Islam and Higher Education in Transitional Societies

Fatma Nevra Seggie and Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela (Eds.)

Bogazici University, Turkey
and
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Islam and Higher Education in Transitional Societies explores and illuminates the intersection of Islam and higher education in changing societies. The critical question explored in this book is, what role does Islam play in higher education in transitional societies? This book presents research conducted in geographic regions that are generally under-researched including Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and where the place of Islam in higher education is often not well-explored. Because higher education is embedded in the cultural, social, economic and political contexts of particular countries, it is important to examine the role of Islam in higher education systems in different countries to better grasp how next generation of leaders in these countries will be shaped. Islam and Higher Education in Transitional Societies serves as an important benchmark for understanding Islam and potentially inform policies to transform higher education institutional processes and structures to be responsive to the Muslim world.

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all the academics working in transitional societies. Without their contribution and willingness to participate in the research, this book would not have existed.
ABOUT THE EDITORS

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OVERVIEW

Islam and Higher Education in Transitional Societies

One way to bridge the gap between East and West is for the parties to understand themselves and to explore areas of mutual commonality with one another (Huntington, 1993). Especially after 9/11, the search for understanding Islam and its role in different contexts such as politics, economy, and education in nation-states has become particularly important as a guide while societies are changing domestically and countries communicating internationally and there is a growing literature in this area.

This book explores and illuminates the intersection of Islam and higher education in changing societies. The question central to the arguments examined is, what kind of role does Islam play in the context of higher education in transitional societies? First, Islam and Higher Education in Transitional Societies presents scholarly work from research conducted in geographic regions that are generally under-researched (e.g. Iran, Turkey, Pakistan) and where the place of Islam is not well explored in the educational context. Existing literature on Islam is heavily dominated by scholarship in academic disciplines such as political science, with limited systematic inquiry in education. Therefore, it is critical to assessment of the role of Islam in education generally, and higher education specifically, across different countries, to better grasp how the next generation of leaders within these contexts will be shaped. This volume thus fills a critical gap in the literature and offers an understanding of how the role of Islam in higher education is constructed and understood and how it intersects with varied social and cultural contexts. Understanding how Islam reflects itself (and does or does not intersect with secularism) in curriculum, campus life, and administration in changing societies may offer insights into higher education system in non-Western world.

Finally, the role of Islam in higher education in changing societies is important because it is only through an understanding of their educational conditions that institutions (universities) can implement policies and practices to respond effectively, and create campus environments that are supportive to university stakeholders (students, faculty, administrators, employers) (Seggie & Sanford, 2006). Effective policies can only be attained when there is a clear understanding of how cultural, social, and religious values are embedded in university lives (Seggie & Sanford, 2006). Given that Islam has historically occupied and to some extent continues to occupy a marginal position in the daily operations of some institutions of higher education, it is critical to highlight their potential effects not only on its stakeholders, but on the institutions as well in changing societies.
OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

In the opening chapter of this volume entitled “From a U.S. Standpoint: Researching Muslim Higher Education Students,” Xyanthe Neider highlights new trends in the growth of non-Christian immigration to the United States and parallel growth in the representation of non-Christian students including Muslims within the U.S. higher education sector. Yet, there is a lack of understanding of Islam in the U.S. today mainly as a consequence of how Islam is presented in the media and through popular discourse. Therefore, student affairs practitioners at many universities are not clear as to how to deal with the Muslim student body. Neider offers postcolonial theory as a way to understand the needs of Muslim students in United States’ higher education.

The author of the second chapter, Ayesha Razzaque examines academic freedom in Pakistani higher education in a chapter entitled “Islam and higher education in Pakistan.” The author examines the role of conservative religious forces and how they impede academic freedom by not allowing faculty to express perspectives that contradict traditional Islamic thought. As a consequence of these religious forces faculty engage in self-censorship and teach dogmas of religion rather than encourage students to investigate other forms of knowledge. Razzaque’s chapter presents contemporary cases where faculty have attempted to engage in scholarly activities to assert academic freedom and not bow to these religious forces. However, many have faced retaliation from students, colleagues, administrators, and others in society.

The third chapter also explores the concept of academic freedom through a comparative analysis of higher education systems in the U.S. and Iran. In the chapter entitled “Wary travelers: Academic freedom in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States,” Sharon Karkehabadi analyzes how academic freedom is defined in the post-secondary education system in the Islamic Republic of Iran from a comparative and historical perspective, with particular attention to the role of the Islamic government. While describing the organization and governance of higher education in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Karkehabadi highlights the important role of the Iranian government and Islam in universities. The author offers contemporary examples of “violations” of academic freedom in Iran and compares them to examples in the United States in the post 9-11 era. The author offers a provocative argument that clearly highlights the need for further inquiry in this area.

Doria Daniels in the fourth chapter examines the experience of Muslim academics in South African universities. Daniels’ chapter entitled “Muslim Academics at South African Universities: A Western Cape Experience,” discusses the role of the university in South Africa as a force for democracy and the transformation of these universities to a more diversified student and faculty body. This diversification has led to minorities being included in institutions that were rife with exclusionary practices under apartheid. Daniels notes the problems of the transformation process and in particular the challenges that Muslim academics have faced in becoming one of the included groups.
The fifth chapter is by Fauzia Ahmad and is entitled “We always knew from the year dot that university was the place to go: Muslim women and higher education experiences in the UK”. The author engaged in interviews with female Muslim undergraduate and postgraduate students to get the students to describe their motivations and educational experiences. The results of the study demonstrates that contrary to stereotypical beliefs, parental support (particularly father support) plays a strong role in the success of these students. Contrary to the positive support they may experience from parental support, Ahmad asserts that they often feel “othered” on university campuses. Finally, Ahmad concludes by noting that many of the stereotypes presenting female educated Muslims as rebels to their culture are challenged by the results of this study.

The final chapter entitled “Unpacking the undergraduate core curriculum: A comparative textbook analysis” is based on an exploratory study that qualitatively examines the impact of Turkish secularism of 1980s on the core undergraduate curriculum. The authors Fatma Nevra Seggie and Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela compare and contrast the focus and content of two sets of textbooks used before and after 1980 military coup in one core course in Turkish higher education institutions. Findings of the comparative textbook analysis show that after the military coup in 1980, the course became compulsory for all the undergraduate students. In addition, there was a change in the length of delivery of the course as well as its objectives and content, especially with regard to the treatment of Turkish secularism and Islam with these texts.

REFERENCES

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INTRODUCTION

As economic, social, and cultural conditions and conflict force people to relocate across the globe, the cultural and ethnic diversity is changing at a rapid pace in nations such as the United States. For example, persons reporting being foreign born during the 2000 Census period represented 11.1 percent (or just over 31 million people) of the total U.S. population, signifying the second largest percent change and single largest influx of immigrants since the beginning of this nation (Spring, 2007; Suarez-Orozco, 2004; U.S. Census, 2002). Of the 11.1 percent of persons foreign born, 15.8 percent (or just under 5 million people) of that population (the original 31 million) was of European heredity (U.S. Census, 2002). Further, data from the Institute of International Education (2008) reports that of the top 20 countries sending students to study in the U.S. only 4 countries centered upon Western paradigms. In fact, European countries show a 2 percent or less change in the total number of students sent to the United States while Saudi Arabia shows a 128 percent increase in students matriculating in U.S. higher education institutions. These statistics indicate a changing cultural and ethnic diversity in the U.S. and the institutions that operate within this country. What is more, the systems of understanding European persons, culture, and ethnicity cannot be indiscriminately applied to persons or groups from non-European traditions. In higher education this means that theories which guide practice need to be (re)examined, (re)thought, and (re)imagined and that issues of context and environment be broadened to include historical, political, and social forces that may impede or inhibit academic access, retention, and success for students of non-European heredities.

Empirical evidence suggests that campus environments can either positively or negatively affect student outcomes; such as retention or persistence to degree, potential indicators of academic success (Hartley, 2004; Hurtado, 1996; Moneta & Kuh, 2005.) Environment has been defined to include the “physical setting”, “human aggregates”, as well as “organizational structure and dynamics” according to Hamrick, Evans, and Schuh (2002, pp. 88–93). When these environments are perceived as welcoming by students, students are positively influenced (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Hurtado, 1996; Love & Talbot, 1999). Services on college campuses are aligned using developmental theories in an effort to be inclusive of an increasingly diverse student body.

A majority of theories that guide practice have been developed based upon Western ways of understanding the world. These theories do not always capture
the experiences or developmental needs of groups of students who are positioned outside of these confines. Many theories have a main underlying theme of a student moving toward some form of independence. The term independence is defined by Western cultural norms and values to mean: “the fact of not depending on another; exemption from external control or support; freedom from subjection, or from the influence of others; individual liberty of thought or action” (Oxford English Dictionary). This definition may conflict with several non-Western epistemologies due to the communal ways of being within the world these non-Western cultures may embrace (Meyer, 2004; Smith, 2006).

Although many Muslim students are United States citizens, often their religious, national, and/or community identities are challenged by and placed in opposition to some of the central developmental theoretical underpinnings of student development theories. This paper builds an argument for using creative and innovative ways to view and research a changing multicultural student population from a United States higher education perspective. The argument is developed by first exploring how the larger social context is constructed and contributes to shaping hostile campus environments. The discussion continues by exploring the complexities of national identities of people as a basis for understanding weaknesses in contemporary student development theories to describe these students. Finally, the paper concludes by presenting some possibilities and ways to open spaces for new scholarship in United States higher education.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

To better understand Muslim post-secondary students it is important to be mindful of the larger social milieu, to bring to light how groups are constructed in relation to one another, informing the argument for new and innovative ways to investigate Muslim students and their needs in a United States higher education context. The framing of identity is at once both a cultural process as well as a political endeavor. Identity is constantly in flux due to the power of others to (re)inscribe meaning onto our being. Those who define groups of people or particular individuals occupy privileged subject positions within United States or Western society (Barker, 2005; Bauman, 2005; Leonardo, 2004). Historically persons occupying the privileged spaces were considered the bourgeoisie and were responsible for defining, identifying, and gate keeping culture; in fact, high culture was defined by this predominantly white, straight, abled, affluent, Christian, male (Barker, 2005; Lesko, 2001). It is against this backdrop that specific identities have been forged into being in order to fill specific cultural roles in contemporary society, often times meeting multiple political purposes (Bauman, 2005; Leonardo, 2004). For example, Leonardo (2004) highlights how the Irish once considered and named black, became white through social processes meant to increase and maintain “the white nation state” (p. 42).

Identity is illuminated by or comes into being through several processes. One process is in the naming and laying claim in order to seemingly more properly or accurately define the other. Undergirding this notion is a comparison to an
imaginary (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Barker, 2005) norm-referenced group. Because the cultural elite held the capital for so long and continue to do so today, this group takes as its positionality a Western perspective rooted in Christian white masculinity. Bauman (2005), Leonardo (2004), and Lesko (2001) have referred to a great chain of being as the measuring rod against which all are compared. The chain aligns with a theory of evolution by claiming as its Truth the white Christian male as the most evolved of all life forms (Lesko, 2001). Along the chain can be seen the white woman, the black male, the black female, children and animals. As all life evolves, so does the white Christian male. Thus, all life and thereby identities are becoming at the same time and pace; the only form capable of catching up to the white male is the white male child who will eventually grow up, assuming his manufactured place in the hierarchy of life. Because this notion is so embedded within Western conceptions of identity all are measured against the now normalized and hidden hierarchical system of stratification (Bauman, 2005). The great chain of being is a taken for granted, underlying paradigm to traditional studies of identity and development.

In order for identities to be shaped through comparison to a norm-referenced group, they first need to be named. Naming occurs through many avenues. Several scholars have outlined the educative effects of popular media on shaping public opinion, about Muslims and politics in particular (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Buck-Morss, 2003; Chomsky, 2001; Moses, 2007; Nixon, 2005; Shapiro, 2005; Steinberg, 2004). Evidence of this naming of Muslims is viewed on the front page of national newspapers such as the New York Times and USA Today, local newspapers, and televised world news headlined by stories of Islamic terrorists or Muslim fundamentalists. These stories are one way in which a grand narrative of what it means to be Muslim is created; again, always measured against the great chain of being. Consider the framing of persons from the Middle East who commit acts of violence, they are always identified by religion as long as that religion is Islam and always labelled as terrorist. Westerners or Western governments who commit similar acts of violence or aggression are never primarily identified by religion and never labelled as terrorist unless they have real or perceived ties to Islamic groups. As evidence of this I offer Ted Kazinski, a.k.a. the una-bomber who terrorized U.S. citizens through the United States Postal Service for the better part of two decades. Also Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City Federal Building bomber, was never identified by religion or labelled a terrorist (Abukhattachala, 2004). Lastly, abortion clinic bombers are also never labelled terrorists or Christian fundamentalists. Again, none of these people have been labelled terrorist in any persistent and seemingly permanent way and religion has rarely been the crux of the bombers identity as conjured by the popular press (Abukhattachala, 2004). The reason I bring these popular media discourses to light here is to illuminate the context against which transnational Muslims in the United States, in fact across the globe at this present moment in history, are shaping their identities.

The media, as educational apparatus, help shape the public discourse in the United States on the subject of Islam. According to Moses (2007), "print media tend to be most used by people who are trying to find information to form an
opinion on a given topic…” (p. 160). As such, negative framings of Muslims since the end of the Cold War (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Buck-Mors, 2003) in political and media discourse have influenced public opinion in ways that are currently shaping, changing, and running the current of social and public policy. Contributing to create the grand narrative of Muslim as terrorist, this process seems to work in a way that goes largely unnoticed and seemingly naturalized; few call into question the othering of Muslims across the globe or in local communities. This taken for granted normalization of othering Muslims in society can best occur through one of the socializing systems/mechanisms in Western society; education.

Through history text books and courses that position and frame, for example, Palestinians as militant and terrorist and Israelis in occupied Palestine as the keepers of peace, martyrs of their holy land, and positioned in the “right;” a grand narrative is reified. Signifiers are sent and received when those from the West in positions of immense power speak out against Islam and the Middle East publicly. Recall the public attacks from Pope Benedict XVI in a September, 2006 speech in which he quoted the 1391 Byzantine Emperor, Manuel II Paleologus, “[s]how me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached” (Wikipedia, 2008). These actions, acts, and framing bring Muslims into being, illuminate, and “force themselves [these actions of framing] into our vision, attention, and thought” in very specific and planned ways (Bauman, 2005, p. 444).

Through politics, Muslims have been identified and operationalized as frustration and trouble. Said (1979) wrote of how the Orient came into being through a Western framing and eventually the persons residing in what was/is the Orient framed themselves through the vision of the colonizers as Oriental. Mohanty (1984) also shows us how the Third World came into being alongside and always in relation to the First World. She states, “[w]ithout the over determined discourse that creates the third world, there would be no (singular and privileged) first world” (p. 353). Within Said’s and Mohanty’s revelations lies the contentious space of identity and identity development. Contemporary Muslim identities are brought into being in relation to Christian identities against the present historical backdrop of media influence of public opinion and discourse as well as current political struggles and framings alongside their transnational communities and identities (Abu El-Haj, 2007).

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS

After understanding how identities are shaped through complex processes we can then turn to explore how these processes also contribute to creating hostile environments, the spaces in which students on a college campus may study, learn, work, socialize, and live. Realizing that the history and traditions of U.S. higher education institutions are historically exclusionary of minority groups, contemporary practice in higher education strives to be more global and inclusionary (Hurtado, 1996).

Hartley (2004) suggests that college campuses are often hostile toward religious, faith, and spiritual practices. Further, Love and Talbot (1999) state that
“spiritual development, like student development, can either be fostered or inhibited by the environmental context in which students live, grow and develop,” (p. 369) thus making the necessary link between student religious, faith, and/or spiritual development and campus environmental context. For some students, environmental influences that are hostile toward one aspect of self can leave them reeling within a college environment, while others will seek out opportunities to become more closely unified with a campus group affiliated with that aspect of identity (Hartley, 2004; Hurtado, 1996). Having an accepting environment is certainly the goal of most higher education institutions; however, this is not always the norm. Muslim women, for example, face close scrutiny in societies where their group is the minority, which becomes more pointed when they choose to wear traditional dress. Choosing to veil and wear traditional dress often challenges the strength of their identity.

Literature about Muslim students and their identity has centered on women; little work has focused on Muslim men, their roles, and how their identities are shaped and challenged in academia. For example, Cole and Ahmadi (2003) conducted a study pre-September 11, 2001 of Muslim women who chose to veil on a college campus and explored the perspectives and experiences of these women. Adhering to Islamic doctrine in a community that is not largely Muslim poses some challenges in how one is received and viewed by others. The women in this study experienced hostility toward their outward appearance. Religious hostility is not uncommon on college campuses, as Hartley (2004) mentioned. To effectively be shut out of the dominant community may lead to greater identity cohesion as a matter of self-preservation.

As stated earlier, the media has a strong influence on public opinion; it stands to reason that the opinions of non-Muslim students, faculty, and staff may have been shaped by inaccurate and exaggerated depictions of Muslims in the popular press, as well as other educational materials, and propaganda. Students, faculty, and staff are all actors on the campus environment – or rather the campus ecology (Hamrick, Evans, & Schuh, 2002).

Hurtado (1996) has documented and outlined how the institutional context affects students in higher education by positing how academic colonialism is deeply embedded within higher education systems, “...the source of [racial] conflict is not between diversity and achievement but originates from differences in institutional priorities that work to preserve inequalities” (p. 488). El-Haj (2007) has taken up a similar project for secondary students by writing, “through everyday discourse and practices inside their schools and communities, Palestinian youth experience their positioning as outside the ‘imagined community’ of the U.S. nation, framing them as ‘enemies within’” (p. 287). For transnational Muslim students who “are often navigating their sense of identity and belonging in relation to multiple national communities,” (p. 288) environmental influences contribute to how their identities are shaped and navigated. Further confounding the social context within United States higher education is this notion of the transnational student, which carries different political implications and meanings for students dependent upon what part of the world from which their heritage originates.
NATIONAL IDENTITIES

As people move about the globe at a frenetic pace, the diversity of U.S. higher education is changing as demonstrated by both the U.S. 2000 Census (2002) and The Institute of International Education (2008) statistics in the introduction. In previous waves of immigration to the United States people came from Western Christian traditions and more readily assimilated into the U.S. national identity. Assimilation is becoming less common as people relocating to the U.S. choose to maintain multiple national identities. Further, the idea of transnationalism may be particularly salient to help student affairs practitioners understand Muslim students in a U.S. higher education context, as shall be demonstrated in this section.

Transnational, according to Appadurai (1993), means the “global spread of originally local national identities” (p. 21). These students have relocated to at least one other country and may be part of a perpetual diaspora relocating frequently or often, do not abandon their native culture while also melding the host culture into a synthesis of a new cultural understanding (Clifford, 2006). Further, Appadurai (1993) stated, “diasporic diversity actually puts loyalty to a nonterritorial transnation first, while realizing that there is a special American way to connect with these global diasporas” (p. 21). Diasporic diversity is best described by the nationalisms of particular groups. National identities are tied to local places, spaces, and land and do not change as nation-state borders are reconfigured or eroded. Nationalisms may be tied to a nostalgic understanding of what previously was or what could one day be. Finally, national identities may relocate with the people to new spaces, places, and lands.

According to the Oxford dictionary the word diaspora describes the relocation of the Jews from Babylon. The Random House dictionary defines diaspora as the relocation of Jews from Palestine. The present use of the term in modern postcolonial literature has redefined and expanded upon this term. In the original use there is an implication of religious persecution. Correspondingly, as the term is used now it connotes a persecution, not necessarily of religion only. As Appadurai’s (1993/1999) writings indicate, diaspora can be a relocation either forced or willing of a people identified similarly to a tribe who have been the recipients of some form of persecution – religious, political, ethnic, or otherwise. Therefore, diaspora is more descriptive than the term immigration because the term immigration describes a permanent relocation where diaspora may be temporary, permanent, or perpetual and persecution of some sort is implicated in and by its use. Diaspora connects with transnationalism because to be transnational means that a person has relocated to one or multiple different countries or nation-states. This is important to understanding transnationalism because the consequences of globalization are causing diasporas across the globe and as these diasporas relocate they are maintaining national identities. These national identities are relocated into new national spaces.

Because the term diaspora is closely linked to transnationalism (i.e., transnational movements of people, transnational cultures), it is useful to quote James Clifford (2006) at some length here to more clearly articulate the interconnections between the two terms.
Diasporic populations do not come from elsewhere in the same way that ‘immigrants’ do. In assimilationist national ideologies such as those of the United States, immigrants may experience loss and nostalgia, but only en route to a whole new home in a new place. Such ideologies are designed to integrate immigrants, not people in diasporas…the national narrative…cannot assimilate groups that maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere. People whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss cannot be ‘cured’ by merging into a new national community. This is especially true when they are the victims of ongoing structural prejudice. (p. 451)

Clifford further states that diasporas “are deployed in transnational networks built from multiple attachments, and they encode practices of accommodation with, as well as resistance to, host countries and their norms” (p. 452). Lastly, Clifford posits: Transnational connections break the binary relation of ‘minority’ communities with ‘majority’ societies—a dependency that structures projects of both assimilation and resistance. And it gives a strengthened spatial/historical content to older mediating concepts such as W. E. B. DuBois’s notion of ‘double consciousness.’ Moreover, diasporas are not exactly immigrant communities…Diasporist discourses reflect the sense of being a part of an ongoing transnational network that includes the homeland not as something simply left behind but as a place of attachment in a contrapuntal modernity…The process may not be as much about being African or Chinese as about being American or British or wherever one has settled, differently. It is also about feeling global. Islam, like Judaism in a predominantly Christian culture, can offer a sense of attachment elsewhere, to a different temporality and vision, a discrepant modernity. (pp. 453–454)

Within Clifford’s postulations a finely nuanced difference is illuminated between diaspora and transnational. Diaspora refers to an entire group of people indigenous to a region, whereas transnational refers to an individual who may or may not be part of a diaspora but has relocated to another location away from their homelands. The tensions between maintaining multiple national identities and the construction of identity by and through the media are the bedrock of the hostile environments in which Muslim students must operate. Operationalizing this concept of transnationalism is important to expanding and (re)envisioning current theories used in U.S. higher education practice because not only have these theories been built on a western perspective and understanding of the world they do not account for the unique positionality of Muslims in U.S. higher education. Through the media and popular discourse Muslims have been forced into a transnational space due to social and political forces. One way in which students are understood and framed on college campuses is through the use of student development theories, most of which have been developed upon the western student experiences, in a western context, and within a singular national identity.
Although many student development theories (Cross, 1995; Perry, 1968; Schlossberg, 1995) may not have had the underlying intent of comparing non-Western groups against an imagined norm, the effect has been to further normalize and institutionalize the norm-referenced group against which to measure development in adults. Recognizing that Churchill (2000) has been widely discredited, he did articulate how deeply these taken for granted systems of oppression run by writing:

The [university] curriculum is virtually totalizing in its emphasis, not simply upon an imagined superiority of Western endeavors and accomplishments, but upon the notion that the currents of European thinking compromise the only really “natural”—or at least truly useful – formation of knowledge/means of perceiving reality. In the vast bulk of curriculum content, Europe is not only the subject (in its conceptual mode, the very process of “learning to think”), but the object (subject matter) of investigation as well. (p. 51)

Many student development models were developed in reference to white Christian masculinity. Therefore, theories that build upon these theoretical models continue to position all other groups in opposition and relation to white Christian masculinity. This argument is similar to Mohanty’s (1984) and Said’s (1979) observations in their work. Further, applying these theories upon groups for which they did not set out to explain may be a form of epistemological violence, forcing assimilation into an imagined and taken for granted norm. A Western standpoint continues to hold Christianity and Europe at the center of knowledge as both creator and subject, the West in relation to the East, First World in relation to Third World (Churchill, 2000; Mohanty, 1984; Said, 1979). Therefore, it is essential to use a critical perspective that can account for transnational nuances.

POSSIBILITIES

Within a United States transitional societal context, Muslims are being constructed as trouble and problem. This current framing of Muslims within the media, national policies, educational contexts, and public discourse creates the environments where Muslims must learn, live, work, and play. The focus of this paper has been to explore the construction of campus environments as places where students learn, grow, and develop. How particular groups of students are framed can make the campus environment hostile to core aspects of the self or welcoming to those aspects. The foundational tenets of contemporary student development theories continues to position white Christian masculinity as that against which all else is measured possibly further contributing to campus hostilities among or within groups. As national borders become more permeable, multicultural populations are changing the demographics of U.S. higher education institutions which calls for new ways to examine issues affecting the student body of college campuses.
Postcolonial theory can be used to think differently about student development and to help expand the educational research literature in new and innovative ways. This theoretical perspective helps scholars to think creatively about policy because as the world and diversity in higher education changes so must how we approach issues of access, retention, and success. Postcolonial theory gives voice to the oppressed groups from colonized discourses (Appadurai, 1999; Bhabha, 1999; Dayal, 1996; Spivak, 1999). By decentering European knowledge as both subject and way of thinking (Churchill, 2000) space is opened for intricate distinctions of transnational persons to be made within the creation and subject of knowledge. Bhabha (1999) contends that postcolonial theory is sensitive to the “unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order” (p. 190). Transnational culture is a strategy of survival “because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted within specific histories of cultural displacement” (Bhabha, 1999, p. 191). Postcolonial theory is already embedded within the global context and helps to provide understandings to the ethnoscapes as an historical occurrence (Appadurai, 1993/1999; Dayal, 1996; Giddens, 2003; Held & McGrew, 2003). Lastly, postcolonial theory describes national identities that may still be held by persons of the diasporas. By using this theoretical perspective to unearth the taken for granted unequal and uneven distributions of power, knowledge, and resources one can begin to explore the consequences of globalization on the people who are relocating around the globe and the local environments to which they move (Appadurai, 1993/1999; Held & McGrew, 2003). This is particularly important for Muslims who reside in predominantly Christian societies (Clifford, 2006).

As for United States higher education, perhaps the most important thing that postcolonial theory contributes understanding to are the students that U.S. higher education institutions serve. By understanding transnational students a deeper understanding of development and identity can better serve student affairs practitioners, inform campus programming, and provide evidence to support, guide, and inform changing university policy in working with these student populations. Because postcolonial theory allows for the colonized to be the subject of legitimate knowledge it is essential to choose methods and theoretical perspectives which do not further colonize the stories, rather the researcher should choose methods which will allow for the stories to be heard.

Finally, contemporary student development theories do not account for histories of how particular groups have been memorialized through the teaching of history, movies, news media, and public discourse. How a group is named or labelled by the dominant group brings the oppressed group into focus in a particular way and validates the inaccurate understandings as Truth and Reality. As such, applying the aforementioned student development theories to transnational Muslims works to further legitimize and normalize western ways of knowing as the measuring rod against which all else is measured. The application also perpetually positions transnational Muslims, whether U.S. citizens or not, as other within the U.S. academic setting. Through the use of postcolonial theory spaces can be opened through which social justice can enter. Using postcolonial theory as a lens builds
possibilities to understand transnational Muslim students in U.S. higher education institutions independent of traditional western theoretical norms and practices.

REFERENCES


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