after the meeting. The consent form is included for review as Appendix A.

Survey. The survey questions were adapted from Gosset, Cuyjet, and Cockriel (1998) study which was adapted from Schlossberg's (1989) study, and examines how diverse students feel about the following five college aspects: administration, peer relations, classroom atmosphere, faculty treatment, and available student services. A copy of the survey is included as Appendix F.

Group interviews. After all participants completed the entrance survey, they were asked a series of questions. A list of these questions is provided as Appendix E. These questions were posed as topics of discussion, and were meant to guide the group interview. The questions are adapted from Schlossberg's (1989) work on mattering and marginality, the theoretical backbone to this study. Again, see Appendix E for a full list of discussion questions. It is important to note that the questions were constructed to direct the conversation, and all questions might not have been asked in the course of the interview.

Concluding the interview. When an hour had passed, participants were compensated and the researcher's contact information so they could contact the researcher if they thought of something after the interview that would have been helpful to the study or if they had any concerns.

Data collection. Having group interviews allowed the students to "best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research finds"

(Creswell, 2005, p. 214). The data were collected with a computer and a microphone, and then the transcript was transcribed into a more usable form to be coded and analyzed. Audio recordings began directly after informed consent forms were signed and entrance surveys were completed. Secure computer files protected all electronic data collected, and the researcher did all transcribing. Field notes were also recorded directly after the interviews were concluded.

Data analysis. The analysis process began with the transcription of all interviews. This allowed the researcher to learn more about the students interviewed and refreshed the researcher's memory of the interviews. This also allowed the researcher to start seeing patterns and get a "general sense of the data...and [think] about the organization of the data" (Creswell, 2005, p. 237). Then the data was encoded into themes and organized for appropriate breakdown for conclusions.

Anonymity and confidentiality. The information provided during this research was and will continue to be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. To help protect confidentiality, individuals who participated will not be spoken of by name or pseudonym, and, as mentioned before, Anonymous University (AU) will be used in place of the institution's name. All consent forms and surveys will continue to be kept in a safe and confidential location. All digital material, including IRB documents, is digitally stored on an on-campus server with locked and encrypted files. In order for the researcher to perform work at home, all identifiable items were stripped from the material. Transferring data from campus to the researcher's home was done very carefully; all digital material was transferred on a password-protected laptop in secured and encrypted files. While at the researcher's home, all material, now completely unidentifiable, was kept in a locked and encrypted file.

After the data were transcribed, they were read through carefully and the researcher began to interpret and organize the data. The researcher then coded the data into three themes and of mattering and marginality (see the section on methods and procedures), and prepared to formulate results. All coding steps taken by the researcher were recorded so that peers can trace validity. Furthermore, all data collected will be deleted upon completion of the research study or within one year of the date of the interview. Hard copies of all data collection materials will be destroyed upon completion of the study or within one year of the date of interview.

Evaluation Tools

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Schlossberg's (1989) work with mattering and marginality acts as the backbone to this study. Upon further examination of this theory, it was discovered that Schlossberg (1989) focused on Attention, Importance, Dependence, Ego-Extension, and Appreciation. Many studies have come of this work including Gosset, Cuyjet, and Cockriel's (1998) work with African American's at PWI's. They developed a survey that was used to determine mattering and marginality. Schlossberg, and Gosset, Cuyjet, and Cockriel, concluded that more needed to be done for students who feel marginalized. There work, along with Schlossberg (1989) and Cooper (1997) concluded that rituals, proper students services, and efficient programs and policies all help underrepresented student's feel more connected to campus. This work will be evaluated with rituals, proper students services, and efficient programs and policies in mind.

Summary

This research design helped to discover how Middle Eastern students feel about their time spent on large American campuses in light of Schlossberg's (1989) research on

mattering and marginality. This research was conducted by interviewing two separate groups of students who identify themselves as Middle Eastern. These large group interviews fostered an open dialogue between students and the researcher. Students were given entrance surveys that evaluated levels of mattering on campuses. A recording device recorded all interviews and personal notes were taken as a reflection after the interviews were concluded. All steps possible were made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, including locked computer files and safe-locked hard materials.

Chapter Four: Results

This study explores the relationship of Middle Eastern students' perceptions of mattering and marginality at a large American university. This chapter begins with a review of the methods used, followed by a review of the significance of this study. This chapter will then explore the results of an entrance survey given to all participants of the study, and later discuss the results of the group interviews, which can be considered the most telling and significant piece of the study because of its anecdotal and qualitative nature. The results of the interviews can be categorized into three main themes: a) Lack of recognition as a cultural group, b) a lack of representation within student services, and c) classic signs of discrimination: serious misconceptions.

These three findings discovered interesting patterns in the way students felt at AU (Anonymous University). The subsequent findings within the three themes are as follows.

Lack of recognition as a cultural group. Participants of this study complained that when entering schools or programs they never had the chance to claim that they were Middle Eastern. At AU there are only four ethnic groups that are recognized, leaving out Middle Eastern students.

Lack of representation within student services. participants of this study complained that AU has not done enough to accommodate for the Middle Eastern students' needs, and also claimed that all attempts to receive services the past have failed.

Classic signs of discrimination: serious misconceptions. Here, participants shared that they often face discrimination in many forms. Several participants reported that they have been associated as a terrorist in one form or another.

Review of Methods

To best gather the right kind of information, the researcher interviewed eight students (six males and two females) who identified themselves as Middle Eastern. Recruiting was conducted by emails and was sent to the heads of students groups, and international offices at AU. Presidents of the Saudi Arabian Student Association and a Muslim Student Association, as well as faculty and staff from international offices at AU who forwarded the recruiting email to students who they thought would be interested. Interviews began after eight participants were collected for the interview, and after consent forms were signed. Two interview sessions were offered to keep the number of participants in each session at a minimum, and so more students could share their thoughts. At the beginning of the interviews a short survey was given to each participant that asked several questions about perceptions of mattering and marginality that served as topics for discussion. The direction of content during the interview was left up to the participants, and the interviews were recorded for use in play back assurances. Because of the sensitive nature of this topic, every precaution to maintain confidentiality was taken. No person-identifying marks or names are on any printed material, and all name-based identifiers from audio recordings were taken out.

During data analysis, several themes began to stand out that are specific to issues regarding mattering and marginality. Aside from what was found from the entrance surveys, which will be discussed later, here what was discovered from the interviews: a) a lack of recognition as a cultural group, which leads to, b) a lack of representation within students services, and c) classic signs of discrimination: serious misconceptions. Each topic will be discussed in detail, along with any additional themes that rose during the data analysis.

In review, this study aimed to explore the relatively undocumented experiences and perceptions of students who identify as Middle Eastern, it also sought to inform higher education administration about the unique characteristics of this rapidly noticeable student population and it attempted to narrow the knowledge gap in existing literature regarding this underserved population of contemporary Middle Eastern students.

Survey Results

The survey portion of this study was put in place as a way to shed light on specific issues the researcher wished to gather, in case the participants in the interviews side tracked and didn't discuss pertinent substantive information. Fortunately that wasn't the case and the interviews proved a great success and the surveys still provide an important part in the study. It was also put in place to focus the discussion on issues about mattering and marginality at AU.

The survey asked each participant to rate, in a Likert scale (agree/disagree), five areas that Cuyjet (1994) developed to explore mattering on college campuses. Cuyjet originally designed this survey for African American college students. Those five areas are administration, peer relations, classroom atmosphere, faculty treatment, and available student services. The five survey questions are:

1. Administrative staff treats Middle Eastern students differently than they do white students (administration).
2. Middle Eastern Students are not considered to be serious students by white students (peer relations).
3. I am often expected to represent my entire race in class discussion (classroom atmosphere).

4. Faculty use examples relevant to people of my race in their lectures (faculty treatment).
5. There is a meeting area on campus where Middle Eastern students feel "at home" (available student services).

Results. The survey question results helped in the understanding of the campus climate for Middle Eastern students, and got the researcher one step closer to understanding mattering and marginality in Middle Eastern students at AU. The results below are a combination of both interview sessions.

Question 1. *Administrative staff treats Middle Eastern students differently than they do white students.* The participants showed a range of answers but the majority disagreed. A total of five participants disagreed with Question 1, and three participants agreed with the statement.

Question 2. *Middle Eastern students are not considered to be serious students by white students.* Here, six participants disagreed with Question 2, and two participants agreed with the statement.

Question 3. *I am often expected to represent my entire race in discussion in class.* The majority of participants agreed with this statement, five out of eight participants. Three participants disagreed. This is one of the more surprising results, and will be discussed more at length in both the conclusion of this segment, and in the discussion portion, or Chapter Five of this thesis.

Question 4. *Faculty use examples relevant to people of my race in their lectures.* The majority of participants agreed with this statement, totaling five out of eight. Three participants disagreed with this statement.

Question 5. *There is a meeting area on campus where Middle Eastern students feel "at home."* A total of six participants disagreed with this statement, and two agreed with it. Again, this result is alarming, and additionally this finding will be talked about in the conclusion of the segment, and in Chapter Five.

The survey questions were designed to focus the conversation and provide additional results to the interview questions. The results did prove beneficial. Although all the results of the survey had interesting conclusions, Questions 3 and 5 provided a glimpse into the potential marginality Middle Eastern students face at universities. Question 3 asked, "I am often expected to represent my entire race in discussion in class." The majority of the participants agreed with this statement, which shows students might be at risk for marginalization. Drew Phillips (2005), found that African Americans who felt they had to represent the entire race in classroom environments felt more levels of marginalization compared to white students.

Question 5, which states "There is a meeting area on campus where Middle Eastern students feel 'at home,'" was another survey question that raises concern. With the majority of students disagreeing with the statement, Middle Eastern students are definitely at risk for feeling marginalized. Again, Philips (2005) found that student services for underrepresented students play a vital role in helping students feel "connected within an environment" (para. 14). This result was also found in the interview portion of the study and much more will be discussed about this in the next section.

The other survey questions found positive results. Questions 1, 2, and 4 all show that there is some good in the way predominately white U.S. universities treat Middle Eastern students. For instance, Question 1 (*Administrative staff treats Middle Eastern*

students differently than they do white students). The majority of participants disagreed with this statement, which shows that faculty might understand the importance of inclusive classrooms.

Conclusion. This survey helped the interviews become and remained focused, and provided evidence in case a lack was found during the interviews. However, the surveys have proved consistent with findings in other similar students conducted with other members of underrepresented populations (Cuyjet, 1994; Phillips, 2005). These surveys also provided evidence that there are positive factors in the way universities are treating Middle Eastern students.

Middle Eastern Student Perceptions of Mattering and Marginality

The primary research question of this study sought to explore the nature of perceived mattering and marginality in Middle Eastern students who are attending a large public, four-year university in the northwest part of the United States (Anonymous University, or AU). *Mattering* has been defined as “the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate” (Rosenberg and McCullough, 1981, p. 165). Countering mattering is the concept of marginality, which can be described as,

A man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct places...and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice in the society in which he now sought to find a place. He is a man of the margins of two cultures (Park, 1982 p. 892).

The concepts of mattering and marginality were explored in depth in Chapter Two. Throughout the interviews, the participants shared their experiences while being on the campus of AU. These discussions were analyzed and organized into three themes: a) Lack of recognition as a cultural group, b) a lack of representation within students services, and c) classic signs of discrimination: serious misconceptions. Here, each theme

will be discussed in detail, as well as any additional themes that emerged during the analysis process.

Lack of Recognition as a Cultural Group

The results of this study revealed outcomes that are both typical for underrepresented students and outcomes that are not. This lack of recognition of a cultural group is not typical. At AU, the students reported levels of frustration with not being able to report that they are Middle Eastern. Some states only recognize four major cultural groups: Asian pacific, Native American, African American, and Latino. AU is in a state that only recognizes these four groups, and the data collected by AU only reports and asks about these demographics. This means that AU doesn't know how many Middle Eastern students they have on campus. Upon inquiry one student shared,

[When] people take demographic data we have to mark white or Asian, there is no Middle Eastern box. So we don't know what numbers there are for Middle Eastern. That is one thing I always have trouble with, any time I have to fill out an application, and there is race or ethnicity.

Along those lines, another student added,

I always have a hard time; *which one I should pick?* Sometimes there is an "other" box, or not applicable but if there isn't I don't know what I should pick. I looked this up online and I saw that a lot of people said that if you are Arab you qualify as a Caucasian because there is a lot of light skinned Arabs in the Middle East.

These comments demonstrate how universities may be excluding Middle Eastern students. Additionally, they didn't feel comfortable classifying themselves *white* because they don't really consider themselves like other typical white students. These feelings can be summed up in one statement; "I just end up putting *white*, because I don't know what to put, which doesn't make sense because I'm far from white." The participant's

comments demonstrate the hesitancy that Middle Eastern students feel about being recognized as white on paper, but dark skinned around campus.

However, AU has suggested they report being Asian and has designated an affiliation with a cultural center for Asians and Pacific Islanders. But as the following quote suggests, this is problematic:

I can think of the Asian Pacific Cultural Center. Their doors are open, that's for sure, but there's no representation there for Middle Eastern students. They're working on it, but even still it feels like it's too far out there to make that connection. No one works there or is there that is Middle Eastern. It seems like that would be the place, but it isn't. And I don't think it really ever will be.

This student suggests that the Middle Eastern Students don't feel welcome being classified as Asian. It also points out that there is a major disconnect from the two cultures, and that there most likely not going to bridge that gap.

By not recognizing Middle Eastern students as a cultural group, AU is declaring that they may not care about them, which doesn't help these students to feel they matter. In fact, it is quite marginalizing. As one student said, "it's frustrating and degrading that they don't recognize us." But this same student pointed out how doing the opposite might increase the chances of feeling connected and welcome on campus, "But when I see surveys recognize my race, I get excited. Like I know the SAT did."

AU and other schools around the country have not created avenues for Middle Eastern students to be recognized. This was worrisome for the Middle Eastern participants in this study, but more importantly, the students point out that this might be a reason AU and other schools haven't created enough student services for them. When asked if they felt comfortable with attending other cultural events, and using other student services like the Asian and Pacific Islander Center a participant said,

I know I feel welcome going to those things [events at cultural centers] because they are supposed to be open to everyone to see the culture and for the community; it's just in going to them I wish that Middle Eastern students had their own version.

This student's passion for more to be done shows just how important it is for AU to provide recognition of Middle Eastern students. This quote also introduces the next key finding in this study.

Lack of Representation within Student Services

One common complaint among the participants was that at AU there are not enough services for Middle Eastern students. For many participants, services mean private places for them to pray, study, teach others about their culture, or just a place to call their own. When the participants were asked about services available for them, an interesting conversation ensued, and a range of answers were shared, which all support this second theme.

When asked about services available for Middle Eastern students, one participant said, "I don't really see that many services here around campus." Another participant agreed, "We should just have the right to have our own center." The latter quote rings of frustration, which was a common feeling among the participants. One participant even claimed that Middle Eastern students outnumbered students from other underrepresented cultures on campus, even cultures that have their own centers,

There is a black cultural center, and an Asian center, and the Native American center, so if you see the number of Africans Americans on campus, and the number of Native Americans, and the number of Arab students, especially coming from Saudi Arabia, it's pretty significant. And it's probably even more than the number of African American students on campus. So why not have a center. I don't know if they're opposed to [it] or not.

This was indicative to many of the participants who desired more services. Many of the participants in this study tried to get a center started, or office for Middle Eastern students but have failed, citing lack of interest and support from the university.

Students' failed attempts at starting a center. Many participants had attempted to start centers, or petitioned for more to be done for them, as one participant relates,

I remember that we did write so many notes to the president here, to have places for us to pray, and a room for us to work out of; all of these were shut down. We really didn't get any answers, to what we are requesting. There was a group of 90 of us that wrote and supported the letters. And we attended lectures about this and we asked for them but they really didn't do it. We didn't get any response. I mean, they said we could reserve a room, it's no fixed place for us to pray, not even a clean place. We even asked if we could reserve the swimming pool here at [AU] for the women, because we need to take off our scarfs [religious headwear] in private, but this never got answered.

This participant's frustration was shared among the other participants, as they relayed more about their attempts to receive services. After this failed attempt at writing letters, one of the participants tried creating a Middle Eastern student center on his own, but was faced with roadblock after roadblock, and at one point he was even told to keep things quiet, "In pursuing a Middle Eastern cultural center, I was told by one of my advisors to 'keep it quiet' until I figured out logistics—until I've found more community." Why was this participant told to be quiet? The participant didn't know, but speculated, "Because some of the people in the areas that I would have to go to wouldn't necessarily be automatically receptive to opening up a new cultural center." Another participant added, "I think they are afraid of problems."

After pursuing a potential center on campus, this student felt pressured to stop working on it,

Needless to say word got out and I had to stop working on it for a few weeks. People weren't harassing me, but they wanted to know what I was doing. As soon

as I told one person what I was doing, they were like we can do this, this, and this, or we can put this in another center or we can look into these resources.

This participant, having been told how to operate and start a Middle Eastern center in a different way than he wanted, than he thought was best for his fellow Middle Eastern students, was discouraged from the project. In frustration he exclaimed, “My only complaint is that a lot of the stuff that the university does, they aren’t proactive about offering cultural resources; they’ve been a little more reactive.”

Why the students think AU hasn’t been “proactive.” More results show that participants had their opinions about why student services at AU were at a standstill. The majority of the participants felt that rising and preexisting social issues were the main reason the university has not created more services so far. “Maybe it’s that fear they have from the Middle East in general. So if they have a group of people they have a fear from, why have a center so they can expand?” This student points out that the university’s staff, faculty, students, and community might be afraid of Middle Easterners. What about Middle Easterners would they be afraid of? There are plenty of social and political issues that answer that question. But one participant blamed it on a lack of understanding of culture and religion stemming from the media,

It is definitely the media. I had a cousin here before 9/11, and he said that he wasn’t identified as a terrorist, but after 9/11, yeah. When President Bush said all Muslims, Arabs, Middle Eastern are all terrorists. He probably didn’t say that, but he helped draw that vision. He didn’t divide these people. He didn’t say that terrorists could also be from any country, and could also be white, and people from everywhere. I guess that’s the problem, and why people are still suffering from that mistake.

Another participant added, “They mostly get wrong information, that’s the problem. Either they don’t know anything at all, the information they get could be wrong; from the Media.” Another participant concluded, “They definitely don’t understand; they

don't know what the Middle East is. They don't understand Islam; they don't understand." With past and present issues facing the students, it was easy for them to conclude why they think AU is not providing enough students services because the "bottom line is they are not comfortable," as one participant concluded. Drawing on the current issues, there is no wonder why Middle Eastern students feel this way. Reflecting on Chapter Two of this thesis, American culture is littered with anti-Arab and anti-Muslim images, movies, and news; flooded with the news of protests against Muslim mosques; and scared after attempted successful terrorist attacks (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Hogue, 2010; Kamilipour, 1995; Mckinley & Yardley, 2010; O'Leary, 2010; Pyszczynski et al., 2003; Salaita, 2005; Shancez, 2010; Wingfield & Karamon, 2002).

Lack of Cultural Understanding: Classic Signs of Discrimination

In exploring Middle Eastern student experiences on American campuses further, it was found that these students are constantly faced with other students not understanding their culture, which is a classic sign of discrimination. The participants reported that they experienced discrimination from teachers, staff, and their peers in a myriad of ways. Most predominately though, are the many ways non-Middle Eastern students associate Middle Eastern students with terrorism or well-know Middle Eastern terrorists or politicians.

Terrorist association. The participants of this study felt frustrated with being associated with terrorists or well-known Middle Eastern politicians. For example,

I was walking by Circle K and was having small talk with a girl, and she said, "what's your name?" And I said Hussein, and she said "do you pronounce it like Sadam Hussein [name used by permission]?" This happens to me a lot.

Another student reported, “One time I said what should I be for Halloween, and a friend responded, ‘you should be a terrorist.’” This student then recognized that student’s might not know they are doing it, but has this participant said,

It’s obvious discrimination and racism, at least to me it is. And a lot of times I can’t bring myself to correct them because I just know how ingrained it’s becoming for people to think that way about anyone who has you know, a darker complexion, darker hair. That’s just the way it’s been going.

This quote demonstrates just how obvious discrimination can be to Middle Eastern students. Additionally, all the participants recognized that they are different from other students in a significant way. A perfect illustration of this lies in the next quote,

You have to come to terms with the fact you’re different and that people are always going to think you are different. After 9-11, especially going into high school—that was a bad difference. It was bad being from the Middle East. If I wasn’t a terrorist, then I probably had a relative that was a terrorist. People look at you differently and you notice people look at the people around you differently.

It’s obvious that these students feel and have felt high levels of discrimination by non-Middle Easterners connected them to terrorism. These examples show just how many different ways Middle Eastern students may face this: in conversations, in the way people look at them, and their names being associated with prominent Middle Eastern figures.

Humor to ease minds. One common finding among the participants was the act of making light of the fact that they are Middle Eastern. For many students, this meant self-degradation. For example, one participant shared,

If you get uncomfortable, our only way is just make a joke. So we bring it up in order to make people comfortable. Like last night, or the night before, I was up with one of my friends and said “you’re from the middle East” and I said “yeah I’m the terrorist guy here, be careful,” and they started laughing but I know if I don’t do that, if I don’t pop that joke, they’re gonna feel that way but they’re not going to talk about it. I don’t believe this stuff is true so I don’t care if people say

that to me or not. I don't want people to feel bad or uncomfortable about this issue.

This participant demonstrates how creating humor can ease the minds of non-Middle Eastern students. But it also points out that Middle Eastern students might feel marginalized. To admit that "I'm the terrorist guy here" shows that students may self-degrade to gain acceptance, or to feel they matter in the society.

Cultural misconceptions. In addition to Middle Eastern students being associated with terrorism, and self-degrading to gain acceptance and relieve perceived awkwardness, the participants discussed all the misconceptions about their culture that they face. The participants didn't appreciate being asked questions like, "are you rich?" Assuming they come from money because of "all the oil," or questions about the treatment of women, "does your culture treat women with respect?" The participants also said that non-Middle Eastern students ask them naive questions like, "Do you live on the sand?" Or "did you ride a camel to school?" The participants conveyed that these questions about their culture showed a lack of respect, and a clear misunderstanding about their culture. The participants contributed a lot of this misunderstanding to media and the news.

Burger King made an advertisement in the Middle East, you will see that stereotype that we are rich, exactly same question you will hear in advertisement; that is the same question people will ask us.

Upon further investigation, three commercials produced by Burger King were found that show stereotypes of Middle Easterners living rich from oil production, living in tents in the desert, and riding camels everywhere they go. The participant above is saying that these Burger King commercials point out what people think about Middle Easterners. It seems even fast food restaurants want to use the stereotypes of Middle

Easterners to entertain and attract customers. As demonstrated in Chapter Two of this thesis, media has had a big effect on the perceptions of Middle Easterners over the past couple decades. From movies to news, negative stereotypes of Middle Easterners are present, and Middle Eastern students have made note of it.

The participants also felt that non-Middle Eastern students didn't have a clear understanding of where they came from, or what to call them,

It's funny that people say Middle Eastern but they don't know what Middle Eastern is. Like if you ask where Egypt is, they don't know where Egypt is. Is it in Asia, Africa, or where? Some people don't even know. People also might confuse between the two words *Arab* and *Muslim*, I think for some people it is interchangeable or something. There are Muslims who are not Arabs and Arabs who are not Muslims. I'm pretty sure a lot of people here may not know about that or know the difference.

The participants of the study felt that they had to explain the differences about their culture at AU on a regular basis. This is something that overtime could contribute to feelings of marginality in Middle Eastern students, and also points to why Middle Eastern students desired a cultural center of their own—to educate AU about their Middle Eastern lifestyle and culture, so they don't have to face naive questions, misconceptions, and stereotypes.

Summary

The results of this study revealed three main themes: a) lack of recognition as a cultural group, b) lack of representation and student services, and c) lack of cultural understanding: classic signs of discrimination. Each one of these results show how Middle Eastern students are feeling marginalized at AU. Students felt strongly that they should be able to report, when taking surveys about demographics, that they are Middle Eastern, and not white, Asian, or Pacific Islander. As one student said, "it's frustrating

and degrading that they don't recognize us." The university has not adequately adopted proper policies, proscribed by Schlossberg (1989), that help Middle Eastern students feel welcome. These feelings would likely be the same if another major underrepresented group were not recognized.

Each participant expressed their desire to have more services available to them. Middle Eastern students at AU currently have no services other than a Muslim Student Association and the Arab Student Association. However, AU does have cultural centers for each underrepresented group recognized by the state AU is in: African American, Native American, Latino/Latina, and Asian or Pacific Islander. The participants show enough interest in having their own center, or even just an office or place, and the fact that nothing has been done in the past, even after writing and petitioning the president of AU to help Middle Eastern students in getting one, doesn't help them feel they matter to the university. Again, AU is falling short of recommendations set in place by mattering models (Schlossberg, 1989 & Gosset, Cyjet, & Cockriel, 1998; Cooper 1997).

The two previous findings are important because it helps explain why Middle Eastern students are still facing major misconceptions about their cultures and major forms of discrimination. These Middle Eastern participants shared stories of how they are associated with everything from being a terrorist to being extremely wealthy. As one student said, "If you're Middle Eastern it comes with all the options of maybe being a terrorist, or not treating women the right way, or you're rich." The participants feel like they are misunderstood, which only makes them feel more marginalized.

On a positive note however, in talking with the participants, each one recognized that other students or staff never intended to discriminate, or hurt them, but that society

has helped ingrain that mentality into them. They were very gracious about the opportunities that they have had at AU, and wouldn't trade their experiences for anything. However, they know their educational experience would better if the school recognized them as a cultural group, if there were more student services for them, and if they were not misunderstood as much as they are.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Suggestions

The exploration of mattering and marginality in Middle Eastern students revealed multi-themed results that show just how difficult attending American universities can be for this underrepresented group. To discuss the importance of the findings related to the research questions, this final chapter will provide a brief summary of the study, a summary of the theoretical background, and a discussion of the results within the context of the theoretical foundation, as well as discuss the limitations, and finally provide recommendations for the future.

Summary of study

This study explored Middle Eastern student perceptions of mattering and marginality, and did so in light of political and social issues that face Middle Eastern students while attending an American university. This was achieved by surveying and interviewing a total of eight students with a range of questions that focused on mattering and marginality. The theoretical backbone to this study comes from Schlossberg's (1989) theory of mattering, and many authors work on marginality. The survey portion of this study was adapted from Cuyjet's (1994), who surveyed African American university students to find levels of mattering. Group interviews were conducted to increase the number of participants and increase the appeal to a broader Middle Eastern student demographic. In order to find participants, emails were sent to presidents of AU's (Anonymous University) Saudi Arabian Student Association and Muslim Student Association, as well as emails to international offices, and student leadership centers. Student confidentiality is extremely important in a study that involves such a delicate subject. Every possible avenue to keep the participants confidentially was taken, even

minimal amounts of demographics were gathered, and names were never used in the interview process, or in Chapter Four of this report. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcribed data was then coded and themed as trends started to immerge.

Chapter Four revealed three main themes: a) Lack of recognition as a cultural group, b) Lack of representation and student services, and c) Lack of cultural understanding: classic signs of discrimination. Each theme shows how Middle Eastern students at AU feel marginalized, such as being associated with terrorists and being denied cultural centers after many petitions and pleas.

Discussion of the results

This study sought to describe the experiences of Middle Eastern students in light of Schlossberg's (1989) mattering and marginality. This section will provide a brief overview of mattering and marginality, discussed at length in Chapter Two. The discussion of the results section will then be organized and discussed as the results and findings pertain to the mattering and marginality.

Defining mattering and marginality. As a review, Marginality can be described as a concept or feeling that one is on the outside, instead of feeling included. Mattering, on the other hand, is the opposite of marginality and is described as a motive, and is "the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego extension exercises a powerful influence over our actions" (Rosenberg and McCullough, 1981, p. 165). In simple terms, *mattering* means to be noticed and appreciated, while *marginality* takes on the opposite form. Marginality is often associated with serve levels of discrimination, but can invoke subtle differences

between people as well. For the purposes of this paper, *marginality* means any act or thought that expresses differences or favoritism of one person, or group, over others. In interest to the reader, students who participated in this study did feel levels of marginality, and low levels of mattering on several topics. These will be discussed below.

Historical underpinnings. An in-depth look at the relations between the United States and the Middle Eastern region of the world, and therefore Middle Easterners, revealed an ugly past. Since 1917, with the passing of the Immigration Act of 1917 and Asiatic Barred Zone, America has been discriminating against Middle Easterners. From then to now, Americans have watched as their country has gone to war with Middle Eastern countries or groups several times. As a result, American's have painted a picture of the Middle East that has Middle Easterners stereotyped as barbaric desert dwelling villains who believe that battering women, killing Christians, or causing terror is all they care about. The media has only fostered this stereotyping with movies that portray them this way, and with news that is very pro-American.

These negative images have a direct relation to how Middle Eastern students are treated in American colleges and universities. This is evidenced by the reactions from the peers of the participants of this study, who has believed the stereotypes. Most alarming however is the fact that administration at some universities has also bought into these stereotypes, and has not done more to accommodate, or recognize that Middle Eastern students face these troubles. It's as if some administrators believe that ignoring this group would be in the best interest of the university and its students, which is not true. Underrepresented students need the opposite. They need to be recognized in order to feel as though they matter. Ignoring only increases marginality. Colleges and universities

would increase in culture by providing more for opportunities for Middle Eastern students share their lifestyles with peers, faculty, and staff. This would eventually translate into mainstream media and greatly reduce the chances of negative stereotyping of Middle Easterners.

The survey. Mattering and marginality lie at the heart of this thesis. Gosset, Cuyjet, and Cockriel, (1998) studied African American responses to a mattering survey at predominately white institutions (PWI). They found that many African Americans did not feel welcome at PWIs. They discovered this by surveying 1180 African American and non-African American students across four different universities. Their survey (Appendix F) explored these six areas: academic and personal advising, interaction with members of the administration, classroom climate, interactions with faculty, interactions with peers, and the delivery of campus services. The previous six components were created by examining Schlossberg's (1989) five elements of mattering: attention, importance, dependence, ego-extension, and appreciation.

The study that examined Middle Eastern students used the same survey at the beginning of the interview sessions to gather specific information. Although the survey included results for all five areas, I will discuss two results of the survey carrying the most weight.

As Chapter Four of this study pointed out, the results of the survey varied, but a surprising number of students found that they had to represent their race in classroom discussion (Question #3). More than half (five out of eight) of those surveyed said this was true. This was comparable to what Gosset, Cuyjet, and Cockriel (1998) found. They discovered that "58% of African American students [tested] feel pressured to represent

their entire race rather than respond as a unique individual” (1998, para. 18). It seems that there is pressure at universities to be the voice for an entire race or group. Universities should be aware that this behavior could isolate members of underrepresented groups.

This survey given to Middle Eastern students also found an overwhelming lack of student services provided for them. This was discovered by asking if the students if they had a place on campus that they could “call home” (Question 5). Six out of eight Middle Eastern students surveyed agreed that there wasn’t a place on campus to call home; 75% is quite high. Also, services available to Middle Eastern students were talked about during the interviews and results were the same: Middle Eastern students felt there were not enough services for them. Because of this obvious lack of student services, Middle Eastern students are at risk of feeling like outsiders and it is important to foster atmosphere that is inviting. Gosset, Cuyjet, and Cockriel (1998) state,

Institutional policies, procedures, and attitudes need to reflect that all students are important and that they do not feel marginalized. The responsibility for bringing this to fruition must be shared among all members of the campus community—administrators, faculty, and students. (para. 23).

Although Gosset, Cuyjet, and Cockriel (1998) are specifically speaking about African Americans, this applies to Middle Eastern students as well, or any underrepresented group who feel marginalized, or who are at risk of marginalization.

Interview Sessions. The interview sessions revealed several noteworthy themes. These themes pointed out that Middle Eastern students are living on the margins of two worlds. They are still identified as Middle Eastern, and people notice; often coupled with discrimination, discrimination that started when the Middle Eastern students applied to AU.

Lack of recognition as a cultural group. AU is a school that only requires the reporting of four underrepresented groups: Latino/Latina, African American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, and Native American, including almost every subset of these four categories. For example, if you say you are Asian American, AU wants to know whether that is Hawaiian, Samoan, Micronesian, Tongan, etc., which seems to show that AU really cares about the origins of their students. But in contrast, Middle Eastern students have to report that they are either white, Asian, or opt not to choose. As a participant said, “I just end up putting white, because I don’t know what to put, which doesn’t make sense because I’m far from white.” This way of highlighting some backgrounds and leaving out many more, is noticed by Middle Eastern students, and it was on their wish list of things to change at AU.

AU, which is considered to be a highly inclusive campus, needs to reevaluate why they don’t account for more underrepresented cultures. If it is a direction that comes from the state (which will also remain anonymous), then AU should put pressure on the state to reevaluate its policies about who is considered underrepresented. If the excuse arises that most Middle Eastern students are international students and AU keeps track of their nationalities, then what about those American-born Middle Easterners? Interestingly, three of the eight students in this study, as I discovered through group interviews, are American born, and identified as Americans as much as they did Middle Eastern.

Lack of representation within student services. Middle Eastern students reported that they desire a place to call their own. Whether that is an office, a room, or just a safe place where Muslims can pray, they did not really care; they just wanted something. Disappointingly, several attempts to get a place on campus for them failed.

One participant reported that any attempt to start a center for Middle Eastern students brings up too many questions, and has felt forced to abandon the plans. Other participants have reported that letters with hundreds of signatures from Middle Eastern students supporting a place on campus where Muslims could meet were written to the president and dean: the letters were ignored. One participant even pointed out that it would appear that there are more Middle Eastern students at AU than there are African Americans. But herein lies a problem: this claim is speculative because AU doesn't keep track of the number of Middle Eastern students. This participant showed his distrust in AU and their ability to provide for them. Even without knowing all the details, and without knowing both sides of the argument, there is enough evidence here to know that Middle Eastern students at AU have felt disrespected—there is pain in their story.

Drawing on the fact that there is discrimination in the United States against Middle Easterners, evidenced by media, and their reactions against extremists and terrorism, AU should do all they can to protect Middle Eastern students, and perhaps even more importantly, provide education for those who are not Middle Eastern. A Middle Eastern cultural center or place on campus could provide a safe refuge for Middle Eastern students. It would also provide education for non-Middle Eastern students about Middle Eastern cultures.

Clearly the actions by AU and AU's state are affecting mattering and marginality at AU for Middle Eastern students. One of the keys to avoiding marginality, and one of the ways to make students feel higher levels of mattering, is to provide student support services (Schlossberg, 1989).

Lack of cultural understanding: classic signs of discrimination. This discovered theme from the interview sessions is perhaps the most alarming of the three, and points to the reasons why AU needs to provide services for Middle Easterner students that centers on educating others, students, faculty, and staff. As discovered through the interviews, Middle Eastern students are barraged with a wide range of cultural misunderstandings and unfavorable associations. As one participant reported, when he introduces himself, he gets associated with Saddam Hussein because his name shares some similarities. As another participant shared, “one time I asked what should I be for Halloween, and a friend responded, ‘you should be a terrorist.’” Although seeking a laugh, this student’s comment was far from funny.

A lot of this attitude about Middle Eastern students comes from poor U.S.-Middle Eastern relations. Today there is an ever-present battle in the media against middle Easterners. Whether it’s conflict between the U.S. and regions in the Middle East, civil wars in the Middle East, or threats of terrorism, these events seem to be on a continuous loop in the news, and this certainly affects American attitudes towards Middle Easterners. As one participant said,

[Discrimination] is still there and it’s pretty much because of what happened, the war in Iraq and all the turmoil in the Middle East, because of the political nature of everything that happened. Being Middle Eastern has become political.

As a result of the turmoil in the Middle East, and the news that surrounds it, these participants are feeling some of its consequences. This only further proves that more needs to be done to provide support for Middle Eastern students at AU, and most likely across all American campuses.

Summary. It is easy to conclude that Middle Eastern students do not have typical college experiences. They are left attending a school that to them, appears not to care. They notice this from the moment they apply and can't find how to report their ethnicity. Having to report white, they mesh in with white students while watching students from other underrepresented groups receive services. To make it worse, our society is littered with anti-Middle Eastern messages that often translate into discrimination and cultural misunderstanding. But herein lies the motivation to do more: "institutions will need to understand their own environmental climates and seek out why certain perceptions are held by different ethnic groups" (Gosset, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1996). We need to come to a better understanding of what Middle Eastern students are going through, and accommodate accordingly.

Limitations and Future Study Suggestions

Because of the sensitive nature of this topic, and because being Middle Eastern is politicized, one of the biggest challenges in this study was recruiting Middle Eastern students to participate. Participants seemed very weary of a study aimed at them. The participants were very cautious about confidentiality and wanted to make sure this study protected their identities, which was a very high priority. For this reason the anticipated numbers of participants was not set high. A larger sample size could have provided broader results. But for the purpose here, the sample size of eight provided ample anecdotal experiences to discover mattering and marginality.

Another limitation, this study was conducted using students from only one university. Therefore the experience shared and the results could be campus specific. However, there is enough evidence country-wide that Middle Eastern students face

similar challenges as the participants at AU. It is therefore suggested that any future studies be conducted using both a larger sample size, being sensitive to Middle Eastern students throughout the recruitment process about their identities, and using multiple campuses.

Because of the sensitive nature of the study, a very limited amount of geographical data was collected. And the data gathered did not prove useful. To protect the students further, no geographical data about their heritage or country of origin was asked. Geographical data could reflect attitudes and give insight into cultures. Since the Middle East has a wide array of cultures within it, and each with a different background dealing with the United States, answers could differ depending on region. But since this study focused on perceptions of others towards Middle Eastern students, and their reflections about the way they are treated, gathering geographical data was not deemed relevant to the study. It would be interesting though in a larger study with more participants to track geographical data.

This study was not about Islam, because that would have been a different study. Because the Islamic religion is so expansive, and because turmoil between the United States and the Middle East have not been about Islam, it didn't seem right to include religious information. Muslims live everywhere from the United States to Indonesia. Additionally, Islam isn't the only religion in the Middle East. Instead, this study considered the inherent prejudices that are accompany when people recognize Middle Easterners as Middle Eastern. However, Islamophobia, the fear of Islam and Islamic believers, does inform the study and the perceptions of non-Middle Eastern people. This study could not ignore that Islamophobia influenced the findings and experiences Middle

Eastern students face. That is why throughout the study some references to Islam exist, like the protest against mosques in New York and California. Interestingly though, Islamophobia in higher education could contribute greatly to the student affairs field. Islamophobia is something that should be studied in depth, but it would require an entire study devoted to it.

Despite the limitations of this study, and the possible area's for future studies, this study found important and substantial evidence that adds the field of student affairs, especially the multicultural discipline.

Recommendations for the Future

This study discovered that Middle Eastern students do feel marginalized at AU. For this purpose alone, more needs to be done for students who identify as Middle Eastern. When more is done in way of campus services for Middle Eastern students they will,

Gain in mental health, function more fully, increase in self-esteem, and reach new levels of maturity, and self-actualization. They will value themselves and other more because they feel they matter to the institution. They will clarify their purposes and increase their determinations to reach their goals. . .they will feel empowered (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989, p. 206).

Whether or not a student feels they matter to an institution is very important for the development of the student. And because Middle Eastern students, as discovered, experience life on the margins, it is extremely important to make them matter more.

To make Middle Eastern students feel the mattering more, a number of actions should take place. Here is a suggested list:

- Universities should provide more opportunities for Middle Eastern students to talk about their experiences with high-level administrators. This opportunity

would allow Middle Eastern students to convey any concerns they may have.

It will also help them feel their voice is valuable.

- They should be encouraged to speak with campus counselors. Speaking with campus counselors will allow the students one-on-one to express the hardships of predominately white institutions.
- Universities or states need to adjust their reporting system and count students from Middle Eastern descent as a minority group. This means that computer systems need to have a place where Middle Eastern students can report their ethnicity. Eliminate the direction for them to report as white, Asian, or nothing at all. According to this study, Middle Eastern students do not associate, nor do they feel comfortable, with reporting as Asian or white. This also means that some action might need to take place at state-levels. Allowing Middle Eastern students to report as Middle Eastern allows the university to know how many they have, and how many to accommodate for.
- Universities should take more action to provide space where Middle Eastern students feel at home, or a place where they can find peace. Whether that is a designated prayer space for Muslim students or not, there needs to at least be a place on every campus where Muslim students can find peace and privacy enough to pray. This alone will help the any religious Middle Eastern student feel more considered, and would not force them to go off campus to express their religiosity.
- If the campus climate supports cultural centers, then Middle Eastern students should not be left out of the conversation. Such areas could provide a safe

space, a prayer space, and opportunities to educate non-Middle Eastern students about the many cultures in the Middle East. This will also increase the chances that Middle Eastern students feel valued.

Universities, faculty, staff, and students cannot underestimate the importance of providing more services for Middle Eastern students. Universities should know that providing more services for Middle Eastern students should be considered an important way to balance the campus environment. As suggested below,

We need to approach educational environments from an ecological perspective, to see our institutions as environments that have the potential for facilitating or hindering adult learning. Ecology, a term borrowed from biology, deals with interaction between an organism and its environment (an animal or plant may flourish in one environment yet fail in another). Thus, to understand human development, we must be aware that although behavior is determined in part by the chance of the individual's birth, certain evidence exists to illustrate that when the environment is altered, behavior and performance will also later (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989, p. 23).

This concept is rooted in the theory that environments, like people, have distinguished personalities. Rudolf Moos (1979), one of the pioneers of this ecology model, suggests that student stability in a campus environment depends on the interaction of the environment and the personal system. In other words, "student behavior is thus an outcome of the environmental perceptions, personal characteristics, and their interaction in a dynamic system" (Evans et al., 2010, p.170). Ecosystems, to explore the scientific side of this even further, require a balance of biodiversity to sustain life. One group cannot be favored over another, or a trophic cascading, (an imbalance and extinction of one group, and ultimately the ecosystem) could be the result. As it is with ecosystems, a balance of diversity on a college campus is crucial in sustaining the growth of students, faculty and staff.

University officials should be treating their campus environment like a delicate ecosystem, which relies on the biodiversity of the ecosystem to survive. Within this ecosystem, it is important to help foster the continual existence of this diversity. Herein lies the motivation for the previous recommendations: that the campus environment is a leading factor in fostering growth as students, and as individuals, and more needs to be done to foster that growth. As evidenced by the findings of this study, creating opportunities for Middle Eastern students to feel less marginalized on college campuses is extremely low, and much more needs to be done to swing American culture out of this trophic cascading ecosystem.

With the recommendations of Schlossberg (1989) in mind, AU has essentially fallen short in their ability to provide rituals, proper student services, and efficient programs and policies geared towards Middle Eastern students. Thus, my suggestion is that AU does more to cultivate the recommendations above.

Concluding Thoughts

The history between the U.S. and the Middle East hasn't always been pretty. There have been wars, hostage situations, and nuclear threats. Many Americans associate terrorism with the Middle East, and therefore associate Middle Eastern people with terrorism. This attitude has existed for years, and America's anti-Middle Eastern media, and experiences like the recent New York City mosque protest and rumored Quran burnings are good evidence of the growing animosity towards Middle Eastern people, and the Islamic faith. Today, Middle Eastern students face a difficult reality: many Middle Eastern students in universities feel marginalized because of their background, the color of their skin, their religion, and history between the U.S. and the Middle East.

This study found that very little was being done to accommodate this marginalized group. Middle Eastern students need more. Universities need to look inwardly at policies and decisions, or the lack there of, that have been made about accommodating Middle Eastern students and try to adjust in light of the findings in this study.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix A Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: **Middle Eastern Student Perceptions of Mattering at a Large American University**
 Principal Investigator: **Dave Kovac, Adult Higher Education Faculty**
 Co-Investigator: **Kent Norris, Graduate Student in College Student Services Administration**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in a research study designed to investigate the experiences of Middle Eastern students in higher education settings, and will explore how U.S. politics influences prejudices and discrimination and affects your student experience. The results of this study will be used to write a Master thesis in partial completion of a Masters of Science degree in College Student Services Administration at Oregon State University.

We are studying this because we want to better understand the experiences of Identified students from the Middle East. Specifically, we wish to gain information about Middle Eastern students perceived mattering throughout college, and its influence on your higher education. **Mattering is defined as the feeling that you matter to someone. This concept of mattering is becoming increasingly important as educators work to develop programs and services to aid students from the Middle East.**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This consent form gives you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you have indicated that you identify yourself as an International Middle Eastern student and are currently enrolled as a full time or part time student at [REDACTED] in the Fall 2010 quarter. Furthermore, that you are eighteen years of age or older and are willing to share of your personal experiences and perceptions as a student who identifies as Middle Eastern.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

This study asks that you participate in a Group interview (6-12 persons) with the researcher to discuss your experiences as a student who identifies as Middle Eastern. Before the interview you will be asked to fill out a short survey that should take no more than 5-minutes.

If you agree to take part in this study, your estimated time commitment is no more than 1 hour over the course of the Fall 2010 quarter. The group interviews will be scheduled sometime during the first half of the Fall 2010 quarter.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?

There are minimal risks involved in this study. The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include possible discomfort or emotional distress in identifying, exploring, and describing experiences and/or concepts of self, and possible acts of prejudice against you that were negative or distressing. Because these interviews will be group interviews, it's important that whatever is discussed remain confidential, but you also assume the risk of others knowing your thoughts and feelings about your experience in college. **There is a risk that confidentiality could be breached, and a risk that others in the group might share what you have said. However, every possible action will be made to protect your confidentiality. You will also be able to decline to answer any question. Additionally, a strong effort will be made to avoid deeply personal topics.**

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

We do not know if you will benefit from being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because we will better understand the experience of students from the Middle East. Furthermore, we hope that you will enjoy the opportunity to speak about and reflect upon your student experience and find it helpful in understanding your individual growth and development.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will be paid for being in this research study. Each participant will receive \$10.00 upon the conclusion of the group interview.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. To help protect your confidentiality, we will store all collected information in a confidential and locked location on campus. All electronic materials will be kept safe on a secured server on campus, with all files being encrypted and locked by the principle investigator. Upon completion of the research study or after a period of no more than three years from the completion of this study, all collected data will be deleted electronically and paper materials destroyed. You will be assigned an identification code that will be used on all data forms in order to secure your privacy. If the results of this project are published, your identity will not be made public.

AUDIO RECORDING

The group interviews will be recorded. The recordings will be transcribed by the co-researcher (Kent Norris) to insure confidentiality. This will allow the researcher to revisit, review, and analyze information discussed during the course of the interview. Only the researcher will have

access to the recording and transcriptions. Furthermore, all recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the research study or after a period of no more than five years from the completion of this study. The transcriptions of the interview will be used in writing the thesis, but again, your personal information will be protected. (_____ I understand that audio recordings are a part of this research).

DO I HAVE A CHOICE TO BE IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to participate. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to participate. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before participating. If you decide not to take part in this study, your decision will have no effect on the quality of care and services you receive.

You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. You may elect to pass or decline to answer any question posed during the group interview.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Dave Kovac at (541) 250-0671 or davekovac@innovistas.com or Kent Norris at (541) 610-9395 or norris.kent@gmail.com.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the [REDACTED] Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-4933 or by email at [REDACTED]

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

Appendix B
Recruiting Email, and Introduction to Study

Date, 2010

Advisors,

Please forward the following to any students who may be interested:

Greetings,

My name is Kent Norris and I'm currently conducting a research study to learn more about the college experience of students who identify themselves as Middle Eastern. This study will contribute to my fulfillment of the Masters of Science in Education in the College Student Services Administration program.

The purpose of this study is to explore perspectives on campus amongst Middle Eastern students attending American campuses. The research will also seek to find out if there are enough services available to students who are Middle Eastern, and will provide important depth to existing research about this concept of mattering amongst diverse groups.

I am interested in interviewing 15-20 students who identify themselves as Middle Eastern. This will be done through two group interviews. I am willing to interview 6-12 students per interview session. Interviews should only last 1 hour, and all participants will be compensated with a \$10 gift certificate for their time. See below for interview times.

I do not know if you will benefit from being in this study, outside of having the opportunity to share your feelings about being Middle Eastern. However, I hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because the final thesis will take the perceptions, expectations and experiences that you have as an student to make recommendations to better the campus environment for Middle Eastern students.

Your name, any identifying aspects of your identity or role at this University will not be released at any point of this research, including divulging your identity during the writing process of this thesis or any subsequent materials. Furthermore, participants can withdrawal at anytime during the interview process.

Two interview sessions have been scheduled,

- 1) Day, Time, Location
- 2) Day, Time, Location

If you are interested, please respond to this email with the interview session that works best for you. Students who respond the quickest will be selected. A confirmation email

will have further directions and a consent form, which outlines your rights through this interview process.

Thank you for your time,

Kent Norris
Graduate Student
CSSA Program, Oregon State University
541-610-9395
norris.kent@gmail.com

Appendix C
Confirmation Email

Date, 2010

(Name of participant)

Hello and thank you for responding to my quest to interview students who identify as Middle Eastern.

Again, the purpose of this study is to explore perspectives of mattering on campus amongst Middle Eastern students attending American campuses. The research will also seek to find out if there are enough services available to students who are Middle Eastern, and will provide important depth to existing research about this concept of mattering amongst diverse groups. As a reminder, you will be in the interview session with other students who identify as Middle Eastern.

You have selected the following day, time, and location for your interview session:

Day _____

Time _____

Location _____

Attached you will find a consent form that must be read before attending the interview session. At the interview, but before it begins, a new copy of the consent form will be distributed and signatures gathered in order for this study to continue. At the completion of the group interview, you will be given a copy of this consent form and \$10 to compensate you for your time.

If you are no longer interested in participating in this study, please let me know.

Thank you for your time; I look forward to speaking with you.

Kent Norris
Graduate Student
CSSA Program, Oregon State University
541-610-9395
norris.kent@gmail.com

Appendix D
Reminder Email

Date, 2010

(Name of participant)

Hello. This is a reminder about your group interview session. The interview session is to help me in my research that explores perspectives of students who identify as Middle Eastern is at the following day, time, and location:

Day _____

Time _____

Location _____

Again, the purpose of this study is to explore perspectives of mattering on campus amongst Middle Eastern students attending American campuses. The research will also seek to find out if there are enough services available to students who are Middle Eastern, and will provide important depth to existing research about this concept of mattering amongst diverse groups. You will be in this interview with other students who identify as Middle Eastern.

I appreciate your willingness to participate. As a reminder, you will be given \$10 gift certificate at the completion of the group interview to compensate you for your time.

If for any reason you are no longer interested in participating you are welcome to withdraw.

Thank you and I hope to see you then,

Kent Norris
Graduate Student
CSSA Program, Oregon State University
541-610-9395
norris.kent@gmail.com

Appendix E

Semi-structured Interview Questions

It is important to note that these questions provide a list of possible areas of semi-structured interview questions. Researcher will maintain the option to ask follow up questions for clarification reasons, and to help the movement of the group conversation.

Mattering:

What types of activities are you involved with on-campus?

What are those activities?

Tell me about the student services available for you on campus?

Are there people/places on campus you're comfortable going to if you needed help?

Where is that place?

Is there a place on campus where you can feel peace? Where is that place?

Marginality:

Do you spend time, outside of class, with students who are not Middle Eastern?

Have you ever felt discriminated against?

Has this college experience ever been a challenge for you? If so, why?

Do you ever feel like students don't understand you? If so, why?

Do you ever feel like teachers don't understand you? If so, why?

Have you ever acted "un-true" to yourself in order to fit in?

Appendix F
Entrance Survey

Please circle the appropriate answers

Are you? Male or Female

Year in School: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate std.

1. Administrative staff treats Middle Eastern students differently than they do white students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4

2. Middle Eastern students are not considered to be serious students by white students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4

3. I am often expected to represent my entire race in discussion in class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4

4. Faculty use examples relevant to people of my race in their lectures.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4

5. There is a meeting area on campus where Middle Eastern students feel "at home."

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4