

IT'S A CHRISTIAN WORLD: THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE IN THE COLLEGE
EXPERIENCES OF JEWISH AND MUSLIM UNDERGRADUATES

By

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative study explored the role of Christian privilege in the college experiences of Jewish and Muslim undergraduates at one large public, land grant, research intensive university, a predominantly white institution (PWI) in the Midwest. I interviewed 13 participants, seven Muslims (four women, three men) and six Jews (three women, three men), about their experiences in college, how Christian privilege appeared (or did not) in those experiences, and how and if they defined Christian privilege for themselves. Through narrative inquiry, in single session, semi-structured interviews, I gathered the stories of these 13 participants and the role of Christian privilege in their college experiences at Midwest University (MU).

This study provides an in depth exploration of what was in the current news when this study was conducted and written up regarding Jews and Muslims in the United States and particularly in higher education. A full chapter is dedicated to a history of religion, particularly Christianity and especially Protestantism, in the United States (and colonial America) and its higher education using Roger Geiger's (2005) "The Ten Generations of American Higher Education" and Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen's (2012) *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education* as guideposts for understanding that history. I use the existing literature to define Christian privilege and provide seven major categories of Christian privilege on college campuses as seen in the literature: the calendar and time off; food; holidays,

celebration, and worship; space; curriculum and language; the secularization of Christianity; safety.

Twelve of the 13 participants provided their own definition of Christian privilege, and all of the participants experienced Christian privilege as having a role in their college experiences, whether or not they identified it that way. The manifestations of Christian privilege in the college experiences of the participants fell into two major categories: living a (minority) religious life and interacting with others. Each of the two major categories had four subcategories. The calendar and time off, food, holidays, celebration, and worship, and space and structure were all salient aspects of living a (minority) religious life; religious literacy and language, the secularization of Christianity, safety, and social isolation and intergroup relationships were all important parts of interacting with others as Jews and Muslims in an environment saturated by Christian privilege. Race is also accounted for as part of how Christian privilege might be experienced.

Through the stories of my participants, this study offers a rich, nuanced, empirical look at the experiences of Jewish and Muslim undergraduates and the role of Christian privilege in those stories and experiences. Implications for practice, theory, and research are offered. Ahmadi and Cole's (2015) campus climate model for understanding campus climate for religious minority students was identified as a useful and viable framework, and further studies could use this framework from the outset. There are a range of research implications that could take research in many directions including studying other religious minority populations, other geographic regions, and other institutional types as well as quantitative studies on this subject. Additionally, there are implications for practice for faculty, staff, students, and administrators – the foremost of which is the need for greater religious literacy in all roles and at all levels of higher education.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my great-uncle, Jacques Kellner, who, had it not been for antisemitism in higher education and western culture more broadly, would have almost certainly been a college graduate and perhaps our family's first Ph.D.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Religion: in the United States we are taught not to talk about it; it often comes first in the list of subjects that are rude to discuss—followed by politics and money. This can make religion a difficult subject for both scholars and practitioners of higher education administration. This difficulty is further complicated by a relatively low level of religious literacy among Americans, higher education scholars and practitioners included. However, religion and its connected social issues are also ripe to be discussed and researched more deeply. For example, last year a new study about the “relationship between college education and religious affiliation” (Jaschik, 2014, p. 1) was featured in *Inside Higher Ed* (Schwadel, 2014). Schwadel’s (2014) study explores the “assumption that education is a motivating force behind secularization” (p. 1). Schwadel (2014) essentially concludes that “college education is no longer a faith-killer” (Jaschik, 2014, p. 1). This very recent large scale quantitative study, like many studies of its type, comes from a traditional discipline, in this case sociology. The bulk of writing about religion from the academic field of higher education focuses on either faith development or personal narrative, both of which are valuable. This study is meant to take those personal narratives one step further to look at the overarching college experiences of students who belong to minority religions, specifically Islam and Judaism, and the role Christian privilege plays in those experiences. I define what constitutes “college experiences” broadly. For the purposes of this study, college experiences are defined as any experience a student has during their college years that is linked, directly or indirectly, to their higher education institution. I focused on experiences and locations directly linked to college, including but not limited to: the classroom, residence halls, dining services, interactions with faculty and staff, any institutionally housed or sponsored jobs or internships, interactions with fellow students, academic advising and other student services (e.g. study abroad, Greek life, athletics, identity focused resources like a multicultural center, an

LGBT resource center, disability services, etc., on campus physical and mental health services), and navigating the campus, the institution, and its policies as a whole. Also, since what happens in a student's life off campus—ranging from as close as off-campus housing or a local job to what happens at their familial home—interacts with and influences what happens on campus, some indirect experiences are included as well. I reiterate the definition of college experiences in the Chapter Four for clarity.

Colleges and universities pay a lot of attention to other aspects of identity (race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) and often have centers devoted to those identities and needs, but rarely is religion treated in the same way. However, this is not because religion and its accompanying privilege or lack thereof are unimportant within higher education. “Indeed, as much of the educational literature over the last several decades had indicated, it is difficult to speak meaningfully about education without examining the role and impact of a variety of categories of difference” in the organization of schools, “in what is (and is not) taught, how things are taught and to whom, and who gets advantages/disadvantaged by those practices” (Burke & Segall, 2011, p. 633). Religion should be no different, and yet “there has been very little critical examination of these issues as they pertain to religion” (Burke & Segall, 2011, p. 633). “Religion is an aspect of student culture that is often overlooked” (Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016, p. 90), and one of the primary goals of this study is to shine a light on this often overlooked aspect of the college student experience with a focus on how the dominant religion, Christianity, and its accompany privilege enters the lives of minority religion students, specifically Muslims and Jews.

I chose Muslims and Jews for a number of reasons, some of which are methodological and discussed in more depth in Chapter Four. However, I also chose Muslims and Jews because

there is both existing data for each group and each group has recently and is still currently featured in news about religion and higher education. Outside of Christianity, these two religious groups generate more news, or at least generate more interest from the media, than other, smaller non-Christian religious groups.

I use Warren Blumenthal's (2006; 2012) definition of *Christian privilege* which he bases on Peggy McIntosh's (1989) work and develops over more than one article addressing Christian privilege. *Christian privilege* is,

... the overarching system of advantages bestowed on Christians. It is the institutionalization of a Christian norm or standard, which establishes and perpetuates the notion that all people are or should be Christian thereby privileging Christians and Christianity, and excluding the needs, concerns, ethnoreligious cultural practices, and life experiences of people who are not Christian. Often overt, though at times subtle, Christian hegemony is oppression by intent and design, but also it comes in the form of neglect, omission, erasure, and distortion. (Blumenfeld, 2006, p. 1)

In Chapter Three, I define and explore the concept of Christian privilege in more depth and situate it within the larger conversation about power and privilege.

Christian Privilege in the Media

Christian privilege does appear in the media, both higher education specific media and general media. Most frequently it appears in the same sort of manifestations that are discussed at length in the rest of this proposal. However, sometimes an issue of Christian privilege will bubble up in such a way that it receives attention for what it is. For example, the 2015 "Starbucks's red cup controversy" (Abad-Santos, 2015, p. 1) was a shining example of

unchecked Christian privilege. The 2015 disposable paper cups for the winter/holiday/Christmas season at Starbucks were a slightly ombre red; they carried no indicators of religion or particular holidays aside from that, nor have they ever really. Previous iterations had literal seasonal decorations like snowmen and snowflakes (Abad-Santos, 2015). However, “to some, the naked red cup, unadorned with symbols like holly or snowflakes, is an affront against the Christian faith, a cut against Christianity” (Abad-Santos, 2015, p. 1). This outrage, some of it manufactured, stemmed from a viral video not only objecting to the plain red cups but also accusing Starbucks of taking “Christ and Christmas off their brand news cups” and not allowing baristas “to say merry Christmas to their customers” (Abad-Santos, 2015, p. 9). The cup was just red, but the rest of it was fabricated; Christ was never on the cups. In fact, “Starbucks, which doesn’t identify itself as a Christian company, has *never* [emphasis in the original] put the words ‘Merry Christmas’ on its holiday cups—instead it’s used wintry and vaguely holiday-esque imagery and language...” (Abad-Santos, 2015, p. 13). Christianity and Christian privilege are so ubiquitous that Christianity, Christmas, and its symbols were imagined and believed to be where they never were.

Inside the world of postsecondary education, there are context-specific examples of this. During the recent Christmas season, the University of Tennessee was a higher education hotbed of the imagined “War Against Christmas.” Fear not, Christmas was not actually in any danger. After all, the Episcopal and Lutheran minister for the campus “sent out an invitation to legislators for a Christmas party...apologized for having a Christmas party in what is technically Advent and urged the lawmakers to ‘please calm down, have a cookie, and know that Christmas is safe and well at the University of Tennessee’” (Jaschik, 2015, p. 1). This statement begs the questions that Jaschik (2015) answers: “Why wouldn’t Christmas be safe?” (p. 1). Apparently, in

this case, Christmas was not safe from the university's Office for Diversity and Inclusion. The threat? A set of online recommendations for being more inclusive during the winter holiday season (Jaschik, 2015). Suggestions included having a holiday party focused on "team morale" and building "workplace relationships," making sure the party was not "a Christmas party in disguise," and the possibility of celebrating the new year rather Christmas specifically (Jaschik, 2015, p. 1). To me, this seems like common sense advice for the winter season at a public institution in a nation without a national religion. Yet, "all nine Republican members of Congress from Tennessee have denounced the holiday guidance" (Jaschik, 2015, p. 1). Ironically, it was actually the diversity office that was in danger from the legislature; in mid-April, both houses of the Tennessee Legislature voted to ban the university's diversity office from using state funds (Jaschik, 2016). The bill cuts "the entire \$436,000 state appropriation...that promotes diversity at the state's flagship institution" (Jaschik, 2016, p. 1). While the guidelines were not the only inclusion that this legislation is meant to derail, this retaliatory behavior on the part of the Tennessee Legislature sent a clear message about the punishment for transgressing the privileged status of Christianity and Christmas.

Cornell University received similar attention during the 2015 Christmas season. Their faux Christmas scandal seemed to be about the display of mistletoe and the online attention to its nonexistent but very concerning ban on mistletoe. Cornell, a mixed public and private institution, has a policy that students and staff may privately display religious symbols in their living or working spaces, but university policy limits financial support for religious displays and discourages those that would give the impression of university endorsement (Jaschik, 2015). Both of these universities are still saturated with Christmas and its trappings—from Christmas ornaments in both schools' stores to the "Cornell police department decorating a Christmas tree

for children” and a wide range of fraternity and sorority Christmas parties at the University of Tennessee (Jaschik, 2015, p. 3). At both of these campuses, despite policy or recommendations enforcing or suggesting inclusivity and despite outrage suggesting Christmas is in danger, Christmas reigns supreme over the winter season just as Christian privilege reigns supreme over the culture as a whole.

Jewish and Muslim Students: Who are They and Why Study Them?

Jews and Muslims have been present in the United States since before it was the United States. In Chapter Two, I provide an in depth history of the religion in the United States and specifically within American higher education. Understanding the history is pivotal in creating a nuanced, complex picture of the role of religion, and of Christian privilege specifically, in higher education in the U.S. Additionally, understanding the history helps to illuminate the path the United States is on, a path towards religious pluriformity (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012).

In a world where we are all connected digitally, and global geopolitics are constantly changing, it is hard to capture an exact picture of the Muslim and Jewish college student population. As mentioned earlier, the United States does not collect religious data as part of census so information about religious demographics in this country comes largely from private foundations. This means that the numbers are sometimes outdated.

Additionally, both historical and recent, ongoing international events impact the lives of Jews and Muslims not only in the location of those events but also in the United States. The current war in Syria and Iraq coupled with the continuing aftermath of 9/11 affect the lives of American Muslims every day (King, 2015; Semple, 2015; Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015). American Jews contend not only with millennia-old myths and stereotypes but also with the complexities of the current situation in Israel and the conflict between Israeli and Palestinian leadership

(Kosmin & Keysar, 2015; Saxe, Sasson, Wright, & Hecht, 2015; Wisse, 2015). Islamophobia and antisemitism are part of the national reality of Muslims and Jews in the United States (King, 2015; Kosmin & Keysar, 2015; Saxe et al., 2015; Semple, 2015; Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015; Wisse, 2015).

Demographics. Currently, Jews and Muslims make up close to the same percentage up the overall U.S. population (Lipka, 2015b; Pew, 2007, 2013, 2015). The Jewish population, long “the largest non-Christian religion in the country,” is slowly shrinking while the Muslim population is growing (Lipka, 2015b, p. 1). “Due in part to their continued migration into the country, Muslims are forecast to make up 2.1% of the U.S. population in 2050, up from 0.9% in 2010” (Lipka, 2015b, p. 1). Jews, on the other hand, clocked in at 1.8% of the population in 2010 and are forecast to drop to 1.4% of the population by 2050. Jews in the United States are hard to count accurately because so many American Jews identify only as “cultural” or “ethnic” Jews; the Pew Research Center attempts to remove ethnic/cultural Jews from the Jewish group and label them secular, but because of the lack of reliability of parsing this, the number of Jews in the United States is unlikely to be exact (Lipka, 2015b). Additionally, “the median age of U.S. Jews as of 2010 (41) was 17 years older than the median age for Muslims (24), and Jews, on average, have 1.9 children per woman compared with 2.8 for U.S. Muslims” (Lipka, 2015b, p. 2). The median age for both Protestant (52) and Catholic (49) adults is higher than for either Muslims or Jews and is rising (Pew, 2015). Overall, “the share of Americans who identify with non-Christian faiths has...inched up, rising 1.2 percentage points, from 4.7% in 2007 to 5.9% in 2014. Growth has been especially great among Muslims...albeit from a very low base” (Pew, 2015, p. 3).

Immigrants are more likely to be members of non-Christian religions; more than 10% identify this way (Pew, 2015). Jews, the longest established non-indigenous, non-Christian religious group in the United States, are above the average in terms of college degrees and household income; an interesting side note is that Hindus, a largely recent immigrant group, outpace Jews in college degree attainment by 18% (Pew, 2015). Muslims also have higher levels of postsecondary degree attainment than the general population ((Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016). In terms of racial diversity, the Muslim population is quite diverse with “no racial or ethnic group” making up more than 40% (Lipka, 2015c, p. 3). “Blacks, whites (including some people of North African or Middle Eastern descent), and Asians each make up a quarter or more of U.S. Muslims” (Lipka, 2015c, p. 3). This is connected to the 65% of American Muslims who were born outside of the country. “A relatively large proportion of Muslim immigrants are from Arab countries, but many also come from Pakistan and other South Asian countries. Among native-born Muslims, roughly half are African American” (Pew, 2007, p. 2). “Jewish [college] students are more likely to be U.S. born than the college population as a whole, and, in fact, 73% are third or more generation Americans” (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015, p. 2). American Jews are also not especially racially diverse; 90% are white, though it is important here, too, to remember that the white category includes people of Middle Eastern and North African descent. Additionally, “the five least diverse groups...are all Protestant denominations” (Lipka, 2015c, p. 3).

The Pew Research Center published its last large scale survey of American Muslims in 2007 and its most recent large scale study of American Jews in 2013 (Pew, 2007, 2013). This means that the numbers for Muslims are almost a decade out of date, but, based on the 2010 general population numbers, it is safe to assume that the Muslim population is increasing in size though it may be changing in other ways that are not yet apparent. As of 2007, 35% of American

Muslims were U.S. born of whom 21% are converts (or reverts to use language of Islam) to Islam (Pew, 2007). This data comes from “the first-ever, nationwide, random sample survey of Muslim Americans” which showed “them to be largely assimilated, happy with their lives, and moderate with respect to many of the issues that have divided Muslims and Westerners around the world” (Pew, 2007, p. 1). Ignoring the problematic assumption that Muslim and Western are mutually exclusive and accounting for the slight out-datedness of this data, this contradicts much of the current public discourse about Muslims, both on campus and, even more so, off (King, 2015; Semple, 2015; Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015).

American Jews are considerably less religious than their Muslim counterparts (Pew, 2007, 2013), and that dynamic plays out in this study. The study is situated in the region of the country with the smallest percentage of the overall Jewish population; only 11% of U.S. Jews live in the Midwest (Pew, 2013). For Jews that are affiliated with a formal branch of Judaism, just over a third of U.S. “Jews identify with the Reform movement, while 18% identify with Conservative Judaism, 10% with Orthodox [and ultra-Orthodox] Judaism and 6% with a variety of smaller groups” (Pew, 2013, p. 5).

The United States also does not exist in a vacuum. This means that world events and world demographics impact even day-to-day life on college campuses. As of 2010, Muslims numbered about 1.6 billion or 23.4% of the global population (Pew, 2011). Jews, despite their slightly larger U.S. population, make up only 0.2% of the world population at 14.2 million people (Weiss & Brackman, 2015).

Today's News. Just during the time I have spent working on this study, national and geopolitical events have affected and potentially changed the lives of Jewish and Muslim college students in the United States—unfortunately mostly in negative ways for both groups (King, 2015; Kosmin & Keysar, 2015; Saxe et al., 2015; Semple, 2015; Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015; Wisse, 2015). This has been the case throughout the course of the study and may factor considerably into how Muslim and Jewish students experienced college. In terms of how students feel they are treated on campus or in the larger community, the primary geopolitical and national issues and concerns for Muslims right now are the war in Syria and Iraq involving ISIS/Daesh, the echoes of 9/11, the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels, and the mass shooting in San Bernardino; for Jews, the actions and existence of the state of Israel are primary; and for both groups, the United States presidential primary race, particularly the Trump campaign, looms large (King, 2015; Kosmin & Keysar, 2015; Saxe et al., 2015; Semple, 2015; Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015; Wisse, 2015; Yan, 2015).

In just the last year or less, articles about the fears and concerns of young Muslims in the United States have appeared in major news outlets, including but not limited to *The New York Times*, *The LA Times*, *The Atlantic*, *CNN*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Bishop, 2015; King, 2015; Semple, 2015; Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015; Yan, 2015). This is being treated as an emerging issue though one can find similar articles from the time period after 9/11. Female students at Zaytuna College, the only Muslim college in United States, in Berkley, California report “making sure to walk in twos or threes as they made their way from Zaytuna to their dormitories on the opposite side of the UC Berkeley campus. Out of the corners of their eyes, they could see the occasional lingering stares” (King, 2015, p. 3). Muslims students are noticing that they are “set apart” from their peers “as an other” (King, 2015, p. 4). One of the students in

King's (2015) article shared, "I think a lot of young Muslims share some resentment about feeling like we need to apologize when we have done nothing wrong" (p. 4). In March of this year, students at a campus fairly near the site of this study discovered anti-Muslim graffiti on their campus "including some labeled #stopislam" ("Muslim hate graffiti discovered at University of Michigan campus," 2016, para. 2).

Experiencing Islamophobia, or fearing that it might emerge at any moment, is not only for young adults. High school students are having similar experiences; so Muslim students may be arriving at college having already been targeted for their religion. One of Semple's (2015) interviewees, a 15-year-old girl, said that,

she has had to contend with growing anti-Muslim sentiment, adjusting her routines to avoid attacks and worrying about how she appears to the rest of society. And she has repeatedly felt compelled to justify her faith and to distance herself from terrorists who murder in the name of her religion. (p. 1)

This has been going on for some time, and while there might have been a lull between 9/11 and now,

Farha Abbasi, assistant professor of psychiatry at Michigan State University and an expert in Muslim mental health, said that since the Sept. 11 attacks, young Muslims in the United States have dealt with 'chronic trauma' from the constant stress of anti-Muslim sentiment. (Semple, 2015, p. 2)

This aligns with students in middle and high school being called terrorists, high school students seeing microaggressions against women wearing a hijab—including their own mother, and a Brooklyn College student sharing the it feels "like it's them against us, that everybody's out to get you and you have something to prove" (Semple, 2015, p. 3). That student's words

could have just as easily come out of a Jewish student's mouth, especially if this were 70 years ago but even, as I discuss in the next few paragraphs, now. Both groups experience feeling like the world is against them, typically for things far beyond their actual control (King, 2015; Kosmin & Keysar, 2015; Saxe et al., 2015; Semple, 2015; Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015; Wisse, 2015).

Both Jewish and Muslim students report being concerned for their safety on campus (King, 2015; Kosmin & Keysar, 2015; Saxe et al., 2015; Semple, 2015; Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015; Wisse, 2015). Muslim students “worry about wearing head scarves—which make them visibly identifiable—and about walking alone at night” (Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015, p. 2). The vast majority of Jewish students' safety concerns were focused around events and spaces that are focused on or perceived to be involved with Israel (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015; Saxe et al., 2015; Wisse, 2015). In April of this year, “a bipartisan congressional task force on anti-Semitism asked US Education Secretary John King to outline how his department is tracking anti-Jewish bias” (JTA, 2016, para. 1), and a study recently found “instances of anti-Semitic expression, as defined by the U.S. Department of State, to be highly likely on campuses where students, faculty or groups...support or promote the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel” (Logue, 2016, para. 1).

Both groups report feeling like they have to speak for their entire group, being fearful, experiencing anxiety about what topics might arise in casual conversation, and receiving insufficient, incompetent, and/or bigoted responses from college and university administration (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015; Saxe et al., 2015; Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015; Wisse, 2015). Many Muslims “also believe that the government” singles them out “for increased surveillance and monitoring” (Pew, 2007, pp. 3–4). It is hard not to agree they are likely correct considering that

the Republican presidential primary frontrunner has called publicly for a moratorium on new Muslim immigrants to the United States (Yan, 2015). Additionally, Muslim college student perceive themselves as “always at the back of the line for...compassion” and can be frequent targets of hostility, towards both their person and their religious traditions, from both peers and faculty, in person and online, including anonymous platforms like Yik Yak (Bishop, 2015, p. 3).

The information about college campuses and Islamophobia comes largely from news outlets. Conversely, the information about campus antisemitism comes from primarily from academic reports. There was some overlap, but it is worth noting that right now the general and higher education specific media thinks Islamophobia is an issue, and parts of the academy, all of them with some kind of Jewish connection or funding, and Jewish media think antisemitism is a current problem (King, 2015; Kosmin & Keysar, 2015; Saxe et al., 2015; Semple, 2015; Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015; Wisse, 2015). I cannot claim to be certain why this is, but The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Law’s and the Program on Public Value at Trinity College’s *Anti-Semitism Report* found that,

anti-Semitism appears to go under the radar and is largely ignored by the official cognitive system. In the current climate on campus, and under the official cognitive system, Jewish students and supporters of Israel are not perceived as legitimate victim groups. Rather, they are perceived as privileged. (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015, pp. 10–11)

In 2004, “the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights announced that campus anti-Semitism had become a ‘serious problem’ at many universities around the country,” and that “more than half of Jewish American college students personally experienced or witnessed anti-Semitism during the 2013-2014 academic year” (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015, p. i). Antisemitism in the United States is, unlike many kinds of bigotry, today “a problem mainly facing the younger generation

of American Jews” (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015, p. 1). Jewish college students report experiencing it across the board, whether they were liberal or conservative, observant or not, sophomores or seniors; men and women and students in all disciplines experienced it (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015). Antisemitism seems to be happening both inside and outside of the classroom and is perpetrated by peers, faculty, and the administration (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015). “Hostility emanates mostly from students’ peers, but nearly ten percent of students reported that hostility from faculty was a problem” (Saxe et al., 2015, p. 23).

Jewish students identified a few possible sources of antisemitism including that “we live in a Christianity-based society” (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015, p. 11). However, the most virulent antisemitism on campus is focused on the actions and existence of Israel (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015; Saxe et al., 2015; Wisse, 2015). Almost a quarter of college students “report being blamed during the past year for the actions of Israel because they were Jewish,” and “nearly three-quarters...report having been exposed...to...at least one...anti-Semitic statements including claims that Jews have too much power and that Israelis behave ‘like Nazis’” (Saxe et al., 2015, p. 1). Relevant to my study, “large land-grant universities in the Midwest (the type of institution that will house my study) are over-represented among schools with the highest average levels of hostility towards Jews and Israel” (Saxe et al., 2015, p. 1), and 65% of Jewish students at public institutions in the Midwest reported experiencing antisemitism (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015).

Both Muslim and Jewish college students are targets of bigotry, harassment, and violence, largely on campus for Jewish students and both on campus and off for Muslims (King, 2015; Kosmin & Keysar, 2015; Saxe et al., 2015; Semple, 2015; Stoltzfus & Wexler, 2015; Wisse, 2015). The constantly changing geopolitical landscape, both domestically and abroad, made campus climate an ever moving target during the course of this study. The two groups are

not the same and will have divergent experiences inside each group and across the two.

However, Jewish students, like Muslim students, “believe it has become [or always has been] socially acceptable to provoke or disparage” them (Kosmin & Keysar, 2015, p. 10).

My Story

This project was born of my own experiences as a non-Christian student in predominantly Christian, though ostensibly secular, educational environments as well as of my observations as a student affairs professional. Christian privilege has and still does play a role in my life as a student and as a professional who is a practicing member of a non-Christian religion. Additionally, I can see the role that Christian privilege plays in the lives of the non-Christian students I work with.

Growing up as a non-Christian in a predominantly Christian nation and a rural, almost exclusively Christian town, I eagerly anticipated college as a time when I would finally not feel like an outsider. I chose a private, secular college outside of Los Angeles, the second largest city in United States, that purported to have a wide range of religions represented on campus (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). I assumed that in a place that diverse, a place that close to a major metropolitan area, I would not be subjected to the same kind of ignorance I had in my hometown. This was not the case. While I was not the first Jew most people at college had met, it was still an environment saturated by Christianity. In my hometown, ignorance was blatant; in elementary school I was accused by a peer of inventing Chanukah because I was sad that my parents did not love me enough to celebrate Christmas. In college, my residence hall had a “holiday tree,” that is an evergreen tree covered in lights and decorations—an object known in most circles as a Christmas tree. My alma mater was socially conscious enough to realize that not everyone would want a Christmas tree but too steeped in its own Christian privilege to be

able to see that renaming the Christmas tree a “holiday tree” fixed nothing. The message was as clear as it had been in my childhood: non-Christians are tolerated, but they do not belong.

This status of being a tolerated but unconsidered and ignored outsider continued in my graduate career. My relocation to the Midwest amplified this phenomenon. The school, a very large, diverse, public, high research activity, doctoral granting institution (Carnegie, 2015) with a sizeable non-Christian student population, seemed, from my perspective, oblivious to the non-Christians in their midst. On Easter all the major dining halls shut down. In December, many buildings were covered with Christmas specific (Santa Claus, etc.) holiday light displays. My first year a mandatory training for my graduate assistantship was scheduled to take place on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, which is considered one of the holiest days of the year in Judaism. When I was informed of the date, I contacted the person in charge and explained that I could not attend because of my religious observance; like many other practicing Jews, I do not work on major holy days. The response I received: “Is there any flexibility in your schedule?”

While many of my experiences have been from my perspective as a student—graduate, undergraduate, and K-12—I have also seen how this plays out for students from my perspective as an administrator. During my time in graduate school, I have worked in administrative roles in both Residence Life and the College of Education; I have also spent almost eight years living, working, and/or learning on the same large, Midwestern public campus. This is an institution with approximately 50,000 students, many of them hailing from non-Christian religious backgrounds. Despite this, year after year, I see a focus on Christianity, though there have been improvements and changes. What follows are a few examples I have seen in the last almost eight years:

- Every year in December the campus lights up with Christmas lights. While none of it—during my time here, at least—is overtly religious, it is deeply culturally Christian. Santa Claus and his reindeer, little drummer boys, nutcrackers, etc. appear on all residence halls and some academic buildings. In the past couple of years, under new leadership, there has been a move to change the lights to more neutral themes such as snowflakes and school spirit displays. However, there has never been a large public display from the university for any other religious tradition or holiday. It is important to note that the “myriad of Christmas and Easter decorations,” as well as celebrations, are currently understood in the United States to be legally “secular” (Clark, Vargas, Schlosser, & Allmo, 2002).
- Every year I worked in Residence Life—and therefore had close contact with dining services—there was a scramble to figure out the food situation for Ramadan. During Ramadan, observant Muslims do not eat from sunrise to sunset. This means they must have breakfast while it is still dark and eat again after the sun sets. The university requires first year students, which includes a population of observant Muslim students, to live on campus and have a meal plan. It is true that the time of year of Ramadan changes on the Gregorian calendar. (The simplest explanation is that the Muslim lunar calendar essentially travels backwards in ten day increments through the Gregorian calendar.) However, the arrival of Ramadan, especially with access to the internet, should not be a surprise. Yet, each year I worked, it was as though Ramadan was being discovered for the first time. My final year working in that position I asked the representatives from dining services that came to speak with my colleagues and me during summer training what the plan for Ramadan was. The silence I received in response was palpable; they had, once

again, forgotten—a particular shame that year when Ramadan would be mid-month when the school year began.

- Food was and is an ongoing place of enactment of Christian privilege at the university. As stated earlier, first year students are required to live on campus and have a meal plan. However, until fairly recently, there has been no kosher or halal food option. According to the students I spoke and worked with, this meant that there were a number of students who paid for meal plans they could either rarely or never use. Additionally, despite it being suggested numerous times over several years, dining services took years to implement food labeling for pork (the biggest concern for eating halal) and other religiously based dietary concerns. This is particularly important because Midwestern cuisine contains a lot of surprise pork in little pieces or as a flavoring agent; I discovered this through my own trial and error when I moved here from the East Coast.
- Even when working with organizations on campus that should be hyper-aware of cultural differences and needs, I found Christian privilege to be both present and unquestioned. A few years ago, the primary office on campus for intercultural work with students had their first big multicultural event of the year on *erev*¹ Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is arguably the most important and certainly the most somber of the major Jewish holidays, the dates of which are readily available on almost any calendar as well as on the internet. When I went out of my way to bring this to the event organizers' attention, I was told that not everyone's needs could be accounted for and this was the day that worked best. They were neither interested in changing the date nor in even publicly acknowledging their

¹ Jewish holidays run from sunset to sunset. “*Erev*” refers to the first evening of the holiday. Using Christian privilege as a tool for understanding in this case, the Christmas Eve (the night before the day of the holiday) is a carryover from that holiday format.

scheduling decision. Religions outside of Christianity, even in an office specifically geared towards intercultural issues and experiences, just did not matter.

Study Organization Summary

This study explores the role that Christian privilege plays in the undergraduate college experiences of students who belong to non-Christian religions, specifically Judaism and Islam, and is meant to pursue this subject beyond my own experiences to look at this generation of college students across more than one minority religious group. While Schwadel's (2014) study is not focused on the aspect of religion in higher education that my study focuses on, his study and the featuring of it in *Inside Higher Ed* are clear indicators that there is an interest in further study of the many aspects of religion and its role in higher education and lives of college students. My study focuses on the college experiences of non-Christian students, specifically students who are members of the minority religious traditions of Judaism and Islam, and the role Christian privilege plays in the lives of those students and on their campuses. In Chapter Two, I discuss the historical and current role of religion in the United States and in U.S. higher education specifically. In Chapter Three, I explain the idea of Christian privilege and its roots in the overarching idea of social privilege. In Chapter Four, I discuss the study design, methods, and methodology. In Chapter Five, I discuss my findings regarding living a religious life, and in Chapter Six, I explore the findings about interacting with the others and as the other. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I discuss the implications of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: RELIGION AND THE UNITED STATES

Understanding the history of religion, and particularly Christianity, in the United States, both before and after the formation of the nation, and specifically the history of religion in higher education, is essential to painting a complete picture of the role of religion in the college experiences of today's non-Christian, in this case Jewish and Muslim, undergraduate students. Today's campus climate, which I discuss in depth in this document, was formed out of this history. Today's issues and concerns are rooted in the issues and concerns of yesteryear. Part of the purpose of my study was to explore the role the vestiges of the historical role of Christianity and Christian privilege in the lives of non-Christian college students today.

This chapter is guided first by Roger Geiger's (2005) seminal piece on the history of higher education in the United States, "The Ten Generations of American Higher Education" and secondly by Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen's (2012) definitive work on the state of religion in higher education, *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*. Geiger (2005) neatly divides US higher education into ten generations starting in 1636 and ending with the 21st century. The Jacobsens (2012) divide the same span of time into three eras. The combination of both structural understandings of the history of American higher education helps to clarify where the nation's higher education began in terms of religion and where we are today.

The Jacobsens (2012) describe today's United States as a religiously pluriform society. I discuss the idea of religious pluriformity at length later in this chapter. I note this here as a preview of where this history is going and as a guidepost to seeing both how much the role of religion, particularly Christianity, has changed over the past several hundred years and how much it has not. This is particularly relevant in engaging with the stories of the participants. Some of the stories, like the inquiries about whether Jews have horns or where their horns are,

could just as easily have taken place when this history begins in the 1600s. Other stories, like the real or perceived conflict(s) between Muslims and Jews around the state of Israel or even the presence of Jews and Muslims—particularly in large numbers, would have been unimaginable even 100 years ago.

However, religion is also a highly divisive subject, one that can become more problematic the greater the religious diversity at an institution (Nord, 2008). “Americans are as deeply divided about religion as they are about politics, gender, or culture” (Nord, 2008, p. 181). The way religion is practiced and understood varies greatly by tradition and by individual (Nash & Bradley, 2008). This,

...sense of religious difference has become a low but growing rumble on most American college and university campuses...we [faculty and administrators] worry about the potential for that growl to transform itself into a dangerously divisive force at America’s mainstream colleges and universities in the years ahead. (Nash & Bradley, 2008, p. 135)

Nash and Bradley (2008) note that, for many students, religious identity is inseparable from their identity as a whole. This can be true for students of any religious background, but for students from minority religions, this can pose a greater challenge because maintaining that identity on campus is often an uphill battle. Additionally, “while higher education has gone a long way towards addressing various multicultural issues, religion has been virtually ignored within the multicultural and cultural studies movements” (Nord, 2008, p. 181). Just as ignoring race and racial issues props up white privilege, ignoring religion undergirds and exacerbates Christian privilege.

The Role of Religion in the United States and American Higher Education

“The Ten Generations of American Higher Education” (Geiger, 2005) does not focus specifically on the role of religion in higher education; it is a more general concise history. However, religion has played such a major role in the formation and delivery of higher education in the United States—and the colonies before the formation of the new nation—that it is present in almost every generation of higher education that Geiger (2005) discusses. *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education* (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012) is a much less general history and offers an in depth look at the role of religion on college campuses and in higher education as a whole, both historically and in the current era.

Geiger (2005) posits that “we study the history of higher education because things change and because some things do not change” (p. 38). As can be seen in Geiger’s (2005) piece, religion is one of things in higher education that both changes and does not change. As I just mentioned, some of what the participants discussed could have been a throwback to hundreds of years ago while other experiences are particular to this moment in time. Religion plays a role in every generation of higher education; sometimes it changes higher education, and sometimes higher education changes religion (Geiger, 2005).

The Jacobsens (2012) define the purpose of their book clearly and concisely in the preface.

Paying attention to religion—which we [the Jacobsens] define broadly to include traditional religion, spirituality in its many forms, and life’s big questions of means, purpose, character, hope, and ethics, whether or not they are formulated in religious language—has the potential to enhance study learning and to improve higher education as a whole. (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. vii)

The Jacobsens' (2012) book and Geiger's (2005) definitive article together make a powerful case for paying attention to religion in higher education—in its history, in its current state, and in the role it plays in the lives of college students. The stories of my participants confirm the validity of this case.

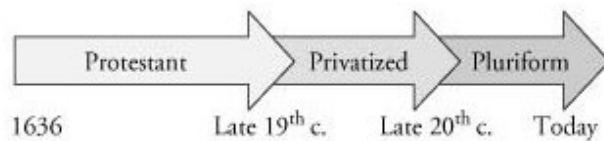
Religion and its relationship to higher education in the United States has ebbed and flowed. “Over the nearly four-hundred-year course of American higher education, religion has moved from being central to being marginal to being newly relevant” (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 16). The Jacobsens (2012) divide this time period into three sections as can be seen in Figure 1; Geiger divides it into ten generations. In the list that follows, the overarching eras are the Jacobsens' (2012) time periods, and the indented time periods are Geiger's (2005) generations where they fall within the Jacobsens' schema:

- The Protestant Era.
 - Generation 1: Reformation Beginnings, 1636-1740s.
 - Generation 2: Colonial Colleges, 1745-1775
 - Generation 3: Republican Education, 1776-1800
 - Generation 4: The Passing of Republican Education, 1800-1820s
 - Generation 5: The Classical, Denominational Colleges, 1820s-1850s
 - Generation 6: New Departures, 1850s-1890
- A century of religious privatization—the 20th century.
 - Generation 7: Growth and Standardization, 1890 to World War I
 - Generation 8: Hierarchical Differentiation between the Wars
 - Generation 9: The Academic Revolution, 1945-1975
 - Generation 10: Regulation, Relevance, and the Steady State

- Today, a time of religious pluriformity.

Geiger's (2005) generations terminate around the turn from the 20th to the 21st century. If he were to write a new edition a few years from now, there might be an eleventh generation. Geiger's (2005) clear delineation of the progress of higher education in the United States helps to create a framework on which to view the Jacobsens' (2012) work and understand how religion in American higher education has brought college campuses to the current iteration which is both pluriform and dominated by Christianity.

Figure 1: Framework for Religion in American Higher Education



(Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 17)

In the next three sections, I explore the history of religion and particularly Christianity in the United States and its role within higher education. I use the Geiger's (2005) generational approach in conjunction with the Jacobsens' (2012) delineation of eras to structure this history. Finally, I take this history into the present day to discuss the state of religion and higher education in the current day United States. It is near impossible to understand an issue, particularly an issue as complex as the role of Christian privilege in higher education, without thoroughly exploring the foundation and roots of that issue.

The Protestant Era. The Jacobsens (2012) describe the Protestant era, from the founding of what is now Harvard University in 1636 until approximately 1900, as “a time when all of life, including education, was set within a national culture dominated by Protestant Christianity” (Geiger, 2005; Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 17). As can be seen in the literature addressing Christian privilege, which I discuss at length in the next chapter (e.g. Blumenfeld, Joshi, &

Fairchild, 2009; Blumenfeld, 2009; Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003; Clark et al., 2002; Clark, 2003; Fairchild, 2009; Schlosser, 2003), the United States is still a nation dominated by Christianity, though no longer exclusively Protestant Christianity. Towards the end of this era, in the 19th century, the number of colleges and, eventually, universities exploded. It was during this era that Midwest University (MU), the site of this study, was founded. This is the longest of the Jacobsens' (2012) eras containing the first six generations of Geiger's (2005) historical framework.

The (future) United States and the Protestant Era. The United States is frequently conceptualized as and treated like a Christian nation, but it is not intrinsically one (Melton, 2009). The idea of the United States as a Christian nation is not only factually incorrect but also “not helpful as we look to serve students and their existential growth” (Fairchild, 2009, p 6). Some participants in the study pushed back against this idea while others seemed to accept it with sad resignation. Yet, the foundation of the United States and its educational system is imbued with Christianity from the beginning of the colonial period (Albanese, 1999). Early American education, at every level, was influenced strongly by Puritanism. “With its opening lines, ‘In Adam’s fall/We sinned all,’ *The New England Primer* (1683? as cited in Albanese, 1999) was published in an estimated seven million copies by 1840. Together the opening lines and the publishing data suggest the enormous influence that this single Puritan reader was to have in the early education of other Americans” (Albanese, 1999, p. 399). This influence extended far beyond just primary school education. For instance, it can be seen in the assumed Christian norms experienced by the participants; Christianity may teach that with Adam’s fall, we all sinned, but that is not a universal belief across religions, even other Abrahamic ones.

It is not uncommon for people to assume that because the founding fathers of the United States were—at least to modern eyes—Christians, they must have intended for the United States to be a Christian nation. However, “it was indeed the goal of the founding fathers...to raise a wall of separation between church and state in order preserve the fragile union and meet the needs of its immigrant population” (Fairchild, 2009, p 6; Waldman, 2008). The founding fathers wanted to avoid having one dominant religion and were looking forward towards a United States with ever increasing religious diversity (Fairchild, 2009; Waldman, 2008). If one understands the history of religion in the United States in this way, understanding that from its genesis the United States was meant to be religiously diverse without one dominant religion, “the normalcy of Christian privilege is disturbed, and the notion of the United States as a ‘Christian nation’ is exposed as false” (Fairchild, 2009, p 6). Yet, it is important to keep in mind that the first long-term white settlers, the Puritans, “fled England in search of a place where they could practice *their* [emphasis in the original] religion without fear or oppression. Their agenda for religious freedom was limited to their own freedom, which they did not extend to other religious groups” (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, p. vii). The narrative of one group’s paramount religious freedom versus the narrative of universal religious freedom continues to be an issue in the modern day United States; the hubbub about the “War on Christmas” is just one example.

The common trope of a Christian America founded by our Christian forefathers is actually far more complex and nuanced than what is taught in the average high school U.S. history class. So much—and also so little—has shifted in the interim that the details of that moment in U.S. history, in terms of the religious character of the nation, are hard to pin down. Thomas Jefferson, a founding father, second Vice President, and third President of the United States of America, is often, unsurprisingly, considered the creator of separation of church and

state; however, what is surprising is that Jefferson's position, thought of as anti-religious by some, made him "a hero to evangelicals" at the time (Waldman, 2008, p. x). This is shocking given today's religious context where evangelicals lobby for less separation of church—their church, of course—and state, and "many conservatives believe that if they can show that the Founding Fathers were very religious, they thereby can prove that the Founders abhorred separation of church and state" (Waldman, 2008, p. x). However, in the late 1700s, religiosity and a desire to keep religion out of government and vice versa were not correlated in the same way they are today. Even following the American Revolution, some religious groups we now associate with trying to bring religion into the public square were supporters of the separation of church and state. Isaac Backus, a Baptist minister, declared "...that all state law regulating religion perverted Christianity" (Waldman, 2008, p. 53). In truth, "the Founding Faith...was not Christianity, and it was not secularism. It was religious liberty—a revolutionary formula for promoting faith by leaving it alone" (Waldman, 2008, p. xvi).

This support for religious freedom from conservative evangelicals would not last. By the Civil War period,

Protestants, while supporting the ideal of religious freedom, continued to shape the vision of a Christian America. For a few, like the conservative evangelicals who started the National Reform Association in 1964, this meant working 'to secure such an amendment to the Constitution of the United States as well indicated that this is a Christian nation, and will place all the Christian laws, institutions, and usages of our government on an undeniable legal basis in the fundamental law of the land.' (Eck, 2001, p. 43)

In the next two sections, looking at the 20th century and today, I explore further the increasing role of Christian conservatives and evangelicals in the religious landscape of the United States.

It is true that the initial European settlers of the land that was to become the United States were largely Christian and primarily Protestant (Waldman, 2008). However, there have also been Jews in North America since before the birth of the United States, although they were hardly welcomed with open arms.

New Amsterdam's [modern day New York] administrator, Peter Stuyvesant, asked the Dutch West India Company [who controlled the territory] to rule that the 'very repugnant' Jews not be allowed to 'infect' the colony...but the company informed Stuyvesant that he *had* [emphasis in the original] to welcome the Jews since 'many of the Jewish nation are principal shareholders in the company.' Stuyvesant grudgingly followed orders but harassed the Jews by restricting their ability to buy homes or cemetery plots, preventing them from opening retail shops, and banning them from practicing any crafts (except being a butcher) as well as from conducting public synagogue services. (Waldman, 2008, p. 15)

In both New Amsterdam and in other colonies, religious minorities, which in many cases included Catholics and Protestants of the non-dominant sect, were persecuted.

The colonies struggled mightily to establish the proper relationship between church and state. Instances of repression were persistent and often grounded in law. And let's be clear: These laws were not intended to promote 'Judeo-Christian values,' as is sometimes claimed. Jews were not included nor were most Catholics. The laws were aimed to advance first Protestantism and then, depending on the colony, a particular Protestant denomination. (Waldman, 2008, p. 17).

Additionally, there were likely sizeable numbers of Muslims among the African persons sold into slavery in colonial America and later the United States. However, as these people were then

understood as property, the records their religions and religious practices are limited at best (Eck, 2001).

North America was not, despite the discovery mythology, unoccupied when the Europeans arrived. Far before the arrival of the first white people, the land that would become the United States was already rich in religious belief and practice. “Historians tell us that America has always been a land of many religions, and this is true. A vast, textured pluralism was already present in the lifeways of the Native peoples—even before the European settlers came to these shores” (Eck, 2001, p. 3). Religion was pluriform in North America before the arrival of white people, and now it is again. However, the arrival of the first wave of settlers and the many waves of immigrants, both voluntarily and forced, that followed would eventually greatly increase the overall religious diversity of the land while irreparably damaging the indigenous peoples.

The people who came across the Atlantic from Europe also had diverse religious traditions—Spanish and French Catholics, British Anglicans and Quakers, Sephardic Jews and Dutch Reform Christians...Many of the Africans brought to these shores with the slave trade were Muslims. The Chinese and Japanese who came to seek their fortune in the mines and fields of the West brought with them a mixture of Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian traditions. Eastern European [Ashkenazi] Jews and Irish and Italian Catholics also arrived in force in the nineteenth century. Both Christian and Muslim immigrants came from the Middle East. Punjabis from northwest India came in the first decade of the twentieth century. Most of them were Sikhs...(Eck, 2001, p. 3)

As time passed and the nation progressed, religious diversity increased. Yet, Christians remained the overwhelming majority. Yet, it is noteworthy, particularly with the view that religion can

change higher education and higher education can change religion, that religious diversity and participation in higher education increase simultaneously in the United States.

Higher education in the Protestant Era. Religion, specifically Christianity, has been intertwined with higher education in the United States since before the United States was a nation. “Religion has long figured importantly in the history of American higher education, but its role has changed as America and its educational institutions have changed. In the colonial period, a number of major colleges were founded primarily for the purpose of educating [Christian, specifically Protestant] clergymen” (Cherry, De Berg, & Porterfield, 2001, p. 1). The very first institution of higher education, today’s Harvard University, in what would become the United States was funded by Christian missionaries with the dual goal of educating new ministers and “civilizing” the indigenous population (Thelin, 2004). In fact, the majority of the colleges and universities that are considered most prestigious today were founded under religious auspices. For example, Princeton University was, originally, “an *evangelical* [emphasis in the original] Christian school” (Waldman, 2008, p. 95). This era of higher education can be called the Protestant era since both higher education and overarching American life were “dominated by Protestant Christianity...Protestantism was, of course, never the faith of all the people, and for those in the minority it could become oppressive” (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 17). The stories of the participants in this study echo that the dominance of Christianity can become oppressive for religious minorities.

Geiger (2005) divides this lengthy period in American higher education into six distinct generations. I provide a summary here of his generational divisions coupled with other sources in order to make more orderly sense of a large and varied expanse of time, a time period that includes the formation of the nation of the United States of America (Geiger, 2005). The first

generation runs from the founding of Harvard in 1636 to the 1740s; this is a time period that is pre-United States (Geiger, 2005). “Each of the first three colleges in the British colonies of America was unique, but all may be described as ‘schools of the Reformation.’ Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale were established as adjuncts of their respective churches...”, all of them Protestant (Geiger, 2005, p. 39). During this time the lines between church and state in higher education were blurred at best. For example, Yale was governed by a board “...of ten Congregationalist ministers but...looked to the General Assembly of Connecticut for financial support and legal backing” (Geiger, 2005, p. 40). All these original colleges were founded to educate ministers for their respective Protestant denominations, but “the nexus between college and the ministry would erode slowly during the eighteenth century” as a new class of colonial gentlemen moved into these schools (Geiger, 2005, p. 41).

The second generation, the colonial generation, is a comparatively short one running only from 1745 to 1775 and brings us to the end of the colonial era as well as breaks the previous mold of Reformation colleges (Geiger, 2005). This generation produced a number of institutions that were a hybrid between public and parochial such as the College of New Jersey—now Princeton University (Geiger, 2005). The College of New Jersey was “a compromise between Presbyterians and the colony of New Jersey...” with a governing board made up of “...twelve ministers, ten laymen, and the governor of the colony as ex officio presiding officer. The college was rooted in the colony...it was denominational in nature yet tolerant of other Protestant sects” (Geiger, 2005, p. 41). Here are the first beginnings of religious diversity in American higher education. In fact, “the next four colleges to be founded followed this same pattern of ‘toleration with preferment’” (Geiger, 2005, p. 41). However, this tolerance was only for other Protestants.

This was, after all, the Protestant Era, and non-Protestants could barely hope for safety in the American colonies; access to higher education was not even on the table.

Geiger (2005) names his third generation the generation of republican education, running from 1776 to 1800. These are the birth years of a new nation. The newly formed states began to charter their own colleges, particularly in states where there had previously been none; these colleges were ostensibly secular but the saturation of Christianity in the newly formed United States made secularity an impossibility on the ground (Geiger, 2005; Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012; Thelin, 2004). Despite this, the groundwork for the kind of institution that I looked at in this study—a large, public university—was laid during this era; for example, “the superstructure of the University of the State of the New York was erected in the 1780s to counter the conservative influence of Columbia” (Geiger, 2005, pp. 43–44).

Geiger’s (2005) fourth generation, lasting from 1800 to the 1820s, contains no major changes in the role of religion in higher education; however, the fifth generation, the classical denominational colleges, lasting from the 1820s to the 1850s brings with it major changes in the religious landscape of American higher education. This era is best known for its ongoing debate about the place and role of the classical curriculum, but, for the purposes of this study, what is most relevant is the emergence of “the prototypical denomination college” (Geiger, 2005, p. 49).

The definition given by the Lutherans of Pennsylvania College (Gettysburg, 1832) cut to the heart of the matter: noting that its students, teachers, trustees, and benefactors all were church members, they concluded that the new college ‘may then in truth be said to belong to that church.’ The denominational college was thus consciously established as an alternative to the mixed ownership of ‘provincial colleges.’ (Geiger, 2005, p. 49)

It is noteworthy that these schools were founded as educational refuges for members of minority Protestant denominations and that they include many schools we would now think of as private but secular, such as Waterville College—now Colby College, and Columbian College—now George Washington University (Geiger, 2005).

Most early colleges and university were founded by Christian organizations, and after 1870 there was “a proliferation of new colleges founded under church auspices” (Thelin, 2004, p. 96). This is during Geiger’s (2005) sixth generation running from the 1850s to 1890—the Jacobsens’ (2012) Protestant Era framing brings this time period through approximately 1900. Also, in 1862,

The Morrill Land Grant Act provided funding for a new public university system dedicated to the advancement of learning and the common good....[which operated under] the moral ethos of Protestantism—its generalized biblical version of life...[and] continued to function as a kind of de facto religious point of reference for all of these schools. (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 19)

The passing of the Morrill Land Grant Act is particularly relevant for this study since the institution I looked at is a land grant institution.

At this point, “Catholic and Lutheran institutions...joined the older Protestant denominational colleges founded by Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists” (Thelin, 2004, p. 96). Additionally, women were beginning to participate in higher education in meaningful numbers (Geiger, 2005). While this marks some diversifying in American higher education, it is important to note that this diversity was only diversity within Christianity. Additionally, a number of institutions that still exist and would commonly be thought of as secular were founded with religious intentions. For example, “John D. Rockefeller’s gift...to

found the University of Chicago was offered in cooperation with the American Baptist Education Society to create an eminent Baptist institution in the Midwest” (Thelin, 2004, p. 113). Different Christian groups saw the founding of colleges, particularly those with prestige, as a way to insure the stake of their denomination in the intellectual world of the United States. Thelin (2004) notes that,

Perhaps the best testimony to religion as a central force in creating the modern American university came in 1884, when an alliance of heiresses and wealthy businessmen...provided the endowment for founding the Catholic University of America—strategically located in the nation’s capital—to assure that advanced American scholarship in philosophy and theology would include a Catholic perspective (p. 113).

The format of higher education institutions during the Protestant Era, most particularly during the 19th century, varied greatly, but “the one thing almost all of these schools shared in common—except for those that were Catholic or Jewish is that every one of them was still discernibly Protestant in ethos and orientation. This was so much the case that even ‘state schools’ frequently required students to attend chapel services that functioned in a thoroughly Protestant manner” (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 20). Catholic and Jewish institutions represented a small minority; there were only three Jewish postsecondary institutions in the United States prior to 1900: Hebrew Union College, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, all of them seminaries (Pollack & Norwood, 2008). This same time period, the 19th century, “has been called the Methodist era because it was the time when Methodism became the predominant form of American Protestantism...the older, Puritan form of evangelism was yielding to a new, more popular version” (Albanese, 1999, p.

161). However one frames it, Protestantism was the dominant religious force in the culture of the United States and the nation's higher education institutions.

The 20th Century. Over the course of the 20th century, religion in higher education moved out of the public eye in and into the private sphere; this accelerated during and after the social tumultuousness of the 1960s (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012). This is what the Jacobsens (2012) mean by privatization—that religion moved out of the public square and into the private realm. However, the story of religion in the United States during the 20th century is both that of privatization and that of greatly increasing religious affiliation particularly among Christians (Ahlstrom, 1972; Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012).

Twentieth century United States: the changing role of religion in a changing society. In 1910, only 43% of Americans were affiliated with a church; by 1970, 62.4% were (Ahlstrom, 1972). Additionally, in the years following World War II, the amount of money spent on church construction went from \$26,000,000 in 1945 to \$1,016,000,000 in 1960 (Ahlstrom, 1972). While the actual practice of religion may have moved slightly out of the public view, the pervasive nature of religion, and specifically Christianity, expanded during this time. For example, "...in 1954 the phrase 'under God'...was added to the Pledge of Allegiance" (Ahlstrom, 1972, p. 954).

As seen in the previous section, antisemitism has deep roots going back to before the birth of the nation, but it also manifests in much more recent history. Increased private religiosity, or at least church affiliation, among Christians did not serve to stem the tide of virulent antisemitism which most American Christians were more than willing to turn a blind eye to.

Anti-Jewish groups saw Frank Roosevelt as favoring Jews in his administration, and they dubbed the New Deal the 'Jew Deal.' The 1930s saw the rise of hate groups, the

Christian Front, and the anti-Jewish rhetoric of Father Coughlin in the Detroit area, whose weekly radio broadcasts were carried on forty-five stations. Finally, in 1939, the *St. Louis*...a Hamburg-America Line Steamer, filled with nine hundred Jews who had fled Nazi Germany. It sailed for Havana, Cuba, hoping to make it eventually the United States...it was not allowed to come into port anywhere in the United States [or Cuba]...Eventually, the *St. Louis* and its passengers had to return across the Atlantic to Germany and to certain death. There could be no more tragic expression of America's sentiment for [religious and ethnic] exclusion. (Eck, 2001, p. 61)

Today's tragic expression of America's sentiment for religious and ethnic exclusion can be seen in the rhetoric of the Donald Trump presidential campaign, an issue that came up in multiple participants' interviews—both Muslim and Jewish.

By the 1920s, U.S. higher education was, for the most part, actively working to keep Jews out of higher education (Eck, 2001; Karabel, 2005). For example, A. Lawrence Lowell, Harvard's president from 1909-1933, engaged in quite public attempts to keep Jews out of Harvard (Karabel, 2005). However, Harvard was not the only institution engaged in creating Jewish quotas or other ways to limit Jewish enrollment. Lowell desired to cap Jewish enrollment at no more than 15%; Harvard, Princeton, and Yale all instituted policies where “character” was to be part of the admissions process, “a quality thought to be in short supply among Jews but present in abundance among high-status Protestants” (Karabel, 2005, p. 2). Harvard also began requiring a passport size photo with applications for admission in order to be able to better identify Jews when they applied with the express purpose of keeping them out or limiting their enrollment. This was peddled as a meritocratic approach to admissions; however, it was anything but (Karabel, 2005). Even the SAT was an attempt to keep Jews out of higher education though,

somewhat humorously, it would fail entirely; Jews, on average, did far better than elite Protestants on the test (Eck, 2001; Karabel, 2005; Soares, 2014). “The SAT was rolled out in 1926 by Princeton and Yale universities as an IQ test that was believed — falsely — to demonstrate the superiority of Nordic genetic stock in order to discriminate against Jews” (Soares, 2014, para. 11).

While the 20th century was defined in part by an increased interest in spirituality which lines up with the idea of privatization, as spirituality is—by some understandings—just a private kind of religion, spirituality was overwhelmingly dominated by Christian concepts of spirituality (Wuthnow, 1998). This privatization of religion is often described as a move towards a more secular society; however, more recent scholars have called into question whether this purported “secularization” is happening the way it has historically been assumed (Cherry et al., 2001). There is a lack of clarity about what constitutes religion and secularization. “If secularity is like freshwater and religion is like saltwater, life in America is now thoroughly brackish” (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 7). There is no “neat distinction between the sacred and the secular” (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 11). The troubling nature of this blurred line will be addressed further later as it relates to the ambiguity that helps to perpetuate Christian privilege.

The Pew Foundation offers the most up-to-date numbers of religious demographics in the United States; the U.S. census does not collect religious data. Even in less than the last decade, there has been marked change in religious demographics (Pew, 2015). From 2007 to 2014, the percentage of Americans who subscribe to non-Christian religions—this includes Islam and Judaism as well as Hinduism and Buddhism among others—has risen from 4.7% of the population to 5.9% (Pew, 2015). “The Christian share of the U.S. population is declining” but still constitutes 70.6% of the population, down from 78.4% in 2007 (Pew, 2015, pp. 2–4). While

the Christian share of the population has declined, the following groups had statistically significant population increases between 2007 and 2014: Muslims, Hindus, Atheists, Agnostics, “nothing in particular,” and “other faiths” (Pew, 2015, p. 4).

However, this increase in diversity coincides with a rapid increase of conservative Christianity in the public sphere (Wuthnow, 1998). “Religious leaders [all of them Christian] who advanced a conservative moral agenda, such as Falwell and Robertson, attracted a great deal of media attention in the 1980s, especially when they called on legislative bodies to impose a kind of moral discipline that people themselves seemed incapable of voluntarily” (Wuthnow, 1998, p. 107). These public figures decried the moral decay of the United States, but what they called moral decay could alternatively be understood as an increase in diversity of religious, spiritual, ethical, and moral viewpoints (Wuthnow, 1998). This clash and the end of that era brings us to the present day where “the religion of contemporary America is pluriform, more complex and multifaceted than it has ever been before” (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 26; Wuthnow, 1998).

Twentieth century United States: the changing state of higher education. Eventually and gradually, the total dominance of Protestantism on American higher education began to wane, but the power of Christianity never disappeared and discrimination against non-Christians never became purely a thing of the past.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Catholics and Jews (members of the two largest non-Protestant religious communities in the nation) were still barred from many colleges and universities, but by the 1960s and 1970s, they were welcomed at nearly all institutions of higher learning. (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 21)

Jews faced quotas, speech tests, and other kinds of gatekeeping attempts, including the introduction of the SAT, targeted at preventing them from accessing higher education. While Jews, as “one of the first European immigrant groups who went to college in large numbers and were considered to be among the lowest European races among the Protestant elite,” may have been the impetus for finally federally addressing religious discrimination in postsecondary education. “It was not until 2010 that the civil rights protections outlined in the 1964 Civil Rights Act were extended by the Department of Education to include persons who were the recipients of anti-religious bias,” which likely mattered and still matters to both Jews and Muslims (Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016, p. 23).

Geiger (2005) divides the 20th century into his remaining four generations: growth and standardization from 1890 to World War I, “hierarchical differentiation between the wars” (p. 57), the academic revolution from 1945 to 1975, and the final period, “regulation, relevance, and the steady state,” leading into the 21st century (p. 64). During these time periods, Geiger (2005) no longer focuses on religion as a major aspect of American higher education. In some aspects of higher education Christian, and specifically Protestant, domination was fading, but not completely. For example, Geiger (2005) wrote about the interwar period, “it was no paradox...that a Jew could be a physics professor at Princeton but not an undergraduate” (p. 60).

As noted in the section on the Protestant Era, it is not only at the college and university level that Christianity has played a major role in the formation of American education. This is also true at the primary and secondary levels of schooling (Marshall, 2006). Therefore, students have already been impacted by years of Christian dominated education well before they start their first day of college. The only exception to this, among my participants, was Ilana who had been educated in Jewish day schools prior to attending MU, a public university. In many ways

not much has changed in recent years. In 1955 Howard Hintz wrote the following in his short volume on public higher education and religion:

The sharp differences of opinion and viewpoint which mark the present controversy over the role of religion in our schools and colleges are in some measure symptomatic of a widespread confusion not only about the meaning of education, but about the meaning of religion itself. With great vehemence and fervor people of various and divergent persuasions are proclaiming the need for more religion, for less religion or for no religion at all. (Hintz, 1955, p. 5)

This statement could have just as easily been written today; neither the confusion nor the fervor has resolved in the 60 years since then. During that time there was great concern about the secularization of both higher education and American life as a whole (Hintz, 1955).

In the 1950s many of the vestiges of Christian religious origins could still easily be seen on campuses. At “Columbia, Yale, Princeton, and others whose origins and early traditions are church-related, an official university chaplain [which at that time would have been a Christian—likely Protestant—clergyman] serves on a full-time basis to conduct regular chapel services and to perform other pastoral functions” (Hintz, 1955, p. 41). While there continue to be chaplains on many American campuses today, there has been some diversification both in their religious traditions and their professional functions, although it is worth noting that chaplain, a Christian word, is still the term used to describe all religious and spiritual leaders on campuses (Burke & Segall, 2011).

Interestingly, one of the major factors in the secularization of American higher education, at least in the private sector, was the introduction of the Carnegie Foundation faculty pension plan, the plan that would become modern day TIAA-CREF (Thelin, 2004). “One condition of a

college's eligibility for the...plan was the curriculum be free of denominational orthodoxy" (Thelin, 2004, p. 147). In the early part of the 20th century, most private institutions maintained some kind of denominational affiliation; even at public state universities, "daily chapel was standard practice...in fact, most state universities were heavily Protestant in admissions and in the tenor of campus life" (Thelin, 2004, p. 148).

As religious diversity has increased in the United States, as discussed earlier in this section, so has the percentage of young people who participate in higher education.

By 1975, roughly a quarter of all eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-old Americans were involved in higher educations, and a college or university degree was becoming a prerequisite for most of the nation's better paying jobs. Today, nearly half of all young adults undertake at least some study at the college or university level. (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 24)

Throughout the 20th century American life was secularizing across the board, not just on college campuses (Thelin, 2004). However, it is unclear how far this secularization really extended; its reach was certainly not vast enough to eliminate Christian privilege on college campuses and certainly not in the nation as a whole. As stated before, part of the purpose of my study was to explore the role of the vestiges of that legacy in the lives of today's non-Christian, specifically Muslim and Jewish, college students.

Today. "By world standards, the United States is a highly religious country. Almost all Americans say they believe in God, a majority say they pray, and more than a third say they attend religious services every week" (Chaves, 2011, p. 1). "Americans have been and remain among the most religious people in the western world" (Harvey & Goff, 2005, p. xxi). It is without question that the population landscape of the United States has changed drastically since

the nation's inception in 1776. Immigrant populations have shifted and increased, changing the racial, ethnic, and religious makeup of the nation (Eck, 2001). "In the 1950s the sociologist Will Herberg...confidently described America as a 'three religion country'—Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish" (Eck, 2001, pp. 13–14). This was never entirely accurate though it might have appeared that way at the time. Additionally, in the intervening 50 or so years, Catholicism and Protestantism have ceased to be seen as entirely different religions. However, since the liberalization of American immigration policy in 1965, there has been a dramatic expansion of religious diversity (Chaves, 2011; Eck, 2001; Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012).

Pluriformity in the United States. The Jacobsens (2012) describe today as an era of pluriformity. "The religion of contemporary America is pluriform, more complex and multifaceted than it has ever been before. It is not just that religion has become more pluralistic...but also that the notion of religion itself has undergone major restructuring" (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, pp. 26–27). This change has been both gradual and sudden, but it not as far reaching as the Jacobsens would like it to be. Still, there have been significant changes: a shift towards multiculturalism and a move towards student-centered learning and programming among them (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012).

However, co-existing with people of different religious backgrounds is not the same as being religiously literate, celebrating religious diversity, or treating all religious traditions as equal, both legally and socially. Just as co-existing with people of color—even peacefully and respectfully, does not erase white privilege, the sheer fact that Christians now share space with non-Christians has not resulted in the eradication of Christian privilege.

Buddhists have come from Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, and Korea; Hindus from Indian, East Africa, and Trinidad; Muslims from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan,

the Middle East, and Nigeria; Sikhs and Jains from India; and Zoroastrians from both India and Iran. Immigrants from Haiti and Cuba have brought Afro-Caribbean traditions...New Jewish immigrants have come from Russia and the Ukraine, and the internal diversity of American Judaism is greater than ever before. (Eck, 2001, pp. 3–4)

This change in diversity has not resulted in a full-fledged embrace of this new America. During the same time period, Christian fundamentalists have emerged as a major power in this country, and “the language of ‘Christian America’ has been voluminously invoked in the public square...They [the most strident Christian communities] display a confident, unselfconscious assumption that *religion* [emphasis in the original] basically means Christianity...” (Eck, 2001, p. 4).

There is continued insistence on the United States as a Christian nation. There have been many examples of public figures asserting this (Eck, 2001). While most can agree that legally the U.S. is not Christian, there is a prevailing assumption that,

This is a nation shaped by Christianity. Many Americans agree, assuming the normative status of Christianity in America. When they envision posting the Ten Commandments in public buildings, teaching the biblical story of creation in school, or having prayer in Classrooms or at public school graduations and football games, their underlying presupposition is that America is a Christian country. Christians are the majority and should have their way in setting the public spirit.(Eck, 2001, p. 42)

This power to drive both the narrative and the function of the United States as well as its government and education—a power seen a legitimate and logical, is the very definition of Christian privilege.

Even now, the “narrative of exclusion” for minority religious groups marches on. Various kinds of xenophobia drive acts of hate like this one:

When vandals broke into the newly constructed Hindu-Jain Temple in Pittsburgh and smashed the white marble images of the Hindu deities, they wrote the word ‘Leave’ across the main altar. That is the simple message of exclusivism: what is foreign should leave...recall the Puritans of Massachusetts in the seventeenth century, who told Quakers, Jews, and Catholics in no uncertain terms to leave. The narrative of exclusion has long been part of the American story. (Eck, 2001, p. 48)

Religious exclusion in America has long been based on who was Christian and who was the correct kind of Christian. First, Puritans pushed out non-Puritans, but now, under a larger Christian umbrella, Christians are what is not ‘foreign,’ and everyone else is. Chaves (2011) asserts that “increasing religious diversity has been accompanied by a cultural change in the direction of greater toleration, even appreciation, of religions other than our own” (p. 12). This is certainly not universally true, and toleration and appreciation are vastly different. Chaves’s position is hopeful but potentially overly optimistic. Even Chaves (2011) recognizes the limitations of his own optimism. “Not all religions are equally appreciated, of course. American Christians are much more suspicious of Muslims than Jews, for example...Even more troubling, outbursts of anti-Muslim sentiment, vandalism, and violence have increased since 2001” (Chaves, 2011, p. 27). The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 placed Muslims, even American Muslims, in a negative spotlight that shone all the brighter because of Christian privilege and the acceptance of the narrative of a Christian United States.

Jacobsen and Jacobsen (2012) suggest that we are now living in a religiously pluriform society; not only has the nation become pluralistic but “the notion of religion itself has

undergone a major restructuring” (p. 27). However, over the past few decades there has also been an increase in claims that religion, and specifically Christianity, is “somehow excluded or marginalized in American public life” (Harvey & Goff, 2005, p. xvi). This is further complicated by the reality that “Americans have a hard time acknowledging the reality of public religion because they think it is not supposed to exist—at least, not here in America” (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 52).

Beaman (2003) asserts that scholars, specifically sociologists, “have been too anxious to take diversity for granted” (p. 311). What they call diversity, she suggests is not really that.

The department store approach, the buffet of choices, or the religious marketplace should not be confused with religious diversity. The offering of communion on the first Sunday of each month as opposed to the last reflects religious diversity similar to the diversity face when choosing orange juice—from concentrate, or not? With pulp, or without?—ultimately, though, the choice is still orange juice. The very existence of religions outside the mainstream is sometimes taken as evidence of diversity, of a flourishing margin that is eroding the hegemony of mainstream Protestantism...In fact, there has been little erosion of the hegemony of the religious mainstream. (Beaman, 2003, pp. 311–312)

Essentially, “the fact that most of the choices are Christian...remains obscured” (Beaman, 2003, p. 312). This acceptance of Christian hegemony coupled with minimal critical questioning of said acceptance is the essence of Christian privilege. That said, “although Christian perspectives persist within the majority mindset in the United States and continue to flourish, the presence of countless other faith traditions renders this nation the most religiously diverse in the world” (Bryant, 2006, p. 1).

Higher education and pluriformity. The Jacobsens (2012) claim that we are now living in an age of religious pluriformity; in other words, this is a time of a wide range of coexisting religious beliefs and practices. While the 20th century brought an age of supposed secularism, some might even suggest that higher education has been ruled for a time by “radical secularism”(Dilulio Jr., 2008, p. 56). However, as of late, many of the most prestigious schools in the nation, including but not limited to Harvard University, The University of Pennsylvania, and Yale University, “...have been developing...more even-handed, pluralistic postures toward religion” (Dilulio Jr., 2008, p. 56). For example, “in October 2006, a Harvard University curriculum committee recommended that every Harvard undergraduate be required to take at least one course in an area the committee called ‘Reason and Faith’” (Dilulio Jr., 2008, p. 56). There is an effort being made to recognize both the role of religion in the lives of college students and the diversity of those religious possibilities. Nord (2008) suggests that part of properly addressing these changes in higher education is taking religion seriously; “a university takes religion seriously when it requires students to take at least one course that takes religion seriously” (Nord, 2008, p. 167). Liberal education, after all, is meant to be a broad education, and a truly broad education includes serious engagement with religion and not solely the dominant religion (Nord, 2008).

In this pluriform and ostensibly more open college environment, students from minority religious groups may also struggle with internalized hatred, much like internalized racism or sexism. Tisdell (2008) gives an example of a Jewish woman who described having spent much of her life trying to not be too Jewish or appear too Jewish. Given a supportive collegiate environment, this woman was able to work through “her internalized oppression” and reclaim “her cultural identity” (Tisdell, 2008, p. 159). It is real possibility that this internalized

oppression was born of learning and growing in an environment dictated and saturated by Christian privilege.

Tisdell (2008) also acknowledges another important aspect of understanding students in a religiously pluriform setting. “Students from different cultural backgrounds [in this case religious though this is true of other kinds of cultural backgrounds] explain their cultural stories and symbols using their own terms, and by doing so they develop expertise in defining and describing their own cultural experience” (Tisdell, 2008, p. 163). Christian privilege, however, works against this. If Christian privilege is allowed to run rampant, campuses run the risk of allowing the cultural language of Christianity to define all religions and cultures. Some of the participants used Christian language to describe their religions and religious practices even when being directly asked about their own religion and religious practices. In this study I depended on students from minority religions to be able to explain their cultural stories in order to be able to delve into the role Christian privilege plays in those stories.

“To warn that ‘the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts’ seems especially fitting when the topic is as potentially divisive and ultimately consequential as religion” (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2008, p. 221). In order to support a truly religiously pluriform college or university, clear language and education, what one might call religious literacy which will be discussed in the next section, is necessary.

In matters of religion, we all necessarily speak out of our own particularity. Our life histories have shaped us in different ways, predisposing us to be more or less inclined towards religion in general or to embrace or reject one religion in particular. (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2008, p. 229)

However, we do not have to be limited to our own predispositions (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2008). If this were the case, there might be no chance of true religious pluriformity because the overwhelming majority numbers of Christians could prevent it. An age of pluriformity necessitates that those with Christian privilege, particularly those with power within the institution, step outside of their own predispositions to meet non-Christians in a place of mutual understanding.

An increasing number of college students, as well as faculty and staff, come from non-Christian minority religious traditions (Clark et al., 2002). As of 2002, “approximately 20% of incoming students in public higher education” identified as “religious minorities, either Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, or Jewish” (Clark et al., 2002, p. 52). Non-Christian students are now at U.S. institutions of higher education in meaningful numbers.

Summary

While an in depth history like this might be unusual for a current day human subjects study, I assert that without understanding the history of religion, particularly Christianity, in the United States and colonial America, any conversation about modern issues of religion and Christian privilege in higher education is less meaningfully and less intellectually rich. In this chapter, I provided a narrative of the role of religion in the nation and specifically within its institutions of higher education. Knowledge of both the role and power of Christianity as well as the different ways in which Jews and Muslims were treated and included or excluded over the course of time helps to make sense of the stories of the participants that are communicated in details in Chapters Five and Six. This study is both a current study of a “hot” campus issue as well as another chapter in the history of religion in higher education in the United States.

CHAPTER THREE: CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE

In the previous chapter, I provided a detailed narrative of the role of religion, and specifically Christianity, in the history of and the present day situation in the United States and pre-United States colonial America. In this chapter, I explore the definition and manifestations of Christian privilege with a focus on the college or university campus context. Christian privilege appeared in the literature in overt and covert ways. There is a small body of literature on Christian privilege in higher education with a slightly larger body of literature about Christian privilege in education more generally; this literature discusses Christian privilege overtly. Christian privilege also shows up in covert ways in the scholarship of religion and religious identity in higher education—both in examples of Christian privilege that are not named as such and in the occasional unacknowledged enactment of Christian privilege in the text by the author(s).

The Jacobsens (2012) clearly illustrate the issue of Christian privilege in higher education when they describe how people talk about religion on campus. They spoke with faculty members, administrators, and students about religion and “how it affects life on campus” (p. 32) and received a wide range of responses.

Some of the professors and administrators with whom we spoke expressed very precise views about religion, including several faculty members (from both public and private institutions) who emphatically told us that ‘real’ religions meant ‘having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ’ and that everything else was simply mistaken human opinion. Partly because they are in the majority, Christians in American often speak with great confidence. When we spoke with devout members of non-Christian groups, they almost always framed their comments less forcefully, starting with some kind of

qualification like ‘from my point of view’ or ‘in my tradition’ or ‘where I come from’ before saying religion is this or that. (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 32)

This difference is an example of Christian privilege though the Jacobsens do not identify it that way. Christians, or at least some of them, felt totally comfortable asserting, without qualification, that their religion was the only real or true religion. Adherents of non-Christian religious traditions, on the other hand, made sure to qualify their statements, to make it clear that they did not speak for all people, and made sure, as they have been socially trained, not to assert any sort of dominance. Christian privilege is also perpetuated in far less obvious ways. For example,

“...graduate education (especially at the doctoral level) encourages students to bracket any personal feelings or values they might have...for individuals nurtured into the academy by way of this regimen, the reappearance of religion in higher education [that has taken place over the last decade or two] can seem like a bizarre intrusion into a world where, to them, it simply has no place. (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 33)

The likely outcome of this kind of attitude is that pervasive, dominant Christianity will remain the overwhelming religious power on campuses in ways large and small.

It is certainly true that religion can be a volatile topic. It is, like race, sexuality, gender, and politics, a topic that produces difficult dialogues (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012), but difficult does not necessarily mean bad or unnecessary. The Jacobsens (2012) posit that “what makes religion so potentially volatile is that differences of religion are often invisible, making it hard to tell in advance how problematic or stress-laden a conversation might become” (p. 42). This is true but particularly so for Christians. Members of minority religions are always aware that in any situation the majority of others are likely to be Christian—not always but usually—and adjust their comments and discussion accordingly. After all, “more than three-fourths of

America's population currently identifies as Christian. Followers of all other historic religions together comprise only about 5 percent of the American population" (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 49). Even the most up-to-date numbers report that 70.6% of Americans identify as Christian, and only 5.9% of Americans identify with a non-Christian religious or faith tradition (CBS, 2015). As seen in the results of the Jacobsens' (2012) interviews, even non-Christian faculty members who, presumably, had little to lose by being forthright in that situation adjusted their language accordingly when being interviewed by one or both of the Christian Jacobsens.

While their book does not focus specifically on Christian privilege or even specifically on Christianity, their description of the manifestations of religion in university education shines a light on the pervasive, ongoing influence of Christian privilege on American higher education.

Nearly everyone in America now rubs shoulders every day with people of differing faiths and lifestyles. Students know this. They know they live in a religiously pluriform world, and they are trying to figure out the implications. This means that, perhaps for the first time in American higher educational history, the push for talking about matters of religion and spirituality and answering questions about human purpose and meaning is coming from the bottom up, rather than the top down. Paying attention to religion in higher education is not at all a matter of imposing faith or morality on anyone; it is a matter of responding intelligently to questions of life that students find themselves necessarily asking as they try to make sense of themselves and the world in an era of ever-increasing social, intellectual, and religious complexity. (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. 30)

The Jacobsens' (2012) book, along with the many other texts cited in this proposal, makes a strong case for a changing human landscape within United States higher education, particularly

in the case of religious identity. Along with this change in the population comes a change in the façade of Christian privilege. While Christian privilege was once overt and clear—played out in higher education through exclusionary admissions policies, quotas, and a variety of rules and regulations, today’s Christian privilege is, just as the Jacobsens (2012) describe the state of religion in society in the United States, pluriform—no longer made up primarily of rules and regulations. Christian privilege in our new, pluriformly religious nation is more diffuse and therefore, more difficult to see. The changing population in higher education, particularly in juxtaposition to the pervasiveness of Christian privilege in American society, demands attention and study if we, meaning college and university administrators, leaders, faculty, and student affairs practitioners, are to meet the needs of all students, strive for equity in educational experiences, and accept, rather than deny or ignore, the face of 21st century higher education students.

No Longer Invisible (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012) is the newest, most comprehensive look at the role of religion in higher education. The text offers a wide-ranging exploration of many religious traditions, their interactions, and their places in the changing landscape, both religious and educational, of the United States. This, however, is not the only aspect of this work that is important for my study. The authors’ perspective and how they apply it to their work are equally important. They write in the preface,

One of the lessons we had to learn over and over again was how much our own religious dispositions and habits of thought shaped the way we saw things...We quickly discovered...that our Protestant biases (or perhaps more accurately our Protestant habits of thought of and practice) went deeper than we knew, and people point them out to us more often than we’d like to admit. Eventually, slowly, we became more religiously,

spiritually, and secularly multilingual, but it took effort...Religious or secular convictions and ways of life haunt everyone's thinking and acting, and that means any comprehension of the place of religion in higher education requires a heightened self-awareness from everyone, along with more sensitivity to the ways in which various religious or religion-like frames of cognition, affectivity, and action (of which we are often only partly conscious) shape us as individuals, educators, and students. (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, p. ix)

However, as can be seen throughout the book, the Jacobsens cannot completely mitigate their own positionality², particularly because, as Protestants, they approach this work from an unavoidable place of Christian privilege. They believe they have become “multilingual” in this arena, but it remains clear that their mother tongue is that of the power holders. Certainly, heightened self-awareness and greater sensitivity are good things, likely to result in positive outcomes for all people, regardless of religious background or affiliation. However, to see this lack of self-awareness and sensitivity as universal and pervasive is, in and of itself, a demonstration of Christian privilege. As a member of a non-Christian religion and particularly as someone who has lived and learned in spaces that were overwhelmingly Christian dominated, I have always had to be aware of the needs and norms of Christians and Christianity. This is not new to me or likely to any member of a non-Christian religion in the United States who engages with the larger society. All Americans have at least a minimal level of awareness of Christianity and, in the case of non-Christians, of their own religious tradition. The Jacobsens' call for awareness is framed as a need for everyone to be more sensitive to everyone's religion, religious

²“Positionality is defined as the important aspects of our identity such as our gender, race, class and age. These are markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities” (kgb, 2015, para. 1).

needs, etc. Yet, the kind of self-awareness and sensitivity that American Christians have to work on is different than that of their non-Christian peers.

This difference between the experiences of Christians and non-Christians and the ways in which it manifests in higher education is at the crux of my study. In this section I explore social privilege as a whole—the concept and its origins, next I define Christian privilege specifically—expanding on the definition offered in Chapter One, and then I explore how Christian privilege plays out on college campuses and what that environment might look like for students who belong to minority religions.

The Concept of Privilege

Social “...privilege is like an invisible weightless backpack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks” (McIntosh, 1989, p. 10). McIntosh’s (1989) piece *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack* has become the standard for understanding the concept of social privilege; almost everyone I read about social privilege referenced McIntosh’s piece, and if they did not, someone they cited did. The original piece is about her moving from “thinking about unacknowledged male privilege as a phenomenon” to recognizing that McIntosh, as a white woman, also holds analogous white privilege (McIntosh, 1989, p. 10). Both white privilege and male privilege come with a backpack of their own though the contents may differ slightly; some people have both backpacks, some people only one, some neither. McIntosh “argued that not only are women and minorities at a disadvantage, but those with social power enjoy benefits that are both unearned and unjustified” (Barnett, 2013, p. 30). As research and writing about privilege has increased and progressed, the exploration of privilege has become deeper and more complex. Kimmel (2014) suggests that next,

we have to open up that knapsack, dump its contents out, and take out all the very different ways that these characteristics [like being white, male, Christian, etc.]...have become so obscured that we have come to believe that the events of our lives are the results of [solely] achieved characteristics. (Kimmel, 2014, p. 7)

In the next section, I explore Christian privilege as a similarly analogous social privilege with its own backpack of invisible but powerful supplies.

Black and Stone (2005) offer the following five-part definition of social privilege that helps to further flesh out the definition of social privilege and therefore serves as a framework for understanding Christian privilege:

First, privilege is a special advantage...Second, it is granted, not earned or brought into being by one's individual effort or talent. Third, privilege is a right or entitlement that is related to a preferred status or rank. Fourth, privilege is exercised for the benefit of the recipient and to the exclusion or detriment of others. Finally, a privileged status is often outside of the awareness of the person possessing it. (Black & Stone, 2005, pp. 1–2)

Having social privilege, which I refer to simply as privilege from here on out, can be understood as being "...like running with the wind at your back" (Kimmel, 2014, p. 1). However, for the privilege holders (e.g. whites, men, Christians, heterosexuals, etc.), "it feels like just plain running, and we rarely if ever get a chance to see how we are sustained, supported, and even propelled by the wind" (Kimmel, 2014, p. 1). These two analogies, the invisible backpack and the wind, are helpful in understanding that while privilege is definitely there—after all, one can feel the wind—it is difficult, if not impossible to see. I know this to be true in my own experience; for example, I was aware of my struggles as a Jew long before I understood

that my whiteness made my life easier at every turn. “We see where we *don’t* [emphasis in the original] fit in far better than where we *do*” (Kimmel & Ferber, 2014, p. xi). This is largely because to be in the majority and/or the power holding group,

...is to be simultaneously ubiquitous and invisible. You’re everywhere you look, you’re the standard against which everyone else is measured. You’re like water, like air. People will tell you they went to see a ‘woman doctor,’ or they will say they went to see ‘the doctor’...A white person will be happy to tell you about a ‘black friend,’ but when that same person simply mentions a ‘friend,’ everyone will assume the person is white. Any college course that doesn’t have the word ‘woman’ or ‘gay’ or ‘minority’ in the title is, de facto, a course about men, heterosexuals, and white people. But we call those courses ‘literature,’ ‘history,’ or ‘political science.’ (Kimmel, 2014, p. 4)

The privileges automatically given to groups in power are often unconsciously accepted, particularly by those in power; we often view “our own experience as the norm or solely the result of our hard work” (Barnett, 2013, p. 30). This denial, whether intentional or unintentional, often results in privilege remaining unacknowledged, unrecognized, and unaddressed ((Barnett, 2013; McIntosh, 1989).

“In recent years, the study of discrimination based on gender, race, class, and sexuality has mushroomed, creating a large literature and increasing courses addressing these issues” (Kimmel, 2014, p. 1). Most of the studies have focused on the “victims” of social privilege: women, people of color, non-heterosexual people, etc. This work, much of it produced by people who are victimized or othered by the system of social privilege, is the starting point in understanding the marginalization caused by social privilege, and this work catalyzes a wider understanding of social privilege where the “processes of marginalization are in fact both real

and remediable” (Kimmel, 2014, p. 2). However, this process, one which still has a long way to go around race and gender/sex—the two longest studied loci of privilege, has barely begun in terms of religion and, in terms of the scope of my study, specifically Christian privilege.

One of the goals of work on privilege is to make privilege “visible” (Kimmel, 2014, p. 3). The stories of the participants in this study are part of making Christian privilege visible. In order for privilege to be widely visible, “those of us who are white, heterosexual, middle class [and I would add upper class here as well]...male..”, and/or Christian—among other privileged identities “need to see how we are stakeholders in understanding structural inequality, how the dynamics that create inequality for some also benefit others” (Kimmel, 2014, p. 3). Inquiries into all kinds of privilege enable “us to more fully understand...social dynamics...and how they operate in our lives” (Kimmel, 2014, p. 3). Understanding privilege is imperative because privilege is hard to see, and because for those in power, there is little incentive to draw attention to unearned social privilege. Being in power allows one to “pretend to be the generic, the universal, the generalizable” (Kimmel, 2014, p. 5). Being understood as the generic norm is a place of enormous power, power that needs to be understood and, eventually, dismantled (Kimmel, 2014; McIntosh, 1989).

Additionally, while I draw parallels throughout this chapter between different kinds of privilege and especially between the best understood and most widely studied forms of privilege, white and male privilege, and Christian privilege, it is imperative that all forms of privilege be understood as separate concepts and experiences. Different identities may be easier or harder to hide, and privilege can be contextual. All forms of privilege are forms of oppression that merit study, but “just as all forms of inequality are not the same, all forms of privilege are not the same” (Kimmel, 2014, p. 7).

However, it is worth noting that some loci of privilege and oppression are easier to identify than others. Kimmel (2014) suggests that “sexuality, religion, [and] class...are not immediately visible to the public. One can more easily pass as a member of a privileged group” (p. 8). Kimmel (2014) also suggests that of these identity categories sexuality is the one most like race and gender/sex, that “sexual minorities may feel that their identity is not a social construction but the fulfillment of an inner essence” (p. 8). It is important to note that not all social identities and not all privilege operate in the same way. It is also important not to see social identities as hierarchical. No one can definitively assess which aspects of identity constitute “the fulfillment of an inner essence” for another person. As someone who is both a sexual and a religious minority, I experience my religious identity as a deeper rooted aspect of my “inner essence” than my sexual identity. I have no doubt that for others sexuality, class, ability, and a host of other social identities beyond race and gender/sex are most salient and essential.

Clearly, some kinds of sexual, religious, and class identities are easier to hide than others. As a Reform Jew who wears no religious garb and has a face that does not usually read as ethnically Jewish, I can pass for Christian as needed; my more observant and/or ethnic looking counterparts do not have the same luxury. The same is true for other religious minority groups, including Muslims. This was confirmed by the stories of my participants where Muslim students who had religious markers like a beard or wearing a hijab had very different experiences than students whose religion was not immediately obvious from their appearance. By simply comparing my own understanding of religion as an identity and its place in the privilege pantheon to Kimmel’s (2014), it is clear that identity and the privilege or lack thereof that go with it are experienced differently. Kimmel and I are both Jews (Kimmel, 2001). Yet, we

experience being Jewish differently. Kimmel understands religion, which I assume to include Judaism, as socially constructed rather than an inner essence; I assert that all social identities are socially constructed and have the potential to be part of an individual's inner essence as well (Kimmel, 2014). Trying to parse what kinds of privilege are based on inborn, biologically based, and/or 'God-given' traits rather than social constructs puts researchers in the position of deciding how we become who and what we are, something that is far beyond the scope of research on social privilege.

Defining Christian Privilege

"While there are countless sources on religious pluralism in the U.S., very few include discussion on Christian privilege and religious oppression" (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, p. vii). Schlosser (2003) describes discussing Christian privilege as "breaking a sacred taboo" (p. 1). "The issue of Christian privilege...the struggle to create religiously, spiritually, faith-based, and secularly inclusive communities are still relatively new areas of diversity-related learning and action" (Clark, 2003, p. 48). Peggy McIntosh's (1989) work discussed in the previous section is recommended by the editors and partial authors of *Investigating Christian Privilege and Religious Oppression in the United States* (2009), an anthology based in cultural studies and education, as a tool to assist in understanding "Christian privilege as being an invisible, unearned, and largely unacknowledged array of benefits accorded to Christians, with which they often unconsciously walk through life as if they effortlessly carry a knapsack tossed over their shoulders" (p. vii). Christian privilege, like white privilege, benefits all Christians, just as white privilege benefits all whites (Blumenfeld et al., 2009; Clark et al., 2002).

Christian privilege exists through the cultural power of the *norm* [emphasis in the original]; by extension, everything not adhering to the way religion is understood, taught,

and practiced by Christians is considered abnormal. Christianity is the privileged religion in the United States because Christian groups, people, organizations have the power to define normalcy. (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, pp. vii–viii)

Defining Christian privilege can be both complex and elusive. Christian privilege certainly mirrors white and male privilege, but it also has aspects that are unique. Christian privilege is easiest to understand when framed with familiar ideas of white or male privilege, but a full understanding requires considering Christian privilege both on its own and in comparison with other kinds of privilege. An exact definition for any kind of privilege, including Christian privilege, is complex, which is likely why scholars and authors often default to using metaphors like the invisible backpack or the wind.

When considering how Christian privilege is enacted in the United States, it is essential to keep in mind that just “as there is a spectrum of Christian denominations and traditions, so too is there a hierarchy or continuum of Christian privilege based on 1) historical factors, 2) numbers of practitioners, and 3) degrees of social power” (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, p. viii). White Christian groups have more power and privilege than non-white groups; white mainline Protestants and, increasingly, white evangelical Protestants hold the greatest share of privilege. Minority Christian groups, including but not limited to Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Church of Latter Day Saints, the Amish, and Seventh-Day Adventists, hold dominant position over non-Christians but do not have the power or privilege of mainline or evangelical Protestants. Catholics, who are Christians despite widespread confusion about this, occupy a space between white Protestants and minority—in terms of race or sect of Christianity—Christians; they have the numbers and social power but have been historically marginalized (Blumenfeld et al., 2009).

Christianity enjoys systemic privilege and dominance throughout U.S. society, including in higher education (Blumenfeld et al., 2009); “the disadvantages of non-Christianity are played out not merely at the interpersonal one-on-one level” but also “at a societal and institutional level where individuals are socialized, punished, rewarded, and guided in ways that maintain and perpetuate” Christian privilege (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, p. x). Students who practice non-Christian religions, especially those who practice in ways that are obvious in the public arena, experience the need to both navigate their own sense of self and others’ understanding of them (Ali & Bagheri, 2009; Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006). For example, Nasir and Al-Amin (2006) wrote the following about the experience of being Muslim, and in this case a Muslim woman, on a college campus:

From the decisions to wear or not wear *hijab* (head covering), to fasting during the during the holy month of Ramadan (and attending lunch meeting where our not eating generates inquisitive looks), to addressing...queries about Islam and Islamic practices, to having difficulty finding private and quiet spaces in which to pray during the day, we have come to realize that practice of Islam in the college setting is at once intensely personal and painfully public. (p. 22)

Ali and Bagheri (2009) echo a similar set of concerns of Muslim students as a minority religion in a Christian focused nation; “a lack of accommodations for religious practice such as safe space for prayer, meal accommodations, and acknowledgment of Islamic practices and holidays by administrators and professors can also be problematic for Muslim students” (Ali & Bagheri, 2009, p. 47). They also echo the concern about how the wearing of hijab might be an issue of particular significance for Muslim college women. All of these concerns were also present in the experiences of the Muslims students in this study.

Christian privilege is also bolstered by the secularizing of Christianity and, in particular, Christmas. It has become near impossible during to December to not stumble upon a “holiday” party, that is a party with “traditional Christmas decoration, food, music, and gift exchanges” (Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003, p. 55). While the secularization of Christmas may upset those who want to put the Christ back in Christmas, it also gives Christians an enormous amount of power to dictate the culture. Christmas is no longer seen as Christian but as simply American (Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003). The normalcy of Christianity has made it all but invisible, and “Christianity is accepted as more or less inevitable, status quo, standard, or even ‘normal’ when it becomes visible” (Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003, p. 55). However, when other religions, Judaism and Islam included, become visible, “they are not only noticed, but in being are checked by both individual and institutional prejudice and discrimination. The on-going intermittent vandalism of Jewish synagogues is among the most readily apparent and, thus, most powerful example of this” (Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003, p. 55).

Manifestations of Christian Privilege in Higher Education

Christian privilege and religious oppression manifest themselves in a variety of ways on college campuses. “...A Christian ethos...permeate[s] many campus cultures” (Seifert, 2007, p. 11). I have grouped the aspects of Christian privilege into seven categories based on recurrent themes both in the available literature and their alignment with my own knowledge of being a religious minority student. The seven categories are: the calendar and time off; food; holidays, celebration, and worship; space; curriculum and language; the secularization of Christianity; safety.

Other scholars and authors (e.g. Clark et al., 2002; Schlosser, 2003) created itemized lists much like the list McIntosh (1989) created for white privilege; two of these lists are available as

Appendix A (Schlosser, 2003, pp. 48–49) and Appendix B (Clark et al., 2002, pp. 53–54) to this document. The overwhelming majority of list items are encompassed by these seven categories. In the following subsections, I use these seven manifestations of Christian privilege as a guide to explore and illustrate what we already know about how Christian privilege is present in the lives of college students; it is worth noting that sometimes these manifestations of Christian privilege are college specific while some affect a much wider population. Mutakabbir and Nurridin (2016), in their first of its kind book, *Religious Minority Students in Higher Education*—a volume for *Key Issues on Diverse College Students*, suggest that Muslims and Jews both encounter a range of challenges in higher education that are, in large part, created by Christian privilege. Jews may encounter:

- Eurocentric curriculum (Christian-centered)
- Dietary restrictions
- School calendar which may conflict with Jewish holidays.

Muslims may encounter:

- Eurocentric curriculum
- Dietary limits (no pork, alcohol)
- School calendar which may conflict with Muslim holidays
- Lack of a physical prayer space on campus
- Classes which conflict with prayer times
- Threats/harassment/student intimidation. (Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016, p. 33)

These examples will not be true for every Jewish or Muslim students just as Muslim or Jewish students may encounter challenges not listed here or only listed for the group that is not theirs.

Understanding the wide range of ways that Christian privilege manifests is essential for dismantling it, which is one of the goals of most academic work on social privilege. It is also immediately relevant to the work of college and university faculty, administrators, and student affairs practitioners. The product of Christian privilege can be “an individual (or community) who is in fact alienated, isolated...from the society in which he or she nominally remains a member,” and it “sets up a dichotomy between that which is privileged and normative...and that which is not” where Christianity is privileged and normative, and everything else is not (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, pp. x–xi).

The calendar and time off. The American academic calendar revolves around Christian holidays, Christmas in particular (Blumenfeld, 2006; Burke & Segall, 2011; Clark et al., 2002; Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016; Seifert, 2007). Virtually every institution of higher education in the United States has a “winter” vacation around Christmas. Renaming Christmas vacation “winter” vacation does not negate the fact that the break in the academic calendar occurs at that time in order to accommodate the celebration of Christmas. “Inherent in the organization of the academic calendar in this way is the suggestion that everyone celebrates Christmas in at least a secular way” (Clark et al., 2002, p. 52). Christmas is a federal holiday, something that must be mentioned here. What greater representation of Christian privilege is there than the fact that the most publicly celebrated Christian holiday has been made a federal one (Blumenfeld, 2006; Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016; Seifert, 2007)?

The Christiancentric calendar is, for many, both the most obvious symptom of Christian privilege but also one that goes almost entirely unquestioned (Blumenfeld et al., 2009; Burke & Segall, 2011; Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016). I cannot recall a serious discussion, rooted in religious concerns, about changing the basic school calendar. “For all intents and purposes, the

academic calendar is scheduled around Christian holidays and celebrations” (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, p. vii). Students who practice other religions often have to miss classes and sometimes tests, special speakers, events, etc. in order to observe their own holidays and partake in their own religious celebrations. For example, I am a practicing Reform Jew, which means that while I am practicing, I am on the less observant/strict end of the spectrum. Every year, unless a holy day happens to fall on weekend, I have three major holy days that I take off from all work, including academic work—Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the first day of *Pesach* (Passover). Depending on exact level of observance, a more observant Jew could have a dozen or more days they would need to be out of class or work. Observant Muslims have a similar range of days they might need to take off from classes and work depending, again, on individual traditions and level of observance (*Questions & Answers About Muslim Americans*, 2014).

Even a cursory review of the public academic...calendar illustrates the centrality of Christian holidays despite the lip service paid to the legal separation of religion and state in the public sector. Inherent in the organization of the academic calendar in this way is the suggestion that everyone celebrates Christmas in *at least a secular way* [emphasis in the original]. (Clark et al., 2002, p. 52)

Christian students get the two biggest holidays in their religious calendar off from school; Christmas has its own vacation, and Easter always falls on a Sunday. This is a manifestation of Christian privilege and results in religious oppression of non-Christian students (Seifert, 2007). Christian students are generally not presented with having to make a choice between celebrating their holidays and their schoolwork; this is not the case for non-Christian students (Seifert, 2007). The academic calendar notably disadvantages some students. “For example, in some years, Ramadan—one of the key observances of Islam—may coincide with many campus’

midterm exams” (Seifert, 2007, p. 12). While Muslim students can attend classes during most or all of Ramadan, many Muslim students observe the sunrise to sunset fast that is a major piece of the observance of Ramadan and so may be hungry and distracted during midterms, an important time in terms of grades and academic success in college (Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016).

Since the academic calendar at most universities does not grant universal time off for non-Christian holidays, non-Christian students are put in the position of having to take additional time off from classes and other college responsibilities in order to observe their holidays (Burke & Segall, 2011; Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016). While Christian holidays are generally common knowledge and already factored into the academic calendar, university administrators and faculty may be unaware of non-Christian holidays (Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016). “...The ‘everyone is Christian’ assumption often leads non-Christians to have to verify or document that their absences are associated with the observance of a spiritual event” (Seifert, 2007, p. 12). The person that students have to justify their absence to is often Christian and may have limited knowledge of non-Christian holidays (Clark et al., 2002).

Additionally, both the calendar we use—the Gregorian calendar—in the United States and the language we use to describe dates are Christiancentric. While almost every American uses the Gregorian calendar in day-to-day life and in academic and professional settings, many other religions have calendars of their own. “The enumercation of time through calendars...is never neutral; it is ideological and political in nature,” and the calendar the U.S. has chosen and imposed is a Christian one (Burke & Segall, 2011, p. 640). Since in this study I look specifically at Muslim and Jewish students, I provide here a description of each religion’s calendar.

Islam uses a lunar calendar made up of 354 days, “the Islamic Hijiri calendar” (*Questions & Answers About Muslim Americans*, 2014, p. 45). In Islam “the moon’s lunar cycles are such a

significant element...that significant dates are determined by the visible sighting of a crescent moon” (*Questions & Answers About Muslim Americans*, 2014, p. 45). The calendar used in Islam is 11 days shorter than the Gregorian year (*Questions & Answers About Muslim Americans*, 2014).

The Jewish calendar is based on three astronomical phenomena: the rotation of the Earth about its axis (a day); the revolution of the moon about the Earth (a month); and the revolution of the Earth about the sun (a year). These three phenomena are independent of each other, so there is no direct correlation between them. On average, the moon revolves around the Earth in about $29\frac{1}{2}$ days. The Earth revolves around the sun in about $365\frac{1}{4}$ days, that is, about 12.4 lunar months. (Rich, 2011, para. 2)

As in Islam, the sighting of the new moon is also part of the Jewish calendar; “the lunar month on the Jewish calendar begins when the first sliver of moon becomes visible after the dark of the moon” (Rich, 2011, para. 5).

Because both the Jewish and the Muslim calendar are different from the Gregorian calendar, it can be an effort to keep track of when holidays fall. “To someone following the Gregorian calendar, Islamic holidays appear to slide around from year to year” (*Questions & Answers About Muslim Americans*, 2014, p. 45); an easy, though imperfect way, to understand how this works is that the Islamic calendar essentially travels backwards through the Gregorian calendar. So if, for example, Ramadan was in the early fall one year, the following year it would be in the summer. Jewish holidays also move but not as dramatically. For example, *Pesach* is always around springtime, typically falling in March or April on the Gregorian calendar.

Additionally, it is worth noting that a Christiancentric understanding of holiday hours and the Sabbath may leave Jews and Muslims at a disadvantage. Both Muslim and Jewish holidays

begin at sunset the night before. Jews observe the Sabbath from Friday at sundown to the start of night on Saturday evening; Muslims observe the Sabbath, one that looks markedly different from either Judaism and Christianity, on Friday.

The final major aspect of Christiancentric calendar is how the years are counted and described. It is currently 2016 A.D. A.D. stand for *anno domini*---year of the Lord. The counting of the years begins with the estimated date of the birth of Jesus, Christianity's savior/messiah. Years before that are typically marked B.C. which stands for Before Christ. The Jewish calendar marks this year as 5776; the Islamic calendar marks it as 1437. While there has been a push, particularly in academia, to switch to C.E. (Common Era) and B.C.E. (Before the Common Era), it has not been widely adopted, and either way, dividing the calendar that way still centers Jesus and, therefore, Christianity. Also, A.D. and B.C. push non-Christians to acknowledge Jesus as Lord. A.D., after all, stands for the year of the lord though both Jews and Muslims would assert that Jesus is not their Lord nor, looking at B.C., would Jews or Muslims understand, based on their religious worldview, a whole era to have ended when Jesus was born.

Food. At many colleges and universities, students are required to live on campus and purchase a meal plan, at least during the first year. For students with religious dietary restrictions this presents a problem. Most dining plans are not designed with non-Christian religious dietary needs in mind. "While Catholic students are virtually certain to find meatless entrees on Fridays, it is not a foregone conclusion that institutional dining halls follow kosher practices..." for Jewish students on campus who keep kosher (Seifert, 2007, p. 13). In fact, there is empirical evidence from a study of 1,087 Jewish students that "found that lack of kosher dining facilities presented challenges to Jewish students" (Kadushin & Tighe, 2008 as cited in Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016, p. 99).

Both Jews and Muslims may eat a religiously prescribed diet. This is called keeping kosher or *kashrut* in Judaism and eating halal in Islam. The two dietary practices have quite a bit of overlap but are distinct from one another. For Muslim and Jewish students “who do adhere to the dietary restrictions, dining options on college campuses may not be adequate” (Ali & Bagheri, 2009, p. 50). This is further complicated during specific holidays such as *Pesach* when Jews eat an even more restricted diet or “for Muslim students during the month of Ramadan when they fast from sunrise to sunset, and dining hall schedules may not be accommodating” (Ali & Bagheri, 2009, p. 50).

The website for dining services at the institution that will be the site of my study does have a page devoted to dietary needs, among them halal and *kashrut*. This is an improvement over nothing. However, out of 11 dining halls only two offer kosher meals and only for dinner Monday-Thursday; halal food is also only offered at two of the dining halls—with no overlap with the kosher dining halls so a Jew who keeps kosher and a Muslim who eats halal could never eat together in a dining hall—and, again, only at certain meals and on certain days. In Chapter Five, I discuss the ways in which this advertised information does and does not sync up with students’ lived experiences.

Holidays, celebration, and worship. Christian privilege frequently manifests itself in the ways in which holidays are publicly celebrated. Aside from “American” holidays such as the Fourth of July, the holidays that are celebrated in our public square and in our colleges and universities are Christian. In particular, Christmas is widely celebrated in forums thought to be secular. Oftentimes, Christmas parties have been renamed “holiday parties,” but the preponderance of Christmas decorations and themes suggest a singular rather than pluralistic focus. Clark and Brimhall-Vargas (2003) note that, “increasingly...not stumbling upon another

‘holiday’ party—a Christmas party by another name—in a public educational...setting, in which traditional Christmas decorations, food, music, and gift exchanges characterize the festivities, is harder and harder to do” (Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003, p. 55). This suggests that, if anything, public celebrations of Christmas in secular settings are becoming more, not less, common. Christmas trees, sometimes renamed “holiday” trees, are commonplace on college campuses (Blumenfeld, 2006).

In the United States, worship has come to be understood in a fairly monolithic way; “real worship occurs in a church and in the company of a member of the clergy” (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, p. viii). This way of viewing what constitutes real or legitimate worship or prayer centers on Christianity’s model of worship. “Here, the church represents both a place outside of the home to go and pray, and the more fundamental phenomenon of congregationalism—the idea that prayer, properly performed, is done in groups and led by a person imbued by an institution with special theological authority” (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, p. viii). A Christiancentric understanding of what constitutes prayer and holy practice means that the needs of observant Muslims and Jews often go unmet (Ali & Bagheri, 2009).

Space. Another manifestation of Christian privilege is the question of who has physical space on campus and who does not; there is often a striking difference between the space Christian students and groups get and space assigned to non-Christian students and groups (Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016; Seifert, 2007). “Christians end up with the prime real estate—perhaps a quaint campus chapel—while other religious groups make do with a room in the student center or the basement of a dormitory” (Seifert, 2007, p. 13). For some non-Christian students this may present a sizable obstacle to practicing their religion while on campus.

What constitutes a normal house of worship in the United States follows a Christian model; steeples are what we expect to see while a minaret is considered exotic or foreign (Blumenfeld et al., 2009). “These norms combined with nativism and xenophobia also illuminate another Christian privilege: The privilege of being able to build a house of worship without opposition...” (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, p. ix). The way this architectural norming is visible on college campuses varies. For example, the campus where this study will be conducted does not have any houses of worship, at least not any that are being used in that capacity, on campus; all of the houses of worship are outside of campus boundaries. However, the campus does have a chapel which, while not used for any sort of prayer at this time that I am aware of, was clearly built, as can be seen in its architectural norms, as a Protestant Christian chapel harkening back to a time when a Protestant Christian ethos both permeated and almost entirely controlled the campus culture.

One of the issues that Muslim students report as a major problem is being able to find a place to pray on campus and “make *wudu* (a special way of washing up for prayer)” (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006, p. 24). Very few campuses have dedicated Muslim prayer space despite the need for observant Muslim students to pray five times a day, often while on campus (Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016). On my own campus, I have stumbled upon Muslim students engaged in prayer in hallway corners, stairwells, closets, and empty classrooms; most recently I accidentally disturbed a woman at prayer in the public bathroom of the student union. Nasir and Al-Amin (2006) also noted this phenomenon, writing that Muslim students constantly have to seek out places to pray. One of their students “noted, ‘You have to find a place to pray, so you look like you are sneaking, then you find a room, and people are thinking, what is she doing in there?’” (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006, p. 25). Even on campuses where Muslim students are granted access to

the “chapel,” it rarely can meet their needs. After all, campus chapels are typically set up like churches with pews while Muslims pray facing Mecca, which might not be the direction of the pews, and on the floor (Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003).

Curriculum and language. The U.S. educational curriculum is largely monocultural, focused on a white, Christian, and overwhelming male narrative (Blumenfeld et al., 2009). This is particularly true of the K-12 public school system where the curriculum “celebrates primarily the heroes, holidays, traditions, accomplishments, and importance of a European-heritage, Christian experience” (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, p. ix). While this does shift somewhat at the postsecondary level, how much it shifts and how much of that shift each individual student is exposed to varies by institution, major, and individual experience. Christianity “is very much embedded, de-facto, in current, public educational practices and discourses” (Burke & Segall, 2011, p. 632).

One outcome of this monocultural educational curriculum is that “when other than Christian-based perspectives are introduced in a classroom session, if a student representing that faith...is present in class...often the...professor will call on that student to speak for ‘their people;’” whether it is intentional or unintentional, those from minority groups—including religious groups “are singled out to ‘educate’ others” (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, p. ix).

A form of Christian privilege involves the notion that one does not have to educate oneself to the languages, customs, and traditions of other religious communities.

Members of these other communities, however, often need to become familiar with Christian tradition not only because of Christian hegemony, but also as a necessary condition for emotional and often physical survival within the dominant culture...Though not in the truest sense ‘bicultural’ or ‘bireligious,’ members of non-Christian faith

communities are compelled to negotiate between the dominant Christian culture and their own religious cultures. (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, pp. ix–x)

“The origins of secular educational institutions in western civilization can be traced back to the first medieval universities and the inclination of religious institutions” (Burke & Segall, 2011, p. 635). In other words, religious institutions and education gave birth to secular western education, and that is not a legacy that secular education has been able to entirely shake. And, despite numerous court cases meant to adjudicate the line between religion and state, “the echoes, the imprints of religion remain in the hallways—the rhythms, the routines, and the claims to knowledge—of our public schools...” (Burke & Segall, 2011, p. 638).

Burke and Segall (2011) also connect the Christiancentric calendar to the privileging of Christianity within the curriculum, both the public curriculum and the hidden curriculum: “calendars are inherently curricular, charting a course (a curriculum) to regulate bodies in time and space. An academic calendar is no exception” (p. 640). The language of education in the United States is also rife with the sounds of Christianity; many of the words that we think of as being the language of formal education are actually the words of the Church (Burke & Segall, 2011).

While universities...have ‘deans’ and many universities have rectors—both considered secular administrative positions—their roots are well established in church organizational structures. A dean, now a head of a college, is also defined as the head of a ‘chapter of a cathedral at a collegiate church’ and a rector as ‘a priest in charge of a church or religious institution’ ...the fact that those administering education within secular institution still carry the legacy of religious affiliations ought to matter—indeed invite some pause...(Burke & Segall, 2011, p. 643)

While wiping American education of any vestiges of Christianity would be an endless, and likely pointless, task, the constant presence of unacknowledged symbols and language of Christianity within education may perpetuate the privileged role of Christianity in education at all levels. After all, even when we complete a step in our education, the trappings of the graduation ceremony—the banners, flags, gowns, caps, and hoods—are also those of Christian clerical garb and ceremony (Burke & Segall, 2011).

Secularization of Christianity. The line between Christian and secular in the public square and in our institutions of higher education has become thin and blurry. Christianity is seen as the norm in American culture and as such has become largely invisible (Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003). Symbols from Christian traditions such as Santa Claus, Christmas trees, and the Easter Bunny are perceived as “...devoid of religious connotations and are ‘just part of the culture’” (Seifert, 2007, p. 12). These symbols are mostly understood to be secular by Christians, especially cultural Christians, because this validates their position in society. However, “...many non-Christians experience Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny to infringe on secular space...” (Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003, p. 55). Blumenfeld (2006) summarizes the effects of the secularization of Christianity:

The effect of so-called ‘secularization of religion,’ in fact, not only fortifies, but, indeed strengthens Christian privilege by perpetuating Christian hegemony in such a way as to avoid detection as religion or circumvent violating the constitutional requirements for separation of religion and government. Christian dominance, therefore, is maintained by its relative invisibility, and with this invisibility, privilege is neither analyzed or scrutinized...Dominance is perceived as unremarkable or ‘normal,’ and when anyone poses a challenge or attempts to

reveal its religious significance, those in the dominant group brand them as ‘subversive’ or as ‘sacrilegious.’ (p. 206).

Safety for Christians in the U.S. While people in the United States who are Christian experience harm and fear for their safety for any numbers of reasons including other aspects of identity (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc.), Christians in the United States, particularly in educational settings, “can be reasonably assured that when they talk about religious traditions or wear religious symbols, they will not be the targets of ridicule, discrimination, or harassment [or worse] by their peers and school officials” (Blumenfeld et al., 2009, p. ix). Historically, both Jews and Muslims have been targets for violence in United States. While that continues to be true today, Muslims may be especially at risk.

The events of 9/11 and its aftermath and the political climate that has produced have “brought Islam...into the media forefront. Unfortunately, this attention had been largely negative, and Muslim communities across the nation are increasingly fearful of discrimination and even violence” (Ali & Bagheri, 2009; Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006, p. 23). Muslims have been targeted on colleges campuses and become the victims of hate crimes (Ali & Bagheri, 2009). The classroom can also be a place of violence, if largely emotional violence, for non-Christian students. Muslim students report both students and professors expressing anti-Islamic sentiments in the classroom (Ali & Bagheri, 2009). The political climate is just one part of what makes up the campus climate. As I delve into the data and its implications in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, I further explore the idea of campus climate as a way to understand the experiences of students belonging to minority religions, in this case Jews and Muslims, and in Chapter Four, I show how the particular campus climate framework proposed by Ahmadi and Cole (2015), one

intended for understanding the experiences of minority religion students, is a useful tool in understanding this study's data and Christian privilege's role in higher education more generally.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

In this study I explored the role of Christian privilege in the college experiences of undergraduate students that are members of non-Christian religious traditions, specifically Jewish and Muslim students, painted a full picture of the history and current situation of religion in the United States, defined and described Christian privilege, tied the experiences of the participants to both bodies of literature, and provided implications and recommendations based on all of the previous aspects. This was, at its core, an exploratory study. As such, I chose to make this a qualitative study since “qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem,” in this case the social/human problem of Christian privilege and its potential role in the college experiences of non-Christian students (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). The overarching question for this study was as follows:

- What role does Christian privilege play in the college experiences of non-Christian undergraduate students, specifically Jewish and Muslim students?

Study Sample and Design

As this was primarily an exploratory study, I intentionally went into my data collection without a preconceived idea of what I might find. Based on my own personal experiences that I discussed at length in Chapter One, I had a hunch about what I might find. However, I knew that my experiences might not have any relationship to those of my participants and could turn out to be utterly irrelevant. In order to create as much freedom as possible for the participants and their data to speak their own truth, I kept “pre-structured designs to a minimum” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 19). This is not to say that the study was without any structure or loosely constructed, but I also wanted to prevent it from being too tightly designed. I aimed to strike

some sort of balance in order to have a clear protocol but also to allow for “a more loosely structured, emergent, inductively grounded approach for gathering data” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 19). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) assert that this approach results in conceptual frameworks emerging during the course of data collection and analysis. This study was proposed without a strong, guiding, specific theoretical framework. Schlossberg’s (1989) theory of marginality and mattering was used as an overarching guide for developing the interview protocol; a large part of what I explored in this study is whether Muslim and Jewish students, religious minority students, experienced their campus as a place where they matter, a place where their needs—and not just the needs of the religious majority—are considered and met (Schlossberg, 1989).

This study used narrative inquiry. I understand narrative inquiry to be “a storytelling methodology through which we study narratives and stories of experience” (Kim, 2016, p. 118). Because this study was exploratory, narrative inquiry was the most appropriate choice because it allows the participants’ voices to be heard; they can tell their own story. Narrative inquiry is an exploration of the human experience with a focus on the stories of participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and these participant stories “reveal how people view and understand their lives” (Josselson, 2011, p. 225). Using a method that allowed participant stories to be revealed through storytelling allowed me to explore, with the participants, their experiences. This was further encouraged by the use of a semi-structured interview protocol.

Data Collection. Like Irving Seidman (2006), I “see stories and the details of people’s lives as a way of knowing and understanding” (p. 1). With this in mind, I collected my data in ways that allowed me to hear the stories of my participants. I interviewed thirteen participants. I employed a semi-structured format to both guide the interview and also allow space for the

participants to tell their stories. I incentivized these interviews with \$25 gift cards since students' time is worth something.

Site Selection: Midwest University (MU). The study was conducted at a large, public institution in the Midwest—partially for reasons of convenience but primarily because large public institutions are often seen as emblematic of American higher education, and the Midwest is a midpoint politically and culturally—as well as geographically—in the United States. This institution is, in order to obscure its identity, referred to as Midwest University (MU). The Midwest is neither as conservative socially and politically as, say, the South nor as liberal as the coasts. MU is a predominantly white institution (PWI) like most colleges and universities in the United States. Additionally, the state in which MU is located has sizable populations of both Muslims and Jews living in the state, and both groups are well represented, though both minorities, at the institution. The largest metropolitan area in the state is 67% Christian and 8% non-Christian religions making it far more religiously diverse than the southern cities and the other Midwestern cities but far less diverse than the big coastal cities (Lipka, 2015a).

JTA reports there are 3,500 Jewish students at the institution (Friedman, 2015). There are no national level groups, like JTA or Hillel, collecting information on the number of Muslim students. However, MU shared some of its institutional data with me. The first year class was surveyed in the fall of 2015, and 79% of the first year class responded to the survey. Out of an entering class of approximately 8000 students, there were 4,801 who answered the question about religious identity. Of these, 52 identified as Muslims, and 132 identified as Jews. By comparison, 1,270 identified as Catholic. By these numbers, 2.75% of entering first year students were Jewish, and 1.08% were Muslim. The institution does make the list of the top 30 public universities by Jewish population; however, it is worth noting that even using the

externally JTA produced number of 3,500 students, and assuming they are all undergraduates, this makes Jews 8.75% of the overall student body—still a small fraction but a much larger percentage than the self-reported data from this most recent incoming class.

Additionally, in some pockets of the university, there seems to be some level of awareness of the need to better understand both Muslims and Jews. For example, in early 2015, the Department of Journalism published a book which “...offers a basic introduction to Islam and the practices of observant Muslims. It’s the latest guide by a journalism class [at the institution]...that seeks to inform about various groups” (Warikoo, 2015, p. 1). Next, the program will be working on a guide about Jewish Americans that should be available in 2016 (Warikoo, 2015).

Sampling. The Michigan State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study as exempt in January 2016 (see Appendix G). I selected these two particular religious groups—Jews and Muslims—because they are both very similar and yet in very different places in terms of their place in U.S. society. “Jews have long bore the brunt of Christian privilege, manifest as anti-Semitism, in the U.S.” (Clark et al., 2002, p. 55). However, over the past half a century or so, Jews have become more mainstream and have gained more power. Some argue that Jews have arrived in a place where they are the perpetrators of their own kind of privilege (Clark et al., 2002); it is certainly true that Jews have access to far more of American society than they once did. These two religious groups are in different positions in terms of their acceptance into U.S. society, but there is only a generation or two of difference. Additionally, some see Jews and Muslims as oppositional groups and want to focus any conversation about these two groups on the Israel/Palestine conflict (Clark et al., 2002). However, this study focused on a United States context and on each group’s relationship with the dominant Christian

privilege. Having two similar groups—both monotheistic, Abrahamic religions—at different points in their American journey helps to shed different kinds of light on the issue of Christian privilege in higher education.

I used both criterion and snowball sampling to gather my participants (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 1990). This combination was used with the goal of purposeful sampling. Criterion sampling is exactly what it sounds like; participants for the sample are chosen according to particular criteria (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 1990). Snowball sampling employs current participants to use their network to help find additional participants (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 1990). Additionally, I used some level of convenience sampling since students who are actively involved with their religious community near or on campus are easier to make contact with and identify (Creswell, 2009).

The necessary criteria that each participant had to meet in order to be considered and/or included in the study are as follows:

1. Currently enrolled at MU as an undergraduate and has been a student for a minimum of one semester.
2. Self-identified practicing Muslim or Jew with two Jewish or Muslim parents where Islam or Judaism was the sole religion practiced in the home.
3. Domestic student who attended high school in the United States.

I also intended to provide a diverse sample and one that could elevate multiple perspectives. I was far more successful in getting a diverse sample of Muslim students who varied widely in terms of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and the kind of Islam they engaged with and how. The Jewish participants were less diverse in all of these ways with little to no diversity in terms of race or ethnicity. I had Muslim participants who were Sunni, Shia, and unaffiliated with any

specific sect of Islam. The Jewish participants were largely Reform or Conservative; I was not able to find an Orthodox participant. It is worth noting that both Orthodox Jews and Shia Muslims constitute a very small minority within groups that are already small minorities in the United States (*Questions & Answers About Muslim Americans*, 2014). All but one of the participants were in-state students, and the majority of them came from the large Jewish or Muslim communities in the state's largest metro area.

Some of the criteria may have led to the sample being less diverse than desired. I discuss why in more depth in the limitations section of this chapter. Purposeful selection of participants allowed me to see a broad picture of how Jewish and Muslim students experience the enactment of Christian privilege on their campus (Creswell, 2009).

Finally, I excluded from my sample anyone who identified as also Christian and whom I would label a cultural Christian. For the purposes of this study, Christian was understood to include any and all denominations under the largest umbrella of Christianity. Schlosser (2003) offers the following definition:

a religious group is considered to be Christian if the members believe in (a) Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and (b) the teachings of the Old and New Testament...Christian groups take communion and celebrate holidays connected with their religious beliefs (e.g., Easter, Christmas). Several groups meet these criteria, including Catholics, Protestants (e.g., Baptist, Lutherans, Methodist, Presbyterians), Eastern Orthodox (e.g., Greek, Russian), and members of other, smaller denominations (e.g., Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Seventh Day Adventists). (Schlosser, 2003, p. 2)

A person was, for the purposes of this study, considered a cultural Christian if he or she celebrates major Christian holidays (i.e. Christmas and Easter) regardless of whether that

celebration is framed as religious or secular. One does not need to believe in or accept any of the religious tenets of Christianity in order to be considered a cultural Christian.

Recruitment. I recruited participants through a variety of methods including contacting student leadership of Jewish and Muslim oriented groups on campus, posting on the Facebook pages of those groups, contacting a student I had a prior acquaintance with, reaching out to my contacts within residence life at MU, and, as mentioned earlier, snowballing sampling. Potential participants and anyone who was helping me connect with potential participants were sent my solicitation (see Appendix C). Students who were interested in participating then contacted me by email, and I emailed them the demographic survey for interview participants (see Appendix E). Once they returned the demographic survey, if they met all of the criteria, we scheduled a mutually agreeable interview time. Participants could select a location of their choice or allow me to reserve a room on campus for the interview. Only one potential participant was rejected after filling out the demographic survey; she had attended high school outside of the United States and so did not fit the criteria.

Participants. Thirteen MU students participated in this study: seven Muslims and six Jews. The sample includes three Jewish women, three Jewish men, three Muslim men, and four Muslim women. All of the Muslims were in-state students; only one of the Jewish students was out-of-state, and he came from a bordering state. The participants came from a range of majors and included two transfer students.

Table 1: Research Participant Summary.

Name	Gender	Age	1st Semester at MU	Religion	Sect/Denomination	Race/ Ethnicity
Ilana	Woman	21	Fall 2012	Judaism	Conservative	White/ Ashkenazi
Joseph	Man	22	Fall 2012	Islam	Sunni	Arab & Middle- Eastern
Shoshana	Woman	21	Fall 2013	Judaism	Reform	White/Ashkenazi
Lindsay	Woman	21	Fall 2012	Judaism	Conservative/Reform	White/Ashkenazi
Sam	Man	20	Fall 2014	Judaism	“Just Jewish”	White/Ashkenazi
Hauwa	Woman	22	Fall 2015	Islam	“Just Muslim”	American- African/American- Nigerian
Trope	Man	21	Fall 2012	Judaism	Conservative	White/Ashkenazi
Simone	Woman	21	Fall 2013	Islam	Sunni	Arab or North African
Zaza	Woman	19	Fall 2014	Islam	Shia	Arab-American
Joey	Man	22	Fall 2012	Judaism	Reform	White
Khaotep	Man	21	Fall 2012	Islam	Sunni	Arab-American
Celine- Hazel	Woman	19	Fall 2014	Islam	Sunni	Palestinian
Tarek	Man	20	Fall 2015	Islam	Sunni	Arab

Participant biographical sketches. Participants were allowed to select a pseudonym though some chose to use their legal names or have me assign them a pseudonym. What follows is a short biographic sketch for each participant. I used as much of their language as possible and created pseudonyms for organizations that are specific to MU.

Ilana. Ilana is a Conservative Jew; she is Ashkenazi and identifies as white. Ilana is a 21-year-old senior majoring in Human Development and Family Studies with a minor in Jewish Studies. She grew up in a heavily Jewish suburb; her family came to the United States between the turn of the last century and 1939. She considers herself culturally observant and attended a private Jewish day school. Ilana is involved on campus with organizations in her major and with

Jewish groups, including the David Project through Hillel and the Jewish Student Union (JSU). At the time of her interview, Ilana was living off campus.

Joseph. Joseph is a Sunni Muslim and identifies as Arab/Middle Eastern. He is a 22-year-old pre-med senior majoring in Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy and is part of a residential college (along with Trope and Zaza). Joseph grew up in a heavily Muslim and Arab suburb. His family came to the United States in the 1970s and 80s from Yemen. He considers himself very practicing and attended a public high school. Joseph is involved with the student senate in his residential college, working with K-12 robotics teams, and is part of the Muslim Student Association (MSA). At the time of his interview, Joseph was living on campus.

Shoshana. Shoshana is a Reform Jew; she is Ashkenazi and identifies as white. Shoshana is a 21-year-old junior majoring in Psychology. She grew up in a heavily Jewish suburb; her family came to the United States in the early 1900s. She considers herself to be very spiritual and practicing and attended a public high school. Shoshana intends to become a rabbi. Shoshana is involved with Greek life and is very involved with Hillel and JSU. At the time of her interview, Shoshana was living off campus.

Lindsay. Lindsay is a Conservative/Reform Jew; she is Ashkenazi and identifies as white. Lindsay is a 21-year-old senior majoring in Special Education. She grew up in a mixed religion suburb; her family came from Poland in the early 20th century. She has become less observant at college and attended a public high school. Lindsay is involved with Greek Life, a global education program through MU's College of Education, and Hillel and JSU. At the time of her interview, Lindsay was living off campus.

Sam. Sam is "just Jewish" but was raised Reform; he is Ashkenazi and identifies as white. Sam is a 20-year-old junior majoring in Computer Science. He grew up in a not especially

Jewish suburb. He describes himself as not typically observant and attended public high school. Joe is very involved with Hillel and JSU. At the time of his interview, Sam was an RA and lived on campus.

Hauwa. Hauwa identifies as “just Muslim” rather than Sunni or Shia; she also describes herself as practicing traditional or orthodox Islam. She identifies as American-African or American-Nigerian. Hauwa grew up in the smallish city adjacent to the university. She is a 22-year-old junior, a transfer student, and is majoring in Advertising, Management, and Media. She is very observant, attends mosque multiple times a week, and attended public high school. Hauwa is involved with a foreign service sorority, the MSA, and The Light Group, a student led initiative to bring together Muslims and non-Muslims in post 9/11 America. Hauwa lives at home with her parents.

Trope. Trope is a Conservative Jew; he is Ashkenazi and identifies as white. Trope is a 21-year-old senior double majoring in Comparative Cultures and Politics and Journalism. He is part of the same residential college as Joseph and Zaza. He grew up in a heavily Jewish suburb; his family came to the United States circa the 1920s. He is mildly observant and attended public high school. Trope is involved with the student senate for his residential college, Hillel, JSU, and the campus Israel advocacy group. At the time of his interview, Trope was an RA and lived on campus.

Simone. Simone is a Sunni Muslim and identifies as Arab/North African. She is a 21-year-old junior majoring in Communication with a concentration in Public Health and Epidemiology. Simone grew up in a heavily Muslim and Arab community outside of the state’s major metro area; her family came to the United States from Yemen. She describes herself as somewhat religious and attended public high school. Simone is currently engaged. Simone is

primarily involved with activities related to her major including serving as an undergraduate research assistant. At the time of her interview, she was living on campus.

Zaza. Zaza is a Shia Muslim and identifies as Arab-American. She is a 19-year-old sophomore majoring in International Relations with a minor in Science, Technology, Environment, and Public Policy. She is part of the same residential college as Joseph and Trope. Zaza grew up in a heavily Muslim and Arab suburb. Her family is Palestinian and moved here from Lebanon around the time she was born. Zaza describes herself as a moderate Muslim and attended public high school. Zaza is involved with MSA, the Arab culture group on campus, the student senate of her residential college, Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), and a sorority specifically for Arab women and other women who support them. At the time of her interview, Zaza was living on campus.

Joey. Joey is a Reform Jew; he identifies as white and is likely Ashkenazi but does not know a lot about where his family came from or when. He is a 22-year-old senior majoring in Hospitality Business. Joey grew up in a small city in an adjacent state with a similarly small Jewish population. Joey attended public high school. He is involved with a Jewish fraternity, organizations and volunteering related to his major, and Hillel. At the time of his interview, Joey was living on campus.

Khaotep. Khaotep is a Sunni Muslim and identifies as Arab-American. He is a 21-year-old senior majoring in Food Industry Management. Khaotep grew up in a heavily Muslim and Arab suburb of Detroit. He is Palestinian, and his family came to the United States from Jordan in the late 1980s. He describes himself as pretty religious but far from perfect and attended public high school. Khaotep is involved with MSA, The Light Group, a historically Black fraternity, a multicultural dialogue group, a black caucus on campus, and several activities

related to his major. At the time of his interview, Khaotep was living off campus though he had served as a diversity assistant (a position like an RA but focused on intercultural issues) on campus in the past.

Celine-Hazel. Celine-Hazel is Sunni Muslim and identifies as Palestinian. She is a 19-year-old sophomore majoring in Biomedical Lab Diagnostics. Until middle school, Celine-Hazel lived in Milwaukee, WI; after that, she lived in a suburb of the small city adjacent to the university where she attended public high school. Her family came from Palestine: her maternal grandparents in the 1950s and her father circa 1980. Celine-Hazel describes herself as not super religious but also as more religiously conservative than most Muslims in college. She is involved with MSA, SJP, a group for her major, and the pre-Physician Assistants Club. Celine-Hazel lives at home with her parents.

Tarek. Tarek is a Sunni Muslim and identifies as Arab. He is a 20-year-old junior. He is currently a Human Biology major but is switching to Kinesiology; he is also in the process of trying to be admitted to the College of Nursing. Tarek is a transfer student, grew up in a heavily Muslim and Arab suburb, and attended public high school. His family came to the United States in the late 20th century from Lebanon. Tarek describes his religiosity as a 6.5 out of 10. Tarek is not yet involved with any co-curricular activities. At the time of his interview, Tarek was living off campus with his cousin, also an MU student.

Interview Protocol. The interview protocol was designed to be administered after a short demographic survey sent via email. The full interview protocol can be seen in Appendix F. The demographic form allowed the interview to be largely focused on college experiences rather than demographic and background information, though each interview did include a short, extemporaneous discussion about racial and ethnic identity. Before students were interviewed

they were given the consent form, which can be seen in Appendix D. Because the study was exempt through IRB, they did not have to sign the consent form but were given the opportunity to ask any questions. All participants consented to be audio recorded.

The interview protocol was designed using Jacob and Furgerson's (2012) 14 basic tips for qualitative interviewing as a foundation. The goal of this kind of interview is to "nurture" the participants "through the storytelling process" in order to "gain insight into lived experiences, learn the perspectives of the individuals participating...and discover the nuances in stories" (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012, p. 1). This is a natural fit because storytelling is the crux of narrative inquiry. I used the existing literature on Christian privilege in higher education to guide the questions. For instance, I used lists of examples of Christian privilege, the manifestations of Christian privilege offered by Blumenfeld, Joshi, and Fairchild (2009), and the places of resistance outlined by Fairchild (2009) to shape the questions (Clark et al., 2002; Schlosser, 2003). Much of the work on Christian privilege and the experiences of Jewish and Muslim students also, either implicitly or explicitly, discusses how contexts differ. With that in mind, I structured the interview to focus on a range of institutional contexts, both inside the classroom and out.

The questions were meant to be largely open ended and move from low-risk questions towards the more "difficult or controversial" questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012, p. 4). The closed ended questions were largely reserved for the demographic survey leaving the interview for questions that have the potential to be "big, expansive questions" that allow the participants to say things I might never have thought to ask about specifically (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012, p. 4). They were meant to be targeted but to also allow me to dig deep "into the experiences and/or

knowledge of the participants in order to gain maximum data from the interviews” (Turner III, 2010, p. 757); this is especially important in a study as small as mine.

Data Collection. All participants were interviewed via a one-time face-to-face interview with me. As mentioned earlier, participants were given the choice to select the location. Interviews ranged from 43 minutes to two hours and 23 minutes, with the average interview time being an hour and 15 minutes (or 75 minutes). The interview data totaled 1,099 minutes in all. All participants received a \$25 Amazon gift certificate following the completion of their interview, and all participants agreed to be available for follow up questions via email.

Data Analysis. Qualitative research is “an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study” (Creswell, 2009, p. 184). With this in mind, I did not transcribe each interview word-for-word in its entirety. Sometimes listening to a recording several times and taking notes rather than doing literal transcription can enhance the researcher’s understanding of the data; I employed that format since it allowed me to be more of a listener than a typer or a reader (S. Weiland, personal communication, October 31, 2014). First, I listened to each interview in its entirety. Then, I went back to listen a second time and summarized important parts using *easytranscript*, an open source transcribing software that automatically marks the recording time as you type. Using the timestamps from the summaries, I listened to parts of each interview a third time, transcribing word-for-word specific quotes I wanted to use in the findings of this study. Finally, I returned to listen, as many times as needed, to parts of individual interviews that I wanted to hear more deeply. I wanted to hear my participants, and this method of interacting with the interview data really allowed for that.

Coding. I first used thematic open coding to approach my data. “In thematic analysis you must make connections among the stories: What is being illuminated? How do the stories connect? What themes and patterns give shape to your data? Coding helps answer these questions” (Glesne, 2011, p. 194). That’s what I wanted to find in my data: stories, themes, and patterns. Coding is necessary because it “is the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information” (Creswell, 2009, p. 186).

Next, after allowing the data to speak its stories, I used the seven categories of Christian privilege from the existing literature I identified in Chapter Three. To review, the seven categories are: the calendar and time off; food; holidays, celebration, and worship; space; curriculum and language; the secularization of Christianity; safety. This served as a kind of axial coding (Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). I then checked the themes I had found through open coding against the seven existing categories to see if any of the new themes could be folded into the existent categories. Some could, and some could not. Using this two pronged approach, I searched “for connecting threads and patterns” between the various themes I identified, both within and without the seven categories, and pulled excerpts from my deep listening to illustrate these themes (Seidman, 2006, p. 125).

I coded my summary notes and direct quotes by hand. Because of the relatively small size of the study, coding by hand was manageable and realistic. Additionally, like the deep listening, coding by hand allowed me to engage more deeply with the data. I assigned each theme I found through open coding as well as the seven named categories a color and tracked the relevant information with highlighting, flags, and extensive handwritten notes. Through this approach my hearing was engaged through deep listening while I both engaged visually and tactilely with the data through coding by hand on hard copy.

Researcher journal and notes. Throughout the data collection and writing stages of this study, I have kept ongoing notes. I have a notebook for jotting thoughts and playing with new ideas as well as a running list of ideas I have on the go on my smartphone. Additionally, I took brief notes during the interviews that I have kept and referred to during the analysis of the data. Journaling about my topic also allowed me to identify where there were gaps in my knowledge and how my positionality played a role in how I was approaching the study and my data (Glesne, 2011).

Conceptual Framework. In exploring recent literature on Christian privilege and analyzing the data, an apt conceptual framework emerged. Ahmadi and Cole's (2015) propose that "while campus climate as a conceptual framework has typically been applied to the campus racial climate," the campus climate concept framework can also be utilized "for understanding the campus climate for religious minority students" (p. 178). They base their framework on the work of Hurtado and colleagues and Milem et al. (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). The campus climate does not exist in a vacuum and interaction with "external and internal forces" are constantly shaping and changing the campus climate (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015, p. 178; Hurtado et al., 1998).

"External forces are represented in two domains: (1) governmental policy, programs, and initiatives; and (2) socio-historical forces" (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015, p. 178). Category one can include local, state, and federal laws and policies as well as court decisions, and "socio-historical forces are events or issues in the large society that influence how people view...diversity in society" (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015, p. 178; Hurtado et al., 1998). These external forces technically take place outside of the campus, but they can be felt within the campus environment nonetheless (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015; Hurtado et al., 1998).

Internal forces, on the other hand, are comprised of five “interconnected dimensions:” four from Hurtado et al.’s (1998) model and a fifth from Milem et al.’s (2005) expansion on Hurtado et al.’s model (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015, p. 179). The five dimensions are:

1. Historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion.
2. Structural diversity.
3. Psychological climate.
4. Behavioral climate.
5. Organizational and structural aspects of the institution. (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015; Hurtado et al., 1998; Milem et al., 2005)

All five dimensions appear in the analysis, but I want to draw particular attention to the fifth dimension. This dimension includes “religious-oriented student centers and student organizations” like Hillel and the Muslim Student Association (MSA) (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015, p. 180; Milem et al., 2005). Since this dimension encompasses religious centers and organizations as well as ostensibly secular aspects of the institution, the fifth dimension is a major aspect of the institution specific dynamics of Christian privilege and interreligious strife. While the campus climate conceptual model is not the only tool I used to analyze and interpret the data, it can be applied to all aspects of the data to better understand the experiences of religious minority students.

Ethical Considerations. I applied for approval of this study, since it involved human subjects, through the Michigan State University Institutional Review Board (IRB); it was approved and considered exempt. The IRB’s approval confirmed that I have in place all necessary precautions to keep my study ethical and protect my participants. All participants were given option of using a pseudonym of their choosing. Additionally, I did not record the full

names of any participants and all data was and is kept on a password protected computer used only by me; all handwritten notes, recording devices, and any other points of data collection have been kept on my person or in a locked cabinet. I have done my best to obscure the identity of the institution and have assigned it as pseudonym as well—Midwest University (MU). Finally, all participants received a copy of the consent form to review, and I made it clear that participation was voluntary, could be terminated by the participant at any time, and that, if an interview ran long, the participant was welcome to reschedule for a second session.

Researcher Positionality. As is probably already clear from the previous chapters, I am a Jew. I was born and raised Jewish in an all Christian community. I have my own history as a non-Christian encountering Christian privilege. One of the challenges of this project has been balancing my own experiences and observations with those of my participants. Additionally, I am both an insider and outsider in this project. For the Jews, I was largely seen as an insider and, even without sharing that information with them, they often assumed I was Jewish. For the Muslims, I was largely seen as an outsider, though participants often assumed I was part of the Christian majority. When participants asked, I did share my own religious affiliation though this typically happened at the end of interviews. I had feared that as a Jew I might be seen by the Muslim participants as a potentially oppositional outsider, but this concern never emerged in any obvious way.

While this mixed insider/outsider perspective could be seen as a weakness, I see this as a strength of the study. I think being able to see some of data as an insider and some as an outsider will help me to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Additionally, because I shared the minority experience with my Muslim participants more than with my Jewish participants but am a Jew, not a Muslim, I came to this study with a particular kind outsider within perspective

(“Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought,” n.d.). Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2013) offer a number of ways they have approached “insider” research. One potential “way of managing insider experience is to incorporate it into the research: including the researcher as one of the participants and treating her as having the same status as any other participant” (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013, p.253). I did not go so far as to include myself as a full participant like any other, in large part because my undergraduate experience ended over a decade ago and happened at another type of institution in another state. However, I did unbalance the two groups slightly to account for my own voice. There were six Jewish and seven Muslim participants, and the extra Muslim participant was a woman. The intention was that adding an extra female Muslim participant would amplify participant voices so that my own story did not overpower theirs.

Limitations. I see six primary limitations to my study: researcher positionality, recruitment methods, institutional selection, participant selection criteria, who actually was in the sample, and lack of generalizability. I discussed my positionality in the previous section. Since I recruited participants in large part through the JSU and the MSA, I was more likely to get participants who were actively involved with their religion on campus. This means I may not have reached Muslims and Jews who were not affiliated with a formal community on their campus, which is certainly a limitation as unaffiliated folks may experience being a religious minority and the role of Christian privilege differently.

I selected my institution partially based on convenience. Additionally, while it is a very large, public, research university with very high research activity which, therefore, represents what many Americans’ idea of college is, it is not representative of all U.S. colleges by any means (Affordability, 2013). Additionally, using the word “practicing” as the modifier for Jew or

Muslim unintentionally made for a mismatched sample in terms of religiosity. Jews, in part because the traditions within Judaism vary by level of observance, interpreted “practicing” in multiple ways. However, my Muslim participants had a much more fixed idea of what “practicing” meant. The result was that the Muslims, while not more involved with their religious community, were far more observant than the Jews.

As mentioned earlier, the way I recruited participants may have affected who ended up in the sample. There were also other limitations to the sample due to other factors. Of note, all of the Jews identified as white, and none of the Muslims did. There were no orthodox Jews in the sample, and Sunni Muslims were overrepresented. As expected based on the state demographics, the majority of the Muslim participants were of Arab/North African extraction, and all of the Jews either knew (5) or guessed (1) that they were Ashkenazi. Finally, a qualitative study this small may not be generalizable (Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2011; Miles et al., 2014).

The Role of Christian Privilege in the Study Execution

Unexpectedly, Christian privilege played a noticeable role in the actual execution of this study. Christianity, as the privileged religion in the United States, occupies a position of power. I, as the research and interviewer, also occupied a position of power in relation to my participants. This, coupled with a pervasive assumption that all Americans are Christian, meant that my participants, with only a few exceptions, assumed I was Christian. They used Christian terms to explain Islam or Judaism to me such as saying rabbi was a Jewish pastor or an imam was a Muslim priest.

Interestingly and even more unexpectedly, this language pattern continued even when students were aware of that I am a Jew. From Muslim participants this made sense; Christianity, as the dominant religion in our nation, is a shared religious language even though it might be

neither of our native tongue. However, the Jewish participants did the same thing; even when they knew the conversation was one between two Jews, they still made sure to explain Judaism using the language of Christianity.

Christian privilege was so pervasive that it was part of this study meant to study it. It could not be escaped even when there were no Christians present. This made some sense when participants assumed I was a Christian but became a clear symbol of Christianity's dominance when, between Jews, Christianity was still the common language.

Finally, for many of the Muslim participants as well as for some of the authors whose work I cite (Eck, 2001; Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012), Judaism and Christianity were often conflated. Eck (2001) writes about the longstanding position of Christianity and Judaism as though they were one and the same, ignoring the reality of American Jews particularly prior to the last 50-60 years. This conflation is another symptom of Christian privilege. While Jews have certainly begun to hold a more privileged position in American society than they have previously, the conflation of Judaism with Christianity has more to do with Christianity appropriation of Judaism and its beliefs and texts than with the actual lived experiences of Jews.

CHAPTER FIVE: LIVING A (MINORITY) RELIGIOUS LIFE

I'm not saying I'm not supportive of my religion, but I'm first and foremost a student. I feel like I push my religion back because that's just how it is; it's a Christian world.

That's just how it has to be, and I feel like I've accepted it. (Lindsay, Jewish woman)

In this brief statement, Lindsay expressed that being a college student and being a Jew are not always compatible. The MU environment was designed for Christians since it is a "Christian world," and Lindsay had clearly resigned herself to this situation, going so far as to say "that's just how it has to be." Ahmadi and Cole (2015) offer a description of Christian privilege in higher education that syncs up with what my participants said about their experiences at MU.

In institutions of higher education, Christian students enjoy a number of daily advantages including: widely accepted positive portrayals of their faith in the mainstream media, privilege in the institution's calendar...privilege in on-campus dining options...state and federal holidays often coincide with Christian holidays...while...non-Christian students must negotiate conflicts between their studies and their spiritual practices. (p. 175)

This is congruent with the literature discussed in Chapter Three. "The conscious and subconscious advantages often afforded to members of the Christian faith have been identified as Christian privilege and can be seen on [sic] many colleges and universities," including MU (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015, p. 174).

In this chapter and the next, I identify the many ways that Christian privilege manifests in the lives of Muslim and Jewish undergraduates at MU, and I discuss the ways in which the participants talked about Christian privilege and their lives as Jews or Muslims. In this chapter, I first discuss the particular role of race and racial/ethnic identity in the lives of the participants. Next, I explore the four manifestations of Christian privilege that are part of living a minority religious life at MU. The seven categories are: the calendar and time off; food; holidays,

celebration, and worship; and space and structure. Some of those categories turned out to loom larger than others in lives the participants, both collectively and individually.

Throughout the analysis, I use Ahmadi and Cole's (2015) campus climate conceptual framework, described in detail in Chapter Four, to understand how these various factors contribute to the overall campus experience for Muslim and Jewish undergraduates at MU. By using Ahmadi and Cole's (2015) five dimensional campus climate framework, I am able to parse how both external and internal factors are part of the role that Christian privilege plays in the undergraduate experiences of Muslim and Jewish students as well as to better understand their overall college experience. Throughout the interviews, institutional and larger environmental issues, particularly at the national level, were identified as important in the experiences of both the Jewish and Muslim participants.

Race and Racial/Ethnic Identity

At the beginning of each interview, I had a brief, unscripted conversation with each participant about how they identified racially, and, because of the complexity of identities particularly for American Jews and Muslims, the answers fell outside of the most widely understood U.S. categories. Also, despite the common conflation of race and ethnicity, for some of the participants race and ethnicity were distinct from one another. All six Jews identified as white; none of the Muslims did. However, without additional information, at least two of the Muslim participants would likely be read as white, and at least one of the Jews would likely not be read as white on first encounter. Tarek, a Muslim man, said that, "it's kind of strange. I don't really pass for being Arabic or look Arabic...[people] do not assume I'm Arabic or Muslim. I get Italian...Spanish..."

All seven Muslim participants used a word or words that would be more likely to be understood as ethnic, cultural, or national rather than typical U.S. racial identifiers. These words included Arab, Arabic, North African, Yemeni, Palestinian, American-African, and American-Nigerian. Five of the six Jews claimed an Ashkenazi Jewish ethnic identity, meaning their families likely came to the United States from central or eastern Europe; the sixth Jewish participant only identified as racially white and religiously Jewish. The Muslim participants understood themselves to be people of color; the Jews did not. Because religion, culture, race, and ethnicity can be difficult or impossible to completely deconstruct, it is important to keep in mind these complex identities. Certainly, for the participants, all of their identities are with them all the time, and so some of their experiences might be due to a combination of Christian privilege and other social forces. And because both non-Christians, particularly Jews, and people of color have a “historical legacy of...exclusion” from higher education, this is particularly relevant to the campus climate framework (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015, p. 179; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).

The Calendar and Time Off

It is “not uncommon to find...an academic calendar where the institution is closed or classes cancelled on Christian holy days,” and MU is one those institutions (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015). Khaotep, a Muslim man, noted that Christians not only have their holidays off but also typically do not have to attend work or school on Sundays, the Christian Sabbath. Zaza, a Muslim woman, echoed a similar sentiment,

There’s always been Christmas break. There’s never Eid break so I always need to plan out...I only have three absences in this class and one of those absences has to go for Eid.

I'm really happy when they cross over because then I don't have to use one of my absences.

Shoshana, a Jewish woman, concurred that, "we don't get religious holidays off except for Christian holidays...for Jewish holidays I have to miss classes." Lindsay, another Jewish woman, thought that MU doesn't take non-Christians into consideration when scheduling for the academic year but also feels like "people just accept that." She repeated her sentiment that "it's a Christian world" where Jews and other non-Christians do not have their "big holidays" off, and "yet Christmas is always off."

Some students encountered far more issues with the calendar and taking time off for religious celebration than others. For example, Trope, a Jewish man, was a resident assistant (RA) and needed Friday nights off from duty (as an RA) because he spends it at Hillel celebrating Shabbat (the Sabbath) and has never been denied this time off. However, this was true, in large part, because his supervisor was someone who is particularly attuned to issues of equity, power, and privilege. This very specific situation allowed Trope to feel like his campus workplace could accommodate his needs as a Jew (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015). However, Trope was also aware that Christian holidays dominate the calendar with a winter break that "for a long time was called Christmas break" and is still scheduled around Christmas as well as that "on Easter Sunday the university is pretty much closed." Trope identified that "taking a break for Christmas is, like, major Christian privilege...Muslims don't get a break for Ramadan." Hauwa, a Muslim woman, confirmed this, saying, "they say winter break, but we know it's Christmas break."

Sam, another Jewish man who was also an RA, felt some obligation to accommodate his already accommodated Christian peers. He worked in a residence hall that stays open over the winter break, and he volunteered to work over Christmas. He always offered to do that because

he wanted “people to be able to go home for Christmas” even when the institution did not even offer him the same accommodation.

There are also calendar concerns at MU during the school year. Several Jewish participants mentioned the big, university-wide study abroad fair being cross scheduled with a major religious holiday a few years ago but also noted that this issue had been addressed and not repeated since. Because of the historical legacy of exclusion for non-Christians, it seemed that until the Jewish students, in conjunction with the Hillel staff, made a fuss, university administrators were not checking for religious scheduling conflicts outside of major Christian holidays (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015). Trope described this longstanding approach to the calendar as “the systemic approach through a university calendar that doesn’t accommodate for all holidays.” Joseph, a Muslim man, noted that many annual events are scheduled without regard to non-Christian religions; Saturday and Sunday are automatically days off, but on Friday, the Muslim Sabbath, there are classes scheduled, and “if you can’t take them, oh well.” He struggled with “something as basic as I’m going to have miss prayer...because the professor isn’t going to let me be ten minutes late every Friday,” and this means there will be some classes that, because of the timing, some students will never be able to take.

Four participants specifically addressed having to miss class and/or having to attend on major Jewish or Muslim holidays. These experiences all seemed negative to me, but the participants’ representation of it and understanding of how MU policy came into play varied greatly. Joseph told me, “I think in most of my classes they won’t excuse you for religious reasons...for example, this past Eid, I had an exam and had to go to the earlier prayer to make the exam.” He reported that his syllabi say that an absence is an absence no matter the reason though the students are often allowed to drop the lowest test grade which could, in theory, be a

zero from a day missed due to religious observance. His understanding was that unless a student fills out a grievance form with the student government and the registrar's office, one cannot miss class for religious reason and that even that grievance form is new. As a Muslim, Joseph felt that he was forced to choose between his religion and class, and that while some professors were understanding, others told him there was nothing they could do and would not work with him on this. Lindsay shared a similar sentiment, saying that with professors it varies how and whether religious needs are accommodated. She shared, looking kind of downcast,

I'm in college. I have to follow the college calendar now, and it is sad...I just kind of gave up and was like, okay, I have to go to class. I can't miss because it's not excused, and that's kind of hard with professors...lately I haven't even asked...but I've kind of given up trying to ask.

Lindsay felt she could not ask for accommodation, and no one was offering it. The few times she asked, she was permitted to miss but found making up the work overwhelming and feels like the subliminal message is that non-Christian religious holidays are not a legitimate reason to miss class.

Hauwa went ahead and asked to miss class for major Muslim holidays. "I have to tell my professor I can't come in because it's a holiday, but they wouldn't know what holiday." She disliked having to miss class because it is not cancelled but noted that "it never is." Sam had a markedly different experience from Joseph in terms of class syllabi. Sam said that, "one thing I've noticed...in every professor's syllabus they include the clause at the end that if you have to miss class because of religious activity, this is allowed." This information meant that Sam was more comfortable missing class for religious reasons than some of his peers.

Ilana, a Jewish woman, told a conflicting story about her experiences dealing with the academic calendar, classes, and religious observance. She took a far more assertive stance than any of the other participants and insisted she had not encountered any issues while describing a pretty clear issue.

Classes on Jewish holidays have been no problem. There was a...grad student who was teaching a class last semester...she told me I couldn't skip for the Jewish holiday...I politely went up to her...I said that I would be happy to show up at your house on Christmas Eve to collect my iClicker³...so...I've never really had any problems as a Jew. The teacher sent out an email saying students could miss class for religious reasons. She turned out to be Jewish as well, demonstrating that Christian privilege can be enacted even by non-Christians. Ilana also missed several sessions of her freshman writing class, a class with no absences allowed though her absences were excused. Ilana was absolutely certain that "there is a policy if you have a holiday you're allowed to miss class." Ilana's understanding was closest to the formal MU policy, but clearly the psychological climate, and perhaps also the behavioral climate, was markedly different for different participants.

Jewish students, like Ilana, had more structural support for standing up for themselves around issues like missing class for religious observance. This was largely due to the presence of Hillel, which I discuss at length later in this chapter and in the next chapter. It is worth noting that Lindsay, the Jewish student who does not feel comfortable missing class, told me that, "Hillel has really helped. Their job is to advocate for Jewish students, and so with regards to missing class for Jewish holidays, they have a letter that goes to professors, and they have an

³ "An iClicker is a radio frequency device that allows a student to anonymously respond to questions your instructor poses in class" (Hawaii, n.d., para. 1).

arrangement with the university about that.” There was no indication of any similar education, advocacy, or arrangements for Muslim students from any of my participants.

Food

Twelve of the 13 participants discussed food, particularly in the on campus dining halls, as a place of the enactment of Christian privilege, and they described how food offerings that do not take religious dietary restrictions into consideration play a role in their lives and/or the lives of people close to them. Joey, a Jewish man, was the only one who did not express this, and he was clear that he neither keeps kosher generally nor kosher for Passover. Yet, even Joey goes to Hillel for special meals.

There was significant overlap in the issues facing the Muslim and Jewish participants. There were also places where experiences diverged. Tarek said, “there’s only so much that I can personally eat...I try to avoid eating things that are not halal, but I still do because you get bored of eating the same stuff, and if I’m going to try and eat strictly halal...I’m not trying to lose a...ton of weight.” Even living off campus, Tarek struggles with eating halal and stocks his freezer with halal meat from a butcher in his hometown. Celine-Hazel does not eat only *sabiha* meat or halal so is not affected by the dining options in the way she noted some of her peers are.

Zaza eats only halal meat and chicken. She thinks “the cafeteria needs to do a better job...they’ve been doing a good job with vegetarian options...but they used to have fish all the time...now there’s no more fish...that was my only source of protein pretty much.” Last year, it was not such an issue for her because she went home every weekend; now she eats off campus at halal restaurants to get meat because without it she feels weak. Her father has even given her permission to eat non-halal meat and encourages her to eat kosher meat as a substitute for halal, but she cannot bring herself to do it. Whether or not kosher meat is an adequate substitute for

halal/*sabiha* meat is a question with many answers. Zaza wishes “they would present more kosher and halal options.” She notes that the quick takeout meal option had “a sign that said kosher and halal upon request, and when I asked about it, they said they stopped bringing in halal because it was too expensive.” She also noted that, because of her Muslim beliefs, she particularly values *cleansiness*, a word several of my Muslim participants used to describe being clean in a religious context, and so she chooses to eat at a dining hall across campus from her residence hall because it is cleaner than the one where she lives. I interviewed Zaza shortly before the beginning of Lent, and she noted that she knows she’s “going to start seeing fish because of Lent” and was really excited about that. She was highly aware that the dining hall goes out of its way to accommodate Christians, sometimes Jews, and rarely or never Muslims. After all, “they had a huge Christmas dinner...and then when Eid happened we didn’t have anything.”

Khaotep, who lived on campus for his first three years of college, said that, “Freshman year it was terrible. Everything had pork in it, and they would never know if there was pork in it or not, and...I can’t eat pork, obviously...that was rough...but I never knew who I could talk to about it.” Simone echoed this same complaint, “everything is pork, pork, pork...sometimes I would eat soup only to discover it had bacon in it,” and she shared Khaotep’s concern about food labeling. Throughout her first year she regularly left comments about this in the comment box. His sophomore year, Khaotep finally “got tired of it” and spoke to the boss of the dining hall, and “next thing I knew, like two or three weeks later, everything was labeled...I trust it now.” Khaotep connected this to religious literacy, which I discuss at length in the next chapter. He said, “I don’t think they intentionally wanted it to be a bad experience at first, but maybe they weren’t aware that people were going through that struggle.”

Certainly, advocacy, by students or staff, seemed to shift food offerings. For example, the quick takeout meal option that Zaza mentioned still has a kosher option, in large part due to Hillel and the Jewish Student Union's (JSU) agitation. Trope told me with pride that "the Jewish Student Union was working really hard with dining services to implement more kosher options" but also kosher takeout options, and "they are there, visible with a sign in four locations on campus." Simone still has not found a good food situation on campus. For her, "it's definitely hard to find something to eat. Sometimes I'll just eat one meal a day because I can't find something that doesn't contain pork or alcohol...even cookies contain alcohol."

Another issue raised by several participants, both Jewish and Muslim, was cross contamination of food with forbidden foods like pork. Trope identifies dining as the most problematic aspect of living on campus. He eats kosher style, meaning generally that he does not eat pork or shellfish or mix meat, including poultry, with dairy. He notes that "a big problem is cross contamination." He, like Khaotep, but with more authority because of his role as an RA, is "frequently telling the managers [of the dining hall] to the point where they know my name...that when you're serving a pork product and you have cross contaminated the utensils...I can't eat that, and there's a lot of students that can't." Joseph shared similar food concerns in terms of his eating halal:

There are slight difficulties on campus...like when you're at the deli line at a cafeteria and someone just picked up ham to serve...you ask them to change gloves, and they look at you like what hell are you talking about, what's the big deal. I have to go out of my way to explain that you touched ham, I want turkey. It doesn't work out if you touch both...eating would sometimes be...challenging.

Joseph expressed that even asking for gloves to be changed feels like an imposition, in large part because the workers do not understand why he is asking for it. In Joseph's opinion, "that's where Christian privilege definitely comes into play...most Christians don't follow any special diet...they're the majority...but people have complained about [the religious dining issues] in the past, and it's very slow in terms of getting actual changes done." Additionally, Joseph pointed out that other non-Christian religious groups, like Hindus or Sikhs, have dietary restrictions that no one is even talking about at MU. Lindsay also shared Joseph's concern that lack of knowledge or training on the part of the dining hall workers means that servers often do not know exactly what is in what they are serving and that, even in dining halls with a kosher station, often no one is there serving. Lindsay feels "like in a way people are afraid to serve [the kosher food]...they don't want to make a mistake." Both Joseph and Lindsay were careful to note that this was likely not the fault of the individual workers but more a management level problem.

Trope told me that "a lot of Jewish students move off campus because they didn't have a good experience" with on campus dining. He has heard people say that "if they could move back on campus, they would but it's just the dining." Jewish students who keep kosher and Muslim student who eat halal move off campus in part because then "they don't have to pay for the meal they can't ever use." Joseph echoed the same concern, "I have a lot of Muslim friends on campus who just don't really eat campus food. They're getting charged for it," but they are not eating it. Hauwa, who lives at home with her parents, "sees the struggle" of students who are trying to eat halal in the MU dining halls. It is hard for them, and they "have to go downtown to an actual meat store." Her own situation is fairly easy because she only eats halal at home, and she lives at home. In her words, "I don't have to worry about food." However, she has close friends, one in particular, whom Hauwa goes out of her way to take to the meat store downtown "because

campus didn't provide for her. She has to use money from her own pocket to purchase extra food because she can't get it" on campus.

Sam, who himself does not keep kosher or kosher for Passover, noted that for his girlfriend, who does keep kosher, the experience of living and dining on campus "was a bit tough." She, as Trope said students in her situation often do, moved to an off-campus apartment. Sam noted that even with some kosher options on campus it can be difficult "because the kosher stations are only open certain times of the day," only in some dining halls, and only at some meals. In our conversation, Sam and I concluded that a student who ate *glatt kosher*, or the strictest form of keeping kosher, could not eat anything in the MU dining halls and that might make MU an impossible college to attend; this is certainly one explanation for the dearth of Orthodox Jews in this study. The students who struggled least or saw the most positive accommodation were also the least observant in terms of dietary restrictions. Shoshana, who does not keep kosher normally but does keep kosher for Passover, was "blown away" when she discovered the kosher station in her dining hall her first day. She feels like MU "is such an open minded campus," but then backed up to note that that might be her perception because she doesn't keep kosher.

Both the Muslim Student Association (MSA) and Hillel provide halal and kosher food respectively. However, as I discuss later in this chapter and in the next chapter, the differences between the two organizations means that there is more structural support for Jews who keep kosher than for Muslims who eat halal. Students who keep kosher "like to come to Hillel on Friday nights because it's a nice home cooked meal that is kosher that they don't have to worry about," according to Sam. He also noted that Hillel is looking at expanding their food offerings "to help supplement the experience for [Jewish] MU students."

Passover. The only non-Christian holiday that came up repeatedly in the interviews in terms of food was Passover, or *Pesach*. Keeping kosher for Passover has an additional set of more complex dietary restrictions, and many American Jews who do not keep kosher generally do keep kosher for Passover. (I am one of those Jews.) This largely came up in interviews with Jewish participants, but Joseph noted that he has observed MU accommodating Jews during Passover. He has never experienced Ramadan “on campus during school”; Ramadan has been in the summer for the whole time Joseph has been at MU. He expressed that he is “curious how they would accommodate Ramadan.” I suspect that had I conducted this study seven or eight years ago or a few years into the future, both situations where Ramadan would be during the academic year, food and Ramadan accommodations would have been a more frequent subject in the interviews.

The Jewish students in this study had divergent experiences regarding Passover and the dining halls. Trope was thrilled to discover in his first year, upon returning home from celebrating the first two days of Passover, that “they had completely re-outfitted a section for Passover food which was really surprising...it was important in feeling comfortable.” He thinks the dining halls have done a good job with Passover food during his time at MU.

Other students had more mixed experiences with Passover in the dining halls. Shoshana said that “the matzah ball soup is not actually kosher for Passover...Why do it if it’s not kosher?” She assumed it was kosher for Passover, but it was not and in a way that would not be immediately obvious. When she was living on campus, she “had very limited options during Passover.” Jews who keep kosher for Passover have to fend for themselves during that holiday.

Ilana, who does not keep kosher except during Passover, keeps a fairly strict version of kosher for Passover. She goes back to her home town to buy her groceries, and her grandmother

prepares eight days of food for Ilana to stock her fridge with. However, “keeping kosher for Passover in the dorms, that was difficult.” She understood that could not bring outside food into the dining hall. However, she did try to have some meals there,

I was willing to eat fruit and vegetables...I would eat a piece of matzah...but only on a paper plate, and they would not give me a paper plate...I was, like, okay, so you want me to use a napkin, and they were, like, yeah go for it, and I was, like, that’s not happening...[the manager] got me a takeout container...every single day I was given a hard time about getting a plate...where the matzah was kept was in the same box thingy as the bread. They’re uneducated. I totally respect that, and they’re respecting me by giving me matzah. I just won’t eat it [when it’s been cross contaminated with the leavened bread].

Ilana noted that even with special foods for Passover, cross contamination was still an issue. For example, “they had hardboiled eggs...but they were in the same serving things as the ham.”

Conversely, Lindsay, who only sometimes keep kosher for Passover and engages in a version that is less stringent than Ilana’s, thinks “it’s actually easier keeping [kosher for Passover] on campus in the dining halls. There’s more selection.” For Lindsay, having the food readily available made it more likely she would make choices that fit into her level of Passover observance.

For Passover and otherwise, students who have religious dietary restrictions struggled in the dining hall. This issue intensified for students who were more observant. This issue also seemed to be harder for Muslim students to navigate without a significant structural support like Hillel.

Holidays. Celebration, and Worship

In the interviews, Muslim students largely discussed prayer while Jewish students primarily talked about holidays. Joey went to Hillel to celebrate holidays and implied that perhaps that was the only place to do so on or near campus. Tarek tried to pray five times a day; he struggled with when and where, which I discuss further in the next section on space.

Khaotep prays five times a day. He prays between classes, and often needs to leave right after class to pray. He uses an app on his phone to sound the call to prayer, but when he first came to MU he “was actually afraid” about whether he would be able to pray or attend mosque. He does find the MU schedule to be a concern because prayer is his “main practice.” Celine-Hazel shared this concern about the incompatibility of the MU college student schedule and life with her prayer needs as a Muslim. Khaotep also attends Friday prayer; “it’s around twelve or one o’clock.” This has been a concern for him while working internships in the summer; he always worries about how his employers will feel about him needing to take the time away on Fridays.

Celine-Hazel, a Muslim woman who does not wear a headscarf, has been working on praying five times a day and has made it her practice since last Ramadan. However, when she’s at MU “it’s really hard” because she does not wear a headscarf. Without the headscarf (or hijab) to identify her as a Muslim, she does not feel comfortable praying in public, particularly without a group. However, she also chooses not to wear a headscarf for similar reasons related to not wanting to draw attention, particularly negative attention, to herself for being different. Celine-Hazel experiences not wearing a headscarf as somewhat isolating from other Muslim women

since they have no way to identify her as a fellow Muslim. She wants to approach hijabi⁴ Muslim women, especially groups of them, but feels like she is out of the clique because she does not wear a hijab. Yet, the cost of wearing the headscarf, for Celine-Hazel, at MU, outweighs the benefits.

Simone also ran into issues at the intersection of religious practice and space. She described the following about her experience living with a non-Muslim roommate,

I had to lay down rules with her...I'm Muslim...I can't have boys in the room, and if you do have boys in the room please let me know because I will most likely not be wearing my hijab, and, of course, they can't see me without my hijab, and if you plan to have a guy sleep over I'll figure something else out or crash with a friend. She didn't really respect that...she would leave her underwear all over the floor. I pray five times a day so I would need a clean space.

Simone wanted to have the traditional college experience of having a roommate, someone she'd be friends with throughout college and beyond. However, the psychological and behavioral climate in her living space made that impossible (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015).

Simone prays five times a day, tries "to fast every Monday and Thursday like the Prophet did," eats a "date every day because that's also...a routine of the Prophet," and wears a hijab and covering. She does not wear pants; she wears long dresses. She said of her practice of Islam, "it's been easy...I keep to myself." Unlike Celine-Hazel, Simone is identifiably Muslim at first glance because of the way she dresses. This both sets her apart from her peers and empowers her to engage in religious activities, like prayer, in public. She said, "I take a mat with me, and I pray

⁴ Hijabi means "a woman that wears the hijab," a woman who covers her head and hair typically with a headscarf and was used frequently by participants to describe girls and women who wear the hijab (Anonymous, 2015, para. 2).

wherever I can. I'm sure it makes other people uncomfortable, but it doesn't make me."

However, like most of the Muslim participants, Simone found finding the time to pray to be difficult with her class and work schedule. Hauwa echoed the same concern. So did Joseph. He said, "it's definitely hard...Muslims pray five times a day, and that's difficult to do sometimes when you're having classes or you have office hours or you have to meet with a club." Early on in college, Joseph was careful about displaying his Islam. For example, he would go off to pray before going out with friends but would not say where he was going. When asked, he would just say he was getting dressed. He did not want to hold up his, primarily Christian, peers and felt pressured to rush or skip prayer. Unlike many students, Joseph found it easier to practice his religion while studying abroad in Turkey, a Muslim majority country where there was always a place to pray and to wash for prayer.

Several of the Muslim participants also encountered accusations and suspicion that their participation in Islam was not necessarily voluntary. Hauwa addressed this specifically in regards to wearing the hijab or headscarf, "Obviously I'm an adult. I have the choice to do whatever I want. I could easily leave the house and then take off my scarf...I choose to do this. It's not like someone forced me to." Joseph also encountered peers questioning whether his adherence to a devout form of Islam was something he wanted, particularly around alcohol which I discuss in more depth in the next chapter.

Several Jewish participants encountered barriers to practicing around Chanukah and the lighting of the menorah (or chanukiah). Trope said that he has been part of "working with residence hall regulations to allow for the lightings of...Chanukah candles." Ilana has an electric menorah as a work around. As with missing classes for holidays, students who felt empowered to ask and knew whom to ask got more accommodation. Trope, in part because of his role as an

RA, knew that it was worth asking for an exception for the lighting of Chanukah candles since it is a religious observance. He also noted that celebrating Shabbat, which he does at Hillel, is an important part of his practice of Judaism.

Shoshana, Joey, and Sam seemed to struggle least with observing Judaism at MU. This is due, in large part, to Joey and Sam not being particularly observant, and Shoshana being deeply engaged with Reform Judaism, a stream within Judaism that emphasizes engaging in practices that are meaningful to the individual. For example, she makes “little decisions according to Jewish law,” is working to bring more “purposeful Jewish events” to Hillel, has relations only with people she really cares about and loves—not just one night stands – and wears clothes she is comfortable in and that her grandmother, if she were still alive, would approve. These are all real and meaningful practices, but they are also largely invisible and easy to integrate into the larger Christian dominated society. Even Ilana, who thought of herself as more Jewish than many of the other Jews at MU, identified Shabbat dinners as a primary aspect of her practice, again something that is easy to integrate into the Christiancentric or secular world and something that happens at Hillel.

Lindsay, who seemed to be the participant who struggling most with her own religious identity, talked primarily about holidays and celebrating them with her family. She, unlike the other Jews in the study, did not find a home at Hillel. She liked “to go home for the major Jewish holidays” in part because she found her Judaism difficult to center in her life at MU. At MU where she was not surrounded by other Jews, she took a step back from her Judaism.

Both the Jewish and the Muslim participants thought that MU offered little to no recognition of their holidays. Khaotep said that he hasn’t seen MU wish anyone Happy Eid, and

he thinks they should. Both the Jews and Muslims talked about talking about and teaching about their religion as part of their practice at MU.

Space and Structure

Access to space to practice one's religion and to be in community with one's co-religionists was a major factor in how the participants experienced MU. For the Jews, the literal, physical space of Hillel, which has a large and very nice building a few blocks from campus, was pivotal. Joey who has "been very involved with Hillel all four years" thinks that Hillel gives me "that sense of a second community, a second home." The MSA served a similar purpose but is not a literal physical space. Hauwa found space for herself with the MSA but also expressed that she did not want to limit herself to MSA. Trope noted, however, that "in terms of symbolism...old uses of crosses in...architecture and art" are still present and that "Christian privilege is not needing a Jewish student center or a Muslim student center."

Joseph had previously been the vice president of the MSA. He envisioned the MSA as a "space for Muslims to feel comfortable and discuss issues they feel are happening on campus and to have a voice...a space to communicate with other Muslims," but he also noted that "some say it's just place where you can find your spouse...call it the Muslim Spouse Association." Either way, the MSA serves as a space for important conversations in community for Muslims. Joseph also noted the visible difference between the spaces, both literal and figurative, for Muslims and Jews at MU. The "Jewish Student Union, for example, their events are grand. They always have a lot going on. There's a really strong connection with Hillel on the campus," but the local mosque, which is technically closer to campus than Hillel, has both limited communication with and connection to MU.

The literal physical space of Hillel was important to most of the Jewish participants. During orientation Sam visited Hillel and had lunch with the staff and his cousin, a current MU student. On move in day his first year, Trope's parents took him to a Hillel open house. Trope said about Hillel, "it supports me. It supports other Jewish students...the mission of Hillel on campus...is to be both a physical space as well as an organization...it provides Jewish students with community." Hillel employs a number of paid staff members, sponsors the Jewish Student Union (JSU) as the campus student organization, and provides Jewish students with a range of opportunities including internships, professional development, and study abroad opportunities. Hillel "has been helpful in university relations" and the Hillel staff works with the MU administration. Hillel also offers rides to Hillel events making the space even more accessible than it might otherwise be. Sam told me that Hillel even "offers the penicillin hotline" where "they'll bring you matzah ball soup if you're sick." In fact, Sam saw that having Hillel as a place to go was something "unique to being Jewish." Shoshana felt a sense of religion and spirituality when she walked into Hillel and saw the kosher food and the sanctuary. For Ilana, Hillel was a place to find friends, Jewish friends. She also spent a lot of time with the Hillel staff. Ilana thinks "being a Jew at MU is easy if you surround yourself by Jews." Trope saw the local mosque as serving the same purpose for Muslim students as Hillel does for Jewish students, but Joseph made it clear that is not the case.

Lindsay, the only Jewish participant who was not actively involved with Hillel at the time of the interviews, uses her summers to explore her Judaism in other kinds of Jewish spaces like a Jewish nonprofit and a Jewish Community Center summer camp. However, she found those opportunities through Hillel. Hillel has "a lot of resources" according to Lindsay. Additionally,

even though Lindsay's current involvement with Hillel was minimal, she felt like MU Hillel had "really helped advocate" for her and "for other Jewish students."

Some participants found space for themselves in Greek life, while others found that Greek life was a place where there was no space for them at all. Joey joined the same Jewish fraternity that his father belonged to at another university some 30 years ago, where Joey felt like he "fit in." Zaza created space within Greek life at MU at the intersection of her cultural and religious identity. She is one of the founding mothers of an Arab interest sorority which has 13 members so far and is philanthropically focused. While not all members are Arabs and not all Arabs are Muslim, the sorority has been a place Zaza can live her Muslim identity more fully. Eventually, she hopes to have a house for the sorority, giving them a literal space. Shoshana was very involved with her sorority, which was about 50% Jewish women and "has Jewish Women International as one of its philanthropies." Unlike Joey's fraternity, Shoshana's sorority is not explicitly Jewish.

For Muslim participants, the biggest issue they voiced was around space for prayer and preparing for prayer. However, Simone, who lives in a residence hall with communal bathrooms, expressed an additional concern where, in her own living space, she has "to cover up to go to the bathroom or go take a shower" because there are men in the hall. Tarek prefers to pray at home "although you can pray anywhere that's clean." He told me, "I could pray right here if I wanted to if I knew the direction [towards Mecca], but I feel kind of uncomfortable praying...in the open like that...I might offend somebody that isn't open minded...I don't want to take that chance...that risk." So, Tarek engages in his religious practices at home on his own. It is difficult for him to find space to pray on campus, and he was concerned that he would not be able to focus on his prayers because he would be "focusing on what everybody else is probably thinking

about” him. Khaotep agreed that finding space on campus to pray is “more difficult than easy.” He was aware of one of the two prayer rooms on campus but pointed out that the building it is in closes early. He does most of his praying at the nearby mosque because otherwise he might just have to find someplace where no one is, like a stairwell. Joseph was aware of both prayer rooms and felt fortunate to have them but also remarked, with sarcasm, that “there’s always in between bookshelves at the library and things like that. I make do.” There is a need for more prayer space on campus. Even one’s own room, as demonstrated by Simone’s issues in the previous section, might not be a viable space for prayer. Trope said that, as an RA, he has encountered roommate conflicts around prayer, specifically Muslim prayer.

Celine-Hazel expressed similar sentiments while also expressing concern for the women she knows who wear the headscarf and are willing to “go and make *wudu* (the ritual washing before prayer) in that bathroom” which means they are washing their feet in the sinks and garnering some attention from non-Muslim women. This group of women frequently reserve a room in the library for both studying and prayer. She, too, was aware of one of the prayer rooms on campus, but it is out of the way for her. With only a 20-minute break between classes, there is not enough time for her to pray and then get to her next class on time. Hauwa also talked about reserving a room with friends in the library to study and pray. Hauwa was aware of both prayer rooms on campus and told me that she’s “happy that MU was able to accommodate that to us.” Like many participants in the study, Hauwa expressed gratitude for very little in terms of accommodation, celebration, or acceptance, but she also talked about times of stress and frustration when she could not find anywhere to pray. This is particularly stressful in the building where her major is housed because it “literally has nowhere that is private. Everything is open.” Hauwa was pained that some Muslims resort to praying in the bathroom and said, “you feel like

you have to hide yourself...and to resort to that. I mean, do you blame them...it hurts my heart just to see that.” Hauwa expressed a desire for a prayer area in the library as well as more prayer spaces in general; Zaza wishes there were more prayer rooms “or just open rooms in general...it would be nice if there was just a place for everybody to pray.”

Institutional Structure. During the course of the interviews, I discovered the MU has an unusual situation regarding religious minorities and whether and how they gain access to decision making and financial power. Trope, who had a lot more inside information because he is the president of JSU, explained the situation to me. Part of the student government at MU is made of a set of racial groups (Black, Latino, etc.) as well as a set of interest groups which includes, for example, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) students and the Jewish Student Union (JSU). At some point, in the rewriting of the student government’s bylaws, a Jewish student saw the opportunity to get Jewish students a seat at the decision making table and took it. The goal of having these groups as part of student government is, presumably, to give marginalized student populations a voice in student government. However, the way this plays out with minority religious groups is that Jews at MU occupy a position of power that has been created by the institutional structure.

Many of the Jews perceived money and resources to be distributed according to “needs, wants, and desires” (Joey, Jewish man). The Muslims rarely saw this to be the case. The inequity in terms of different religious groups’ access to student government perpetuated both Christian privilege and, as more than one Muslim participant as well as Trope noted, gave Jews some additional privilege in this specific campus context that they would not have had otherwise.

Additionally, the presence of a well-staffed, well-funded Hillel with a large, lovely building walking distance from campus creates the perception that MU favors Jewish student in

an extreme way. Hillel is an independent organization that does not receive funding from MU. However, they have a tightly knit relationship with the university, and the JSU is both a registered student organization and a part of Hillel, giving them access, per Trope, to both MU funds and resources and Hillel funds and resources. This creates the impression that Jewish students receive far more resources from MU than any other minority religious group. Joseph noted, “the Jewish organizations on campus have a lot of money and resources, but I don’t know where that’s coming from.” Several Muslim participants went as far as to place Jews with Christians in terms of their place of privilege, particularly within the MU context. The Muslim Student Association (MSA) is purely a student organization with little to no outside support, no staff, and no financial support aside from what the university provides. There was a perception among some of the Jews that the mosque in the community served the same role as Hillel, but it was clear from the Muslim participants that was not the case at all.

Finally, almost every participant mentioned one of the most noticeable manifestations of Christianity on the MU campus. There is frequently a preacher outside of one of the main academic building in the center of campus. He is a common enough sight that almost any MU student of any religious tradition knows what you mean when say the “[name redacted] Hall Preacher.” The students knew that this was an example of “freedom of religion” (Joey, Jewish man). Hauwa described him as “annoying...and incredibly visible.” She also noted that in her opinion, “if a Muslim person was to do the same thing, it would not be tolerated...he would be arrested within the hour...I guarantee it. That itself is a huge privilege...”

CHAPTER SIX: INTERACTING WITH OTHERS

In the previous chapter, I detailed the way that Christian privilege played a role in the college experiences of the participants in their efforts to live a religious life as a member of a minority religion as well as addressing the role of race in some of those experiences. In this chapter, I first explore the ways that Christian privilege manifests in Jewish and Muslim students' interactions with others. This aspect, as in the previous chapter, had four major categories: religious literacy and language, secularization of Christianity, safety, and social isolation and intergroup relations. Finally, I offer the participants' definitions of Christian privilege in their own words in order to better comprehend the students' own understanding of what Christian privilege is.

Religious Literacy and Language

Inside and outside of the classroom, the participants in this study encountered peers, faculty, and staff who were unaware of their religious beliefs and practices. The participants largely ascribed this to ignorance rather than malice. However, the way that that language, particularly as it manifests around religious literacy, is used or not used played a role in how these Jewish and Muslim students experienced their college environment and the people within it.

Curriculum and Language. Some participants were able to identify ways in which religion showed up in the classroom. Others were largely in classrooms where religion was not raised. Shoshana was doing an honors thesis and wanted to do a religion-related topic but could not because none of the professors in her major, which is Psychology, "are doing that." How students experienced this varied by major and by individual student. For example, Simone felt isolated in a major where she perceived the overwhelming majority of her peers to be white, Christian women and noted that "sometimes when we get into groups, people are more hesitant

to get in a group with me.” Simone also sees the curriculum as being enacted by whoever is teaching the class. She particularly sees white Christians as holding a position of dominance; “that’s Christian privilege...the privilege to teach” and to decide what others learn. Lindsay also noted that she’s “never had a Jewish professor” to her knowledge.

Several of the participants, both Jewish and Muslim, reported serving as a sort of expert on their own religion in the classroom. Hauwa said, “when the professors see you and they are talking about something [related to Islam in her case], they kinda, like, glance at your side of room, like, what do you think.” Joseph, however, expressed frustration at how much his Muslim identity was forced into the classroom. He shared, “any of my academic stances or opinions on topics of theology or politics was always overshadowed by my Islam. Any decision I would make would always be engulfed by the fact that I’m Muslim.” This was, at best, annoying for Joseph. He said to me, “I don’t have to have an opinion on every topic that comes out from the Middle East or North Africa, in the same way that I don’t ask you what’s going on in Belgium or Switzerland. It’s just not fair...my opinion shouldn’t be the monolith for how an entire people believe.”

However, Joseph also saw that every discussion was “always, always influenced in the political context with Christianity or the Catholic Church...the Christian beliefs definitely dominated, if not took over, when we discussed those topics.” “Christianity was always the dominant faith to be discussed, to be compared with, to be criticized and commended and all that.” Aside from this, he sees religion as topic that is avoided in the classroom. “There’s no room,” in his opinion, “for discussing contemporary issues [related to religion] in the classroom setting.” Joseph drove his point home saying, “the curriculum I learn is very much based in Christianity, Christianity and liberalism, Christianity and secularism versus other faiths.”

Trope, on the other hand, enjoyed feeling more knowledgeable about a topic than his classmates. He used learning about the Holocaust in his residential college intro writing course as an example of this. Shoshana had a similar attitude about her Jewish Studies courses where she sees a diverse range of people who “want to learn about Judaism” and find it “refreshing.” Lindsay also looks at this “in a positive way,” framing it as, “I have knowledge, and other people want to learn about it.” Lindsay did note, however, that it is largely her peers, and not the faculty, that are interested in the knowledge she possesses.

Both Shoshana and Joseph described being targeted in the classroom by co-religionist with different opinions or traditions from theirs. Shoshana encountered this both at MU and on study abroad in Israel. In Israel it was from an Orthodox professor; at MU, it was a rabbi from another liberal stream of Judaism. Joseph encountered this at MU from a professor who was a very liberal Muslim.

Hauwa experienced her professors, when relevant, as correcting misinformation about Islam, providing a counterpoint to the media, and trying to provide an accurate portrayal of Muslims. This made her very happy. Zaza had given some thought to the potential biases of her residential college, and disclosed to me,

This was actually something I discuss with my friends...in [her residential college], we have a lot of donators who Jewish...so a lot of what we learn is from a...I don't want to sound biased...more of pro-Zionist point of view...when we looked into it, it was a lot of Jewish donators, but I don't know if that's just a coincidence...

One of the less anticipated outcomes of this study was that some Jewish and Muslim students at MU understand themselves to be oppositional to one another, a situation I discuss in more depth later in this chapter.

Religious Literacy. A lack of religious literacy, the understanding and knowledge of religion writ large, among their peers as well as MU's faculty and staff was something that nine of the 13 participants talked about. Because the people these students interacted with on a daily basis knew so little about their religions and religious traditions, the participants were tasked with explaining their religion and serving as a sort of expert frequently and often without their volunteering to act in this capacity. Conversely, other participants found that they had to make choices about when to speak up about misinformation regarding their religions. For example, Zaza had a class where the professor was giving out what she thought was misinformation about Islam. She said she wanted to raise her hand to correct the faculty member, but she's "not the one to correct the professor." Sam said that "with people that don't celebrate the same things as you or don't practice the same way you do, you get a lot of questions..."

Simone, in part because she is visibly Muslim as a hijabi, was sometimes approached to discuss Islam. When she was the undergraduate teaching assistant for a class unrelated to religion, a student actually asked her to get together for coffee to discuss Islam further. Simone felt this was inappropriate, particularly since this woman was her student, and she referred the student to the local imam. She, like several of the other Muslim participants, talked about the conflation of terrorism and extremism with Islam writ large even though "there is [sic] extremists in every religion." Shoshana also talked about a lack of religious literacy among her Christian peers in regard to their own religion, Christianity, as well as Judaism and Islam. She thinks her "peers are very skeptical of Islam."

Hauwa, the other woman in the study who wears a headscarf, also was sought out as a content expert on Islam, but, unlike Zaza, she felt comfortable speaking up. She also, unlike most of the other participants, was pleasantly surprised how open to learning about Islam her peers

were. She acknowledged that some people are “ignorant” but thought that most “people just want to know more.” Joseph thought that his peers fell into “four main categories” in regards to that attitude towards Islam. “One group doesn’t know and doesn’t care. One group is uneasy and doesn’t know. Another group...had their steadfast point of view, and then another side is Islamophobic.”

Ilana, like Zaza, encountered professors who she felt misrepresented her religion in the classroom. She also attributed a lot of difficulties she experienced in the dining hall around keeping kosher for Passover to religious ignorance or a lack of religious literacy on the part of the cafeteria workers. A number of other participants, both Jewish and Muslim, made similar comments about why addressing the issues of keeping kosher, eating halal, food labeling, and other concerns related to religious dietary needs was so difficult.

In his role as an RA, Sam enjoyed helping educate his colleagues and residents about Judaism. However, this is a role where Sam is explicitly an educator. Similarly, because she wants to be a rabbi, Shoshana ended up having a lot of conversations about Judaism, and, again, because she wants to be a Jewish educator, she often welcomed these conversations. Shoshana was more frustrated by a lack of religious literacy among Jews from other Jewish traditions.

Joseph, Celine-Hazel, and every Jewish participant except Joey talked about being the first Muslim or Jew someone had met. This meant that for both the Jews and the Muslims there was limited understanding, particularly for the Muslims, that their religions had variations and different traditions under the bigger group umbrella. Unlike the others, Celine-Hazel had encountered being the first Muslim someone had met in her public school before college. Joseph noted that pretty much everyone knows that Christianity has many different sects. Sam said that “some people have never heard of the things that [Jews] do.” Shoshana reported that one of her

friends “was asked straight up if she had horns because she’s Jewish...that is just ignorance.”

Shoshana also often gets asked, “what exactly is a Jewish person?” Lindsay told me that the Christian man she had been seeing, when they first met, said “he’d never met a Jew before,” but “he’d seen *Fiddler on the Roof*,” and thought that meant he knew about Judaism.

Secularization of Christianity

As was outlined in Chapter Three, Christianity has permeated life in the United States in such a way that is often difficult and complex to parse what is Christianity and what is secular culture (Blumenfeld et al., 2009; Blumenfeld, 2006, 2009; Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003; Clark et al., 2002; Schlosser, 2003). Sometimes there is not a difference. Unsurprisingly, this was the category that produced the least data, in large part because once Christianity is glazed with secular Americanness, it is hard to recognize.

Hauwa, however, had noticed the way that Christmas has become part of the fabric of life at MU. “At Christmas time everything is decorated so nicely, and there’s Christmas trees in every department, and...maybe even the secretaries are wearing Santa hats. You can tell it’s so ingrained without us even thinking about it. It’s ingrained within the university.” Joseph had similar observations about lights and candy canes and noted that “you don’t really see anything else from any other faith” on campus. Trope suggested that, “Christian privilege is saying Merry Christmas to anybody and everybody.”

It is meaningful to point out that this section is shorter than the others; this is a symptom of how deeply ingrained Christianity and Christian privilege are in the fabric of American life, in higher education and elsewhere. The students I interviewed had trouble identifying ways in which Christianity was marked as secular culture. It is everywhere though; one only has to look at “In God we trust” on our currency to know that religion has become secularized in the U.S.,

and a solid understanding of U.S. history suggests that the God we trust on our money is the God of Christianity.

Trope was one of the few who arrived there without my prompting. However, when I brought up what campus was like around Christmastime, every participant was aware of Christmas decorations, celebrations, and the break and when it was intentionally brought up in this context by me, I could see the students connecting the dots. The secularization of Christianity does serve to make Christian privilege even more invisible; that is, intentional or not, the point. However, it can be seen in the celebration of Christmas across the nation, in the insistence on and pride in a punishing Protestant work ethic, in the institutional norms around all major Christian holidays—for example, MU offers limited dining services on Easter, and in the socialization of religious minorities to not draw too much attention. This last aspect came up repeatedly in the interviews even as participants acknowledged that Christianity, in many forms, can be seen all over MU's campus.

Safety

Safety was the pre-existing category from the literature that generated the most data. While much of the literature talked about literal threats to the physical safety of students, the participants shared safety concerns and experiences that fell into three primary subcategories: issues of physical safety for people or their property, issues of fear and perceived threats to one's safety, and issues of emotional and mental safety. While these subcategories have some overlap, here I discuss each of them individually.

Physical Safety. Khaotep did not worry a lot about his own personal safety, in part because he is a black belt in taekwondo. He is also a pretty sizable male. Even so, he had been targeted. His sophomore year he attended the big football game against MU's major rival. While

they were waiting in line to get in, a guy put a full beer bottle in Khaotep's hoodie upside down. His RA was with him and called the police over, but the police "didn't do anything even though the guy was drunk, underage, and had an expired id." Rather, the officer "looked like he was going to be friends with" the drunk guy. This sent a clear message to Khaotep about how much MU valued his safety. Khaotep also worries about the safety of Muslim women, "especially if they wear the scarf." He feels "like they are targeted or will be targeted" because hijabi women are so identifiably Muslim while his scarf—a Palestinian keffiyeh though not always in the traditional black and white—and beard might or might not identify him as a Muslim at first glance. Joseph shared this concern about hijabi women with Khaotep noting that "women who wear headscarves kind of get judged on campus." However, his advice is to always "be aware and careful" which sounds like concern about more than just judgement.

Simone noted that things could be worse; "it's not post 9/11, that's for sure." Joseph told me a story that while not about a literal physical threat could have endangered his status as a student. His first year he came back to his room to find a crowd of people gathered around his door. Someone asked whose room it was, and Joseph confirmed that it was his. Someone had drawn a swastika on his door. He was asked who drew it, and he told them he did not know. Rather than reporting it as an offense against Joseph, the residential staff of his residence hall treated him as though he were the perpetrator. He had to go to several meetings and a counseling session "because apparently" he "did something in the wrong for having someone draw a swastika" on his door. This situation produced a complex set of emotions and reactions from Joseph,

...that got me thinking, well is it because I happen to be an Arab Muslim? You know the tension between...Jews and Arabs in the Middle East...the situation made no sense to

me. I had done nothing wrong...if I really wanted to commit a hate crime or show my beliefs, if they were xenophobic, why would I be stupid enough to draw it on my own door?...I was, like, what the hell is going on here...this is a complete waste of my time...you're going after the wrong guy. I really didn't make a scene with it...I just kind of went with it...I just let that one slide.

Joseph expected to be seen as the target but was treated as the perpetrator. He was the target even if the symbol chosen is not typically directed towards Muslims. He tried to explain his side, but he was not heard.

For many of the Jewish participants, some of the fear was about the safety of their possessions, particularly religious objects. Trope talked about working up to putting his mezuzah on the outside of his door as a junior. His first year as a student he put it up inside his room; his second year was his first year as an RA, and he was nervous to put it on his door because he didn't want to put his residents off. Shoshana did not feel comfortable putting a mezuzah in the residence hall. The halls did not feel safe, and she feared it would be ripped down.

Ilana told me, "I'm not afraid to speak up about being Jewish so I've never come across any problems." However, as the interview progressed, she went on to describe problems and express fears. The majority of participants, both Jewish and Muslim, were attached to the narrative that everything is fine, positive even, despite myriad incidents and issues that are not positive. Ilana shared,

I have a mezuzah on my bedroom door, but I will not put it on the apartment door because I'm afraid of what would happen. I don't know if that's a true thing of what could happen, but when my mom was a student here (in the early 1980s)...she did have stuff happen to her...she was living in...she went home for Rosh Hashanah...she came

back, and there was a huge, red swastika painted on her door...we don't know who it was...she didn't have a mezuzah on her door, but she was home for [a Jewish holiday] and people know...I just have that image...in the back of my head that I can't do that [put up a mezuzah on an external door].

Lindsay, who has been Ilana's roommate through college, had her own additions to this story. Their first year they put a red rope on the doorknob as a symbolic reminder of the absent mezuzah. However, Lindsay understood the story about Ilana's mother to include the actual destruction of a mezuzah. They were told, presumably by their parents, that putting a mezuzah up was neither okay nor safe. Both she and Ilana told slightly different stories about swastikas showing up on door signs and/or Facebook postings in conjunction with hall government elections. Lindsay acknowledged that she had only encountered low level antisemitism but lived with a fear of higher level antisemitism. However, she also noted that "you always have to be aware of who's around, and you have to be safe...that's honestly my first priority and then...I'll go about my religion. I just practice it quietly; that's okay." It scares her that people might not look past her religion and see her for who she is. The same school year that this study was conducted, someone broke into a Jewish fraternity's house, took one of their composites, and drew Hitler mustaches on everyone. At the time of this writing, it was not known who did it or why.

Fear and Perceived Threats to Safety. Many of the most salient fears for the participants were based on the experiences of people they knew who attended MU or on more general rumors that were shared within their communities. Tarek talked about hearing classmates make anti-Muslim remarks in class and thought these classmates, whom he perceives as select learners and listeners, might potentially pose a safety threat to himself or others at some point. A

friend of Tarek's who is easily identifiable as both Arab and Muslim was talking in a class, "and then some kid in the middle of class bashed him and pretty much...threw a racial slur at him."

Joey was "comfortable with telling people I'm Jewish, but it's not something I brag about or talk about every single day...that's where I think those [safety] issues and concerns can come into play. You just need to be humble about it." Joey perceived there to be something problematic, or even unsafe, about advertising one's Jewishness. Celine-Hazel was similarly circumspect about her Muslim identity. Most of her classmates do not know she is Muslim. In a class about Islam, the student next to her asked her a question. Celine-Hazel answered the question and told the other student to feel free to ask questions because she "was good with this subject." She also acknowledged that because she does not wear the headscarf, the other students do not say anything to her specifically or give her "any type of looks."

Some of the participants felt like they needed to take preemptive actions to protect themselves and other Muslims. For example, Zaza feels the need to present herself "in a better fashion than usually" because she might be representing Islam. She also feels obligated to speak up in class in order to combat the misrepresentation of Muslims. "When somebody says something false about your religion in general, it seems like a personal attack." Sometimes it is an even more direct attack. Zaza offered a story about a classmate saying "all Palestinians are terrorists." She is not Palestinian, but her best friend is and was in the class with her; her friend felt "personally attacked" and hurt. Simone noted that, as a hijabi woman, "people have this perception" of her before they even get to know her and that many non-Muslim Americans think Muslims are "all a bunch of terrorists" or "a threat to their country." Joseph noticed that sometimes even friends cannot get over their uneasiness about his Muslimness. He was talking to

one friend about Dr. Ben Carson and noted that Dr. Carson has some deeply held prejudices about Muslims, and the friend replied, “me too.” That, for Joseph, “was very alarming.”

Trope knows “a lot of people who have negative experiences in the classroom about Judaism,” but he hasn’t “really experienced those intense negative moments.” Ilana expressed a lot of fear around the possibility, or in her opinion inevitability, of the BDS (Boycott, Divest, Sanctions) movement coming to MU, and she sees this as a threat to her safety. She also fears that she will “come to a point where it will be difficult to work as a Jew” because people will not be able to relate to her because she does not share their religion.

Hauwa, like Simone in the story below, had fears about how being a Muslim woman who wears a headscarf would impact her in the workplace. The week I interviewed her she was starting a new job at the front desk of the on-campus hotel. She was “shocked” to get the job because she is a hijabi. She shared that,

I always have this in the back of my head: I am a Muslim woman who is covered, who is Black in America....in the back of my head I’m thinking now I have to work twice as hard to prove myself. So that’s why I think...they won’t like me, they won’t want a someone covered in the front. I hate to think that, but that’s ultimately the reality.

Even students who had not experienced any threats to their safety understood that to be simply the result of good luck. Twice Sam expressed his good fortune at not having experienced any antisemitism on campus because he knows that is not true for a lot of other Jews at MU. Shoshana had feared that her career plans, to become a rabbi, would prevent her from being selected by a sorority. During rush, at every house aside from the one she currently belongs to, she lied about her career plans, saying that she wanted to be a clinical psychologist rather than a rabbi. She “didn’t want to be labeled as weird...as a religious weirdo.”

Emotional and Mental Safety. Joey had encountered some stereotypes about Jews “along the way...like Jews have a lot of money, and they’re...cheap.” Other Jews encountered questions like, “you’re Jewish, do your parents pay for everything?” Khaotep has friends in ROTC that share with him “a lot of the negative things [about Muslims] that they hear in there.” Even in his multicultural discussion group, Khaotep encountered negative words about Arabs and Muslims, and many of his peers do not differentiate between the two. Additionally, Khaotep was demoted at his on-campus job for reasons related to his religion. He was part of the campus security team. When he signed on, he was not yet able to grow out a beard. Once he could, he grew it out as a sign of his faith. He was told that he had to shave, or he would be let go because the paperwork he has signed forbid facial hair. Eventually, they transferred him to the traffic department, and while he was able to keep his pay, the role was definitely a demotion. The message he received was that as a visible Muslim, he was not welcome in that workplace. He also received even harsher messages from peers about Muslims than Joey had heard about Jews, including being told he was “ignorant,” “praying to the wrong God,” a “terrorist,” and a “sand nigger.” He also gets dirty looks and noted that, “if I forgot my pencil, I know some people have the pencil, but they wouldn’t give it to me because I’m different.”

Khaotep had also had two particularly unpleasant experiences, one on campus and one directly adjacent to campus. These two experiences were primarily threats to his emotional safety, but they also are part of the previous subcategory since they indicate the possibility for other kinds of threats to his safety. In a campus dodgeball tournament, as his team was leaving after one of the games, one of the members of the all-white team that was up next said, “get off the stage. It’s time for the real Americans to play.” The other incident happened at bubble tea café across the street from campus. Khaotep shared,

all of the sudden these four white guys come in...and start chanting ‘USA, USA...get the fuck out of my country and go back to Saudi Arabia,’ and they quickly...left...I didn’t know how to react...we just sat there for five minutes not knowing what to do...I probably would have fought them if they had stayed long enough.

Joseph “kind of woke up to...how uneasy people get sometimes” around Muslims when he got to MU. He got into a political debate with someone on the second day of school during his first year, and as the other person was losing the debate, he screamed at Joseph, “that’s why your people blew our country up.” Joseph has also noticed microaggressions, like people assuming that he would have answers to questions about why Muslims, most of them not affiliated with him in any way, do or do not do things. “Coming here people did make jokes about terrorists and bombs...and about how we pray.” At first he brushed it off because “when people would do it back home (in his Muslim majority hometown), it was kind of like a Black person using the n-word with another Black person.” It took him a couple of weeks for him “to realize, wait, these people have never met a Muslim in their life, and they’re saying these things.” At that point, he stopped letting it go and started saying, “no, I don’t appreciate that, and it’s not funny,” Trope said that Jewish students were having similar encounters with peers who had never met a Jew before and were making antisemitic jokes.

Celine-Hazel encountered a lack of emotional safety around discussions of the presidential primaries in class. She overheard a classmate say, “I don’t want...the Muslims in here to see that I’m voting for Donald Trump.” As mentioned earlier, Celine-Hazel does not wear a headscarf in large part because the high school she attended in a nearby town had never had a hijabi student, and she did not want to be the first. She said, “I wasn’t a tough person to do that kind of thing.” Zaza has never experienced anything traumatizing or that she could not cope

with, but that seems like a pretty low bar for emotional well-being. Simone encountered nonverbal discomfort or hostility in the classroom. The woman Simone sat down next to in her sociology class got up and moved a whole row away. She said, “I wanted to cry...I never experienced that...I never really had...experienced...someone who was prejudiced towards me” before that. She also perceives that people do not want to sit next to her in the dining hall because she is a hijabi. Hauwa feels “different.” People do sit next to her and talk to her, but she always has to be “the one to open the conversation” because they either assume she “can’t speak English” or that she has “no interest in talking to them which isn’t the case.” She goes out of her way to speak to folks to help ameliorate the stigma of being a hijabi Muslim woman.

Joseph has an internship with his state representative and thinks that he is profiled by the security officers. He has to show his “badge more than other people do.” Multiple Jewish participants reported that they and/or their friends had been asked about where their horns are, a myth about Jews that I would have, prior to study, thought was essentially extinct among college students. Shoshana reported that “some people have said some ignorant remarks,” and she has “experienced some antisemitism.” Like Joseph and Trope, she attributed at least some of this ignorance to people who had never met a Jew before. She described this as ignorance more than anything else.

Shoshana had an unexpectedly emotionally unsafe experience as a Jew on her study abroad in Israel. She felt singled out and judged by her study abroad-mates, who were not Jewish. She felt like they put her “in the category of bitchy Jew because apparently every Jew must be in this category.” At the end of the trip, one of the guys told her, “I’m surprised you’re not bitchy like the rest of them.” Also, a close friend of hers on the trip made an antisemitic joke

which hurt her. She “handed him a bag of chips, and he was, like, I don’t want your dirty Jew chips.”

Lindsay talked about a play she was in her first year. Another one of the women in the play was talking about the Middle East, and Lindsay asked if she had ever been to Israel. “She looked at” Lindsay “and said, ‘Israel doesn’t exist.’” Lindsay sat in total silence for about ten minutes because she did not know how to respond. She wanted to “leave a good name for the Jewish people,” but she was also “really scared.”

Simone also encountered Islamophobia and Christian privilege in academic advising. She started out as a business major. This is the story she shared with me,

I had scheduled my first appointment with an advisor at the business complex, and I had a really bad experience. I felt like essentially [the advisor] was telling me because I am a hijabi, I would not get far in my career...I was doing well academically so I didn’t understand why she was being really rude about...the requirements...she kept saying that if you don’t do well in these, you won’t get in, and I was doing well....I...felt like she didn’t want to help me...and I ended up switching my major...she was super intimidating and really rude. I asked her about opportunities for Muslim Americans...I was really worried...when I had my first business class, I thought, okay, I’m the only hijabi. What the hell. Am I going to get anywhere? Even though I’m a hard worker or I’m smart...that doesn’t mean anything if you look around and don’t see someone exactly like you or similar to you. That was my biggest fear that no matter how accomplished I am, I wouldn’t get a job because I’m a Muslim.

So, in essence, Simone’s first encounter with an academic advisor at MU was the embodiment of her biggest fear.

Social Isolation and Intergroup Relations

Both the Jews and the Muslims in my study talked about how their religion socially isolated them in the college environment, particularly from their peers who were either less observant than they were or were not members of their religion. For the Muslims this isolation was usually about partying, dating, and, most especially, alcohol. For the Jews, issues of social isolation were mostly about dating. It is important to note that the vast majority of the participants felt a strong sense of community with their co-religionists and so were not generally socially isolated. Also, the two groups, Jewish students and Muslim students, saw their two groups as more oppositional than having common concerns.

Partying and Alcohol. Partying and the prevalence of alcohol were issues raised by every single Muslim participant. This is, in large part, because Islam forbids the consumption of alcohol, and many practicing Muslims, and the vast majority of observant Muslims, do not partake (*Questions & Answers About Muslim Americans*, 2014). Some of the Muslim participants did choose to drink; most did not. For the Jewish participants, when alcohol was mentioned, which was rarely, it was not as something that separated them from their non-Jewish peers. For example, Joey talked about there being drinking and “rowdy” behavior in his Jewish fraternity.

Khaotep spoke at length about his relationship with alcohol. He was a member of a Black fraternity, and as he got more involved with fraternity life, he also got more involved with the social and party aspects of it. Before I share what Khaotep disclosed to me about his choices regarding alcohol, it was revealing that Khaotep requested that I change his pseudonym to something more anonymous than the name he originally chose because drinking carries such a stigma in the Muslim community. Khaotep said,

Honestly, when I came in...I'd never drank alcohol. I'd never partook in other activities...always something that was difficult for me cuz everyone was drinking alcohol around me...but I was still able to party without it until one day, honestly, my curiosity got the best of me...junior and senior years it's become constant...I always feel terrible after...I felt like crap. I'm at a different point right now. These are my decisions, and I'm going to live with them...God knows what's in my heart...alcohol is kind of like pork, but pork I still haven't touched...

Khaotep clearly struggled with his decision to drink. It brought him closer to his non-Muslim friends, but it distanced him from his Muslim friends and community. He was ashamed of his decision to drink and shared that not wanting to be judged was a reason that he was not very involved with the Muslim community at MU. Zaza was the other Muslim participant who had chosen to drink alcohol. She described herself as “pretty liberal when it comes to the whole don't party, don't drink.” However, she noted that there were kinds of parties and party locations that she did not take part in and that she continued to try to practice modesty, a central part of her religious practice, even at parties. She said, “even at a party, you can be modest, I guess.” Even though both Khaotep and Zaza participated in secular college party culture, it was at a cost to their sense of self, and, at least in Zaza's case, only some parties were spaces where she felt like she could be appropriately modest.

Four of the five other Muslim participants were all non-drinkers who did not attend parties, at least not the kind of parties that one might typically think of as “college parties.” Tarek did not talk about alcohol or partying in his interview. Celine-Hazel did, “the biggest thing is fitting in, not by the way I look or act, but, like, when you see all these college students partying...[with] alcohol...Muslims aren't allowed to drink...that's the hardest part socially.”

All five expressed, to varying degrees, sadness, frustration, and/or irritation at the major role that alcohol played in the social lives of their peers and how that, to varying degrees, excluded them from much of campus social life. This interfered with their ability to build relationships with their non-Muslim peers, especially more secular peers, even when they wanted those relationships to develop. For example, Simone had hoped to have a roommate she could be “friends with all four years of...college and probably beyond,” but it was really hard for her to get along with her roommate because her roommate “would come home at two a.m. drunk.” Not drinking or wanting to be around alcohol also limited Simone’s other social options, and she said, “so many of my friends ask me to go with them...to a club...to a frat house...c’mon now, a hijabi attending these things...just the idea makes me really uncomfortable.” She also expressed frustration about always having to explain this, in part because of her peers’ lack of knowledge of Islam, a theme I discuss in more depth in the next section. Simone was, however, unusual in that her closest friends are highly religious Christians who she feels are the people she has met at college who are most like her in the ways that matter most to her.

Hauwa similarly felt distant from what she perceived to be the dominant social culture at MU. She told me, “I don’t go to [a popular local college bar] on Thursdays...because I don’t drink. I don’t go to parties or stuff because there’s alcohol there. I know that’s, like, a college experience, but it’s something we don’t do. We don’t party.” Hauwa often received “pity” from her peers for her decision to not drink, not party, and, as discussed in the next subsection, not date. This made her feel distant and different even from people she really liked and thought of as “open and accepting people.”

Joseph, unlike Hauwa and Simone, did go to parties and bars to socialize but never consumed alcohol. However, this approach only produced different points of awkwardness or distance.

Every single night there's a point of awkwardness. So, generally speaking, if someone offers me a drink I would kindly decline, but it was uncomfortable at some point because there was always this notion that if you're acting silly, you must be drunk...I like to be silly and joke around. (Joseph, Muslim man)

Joseph was willing to socialize with his peers in their alcohol laden space but still was not able to find spaces and people who were comfortable with his goofing around without being drunk. Additionally, he expressed frustration at the central role of alcohol in the social lives of MU students and said, "coming to [MU], every single event...has to be centered around booze...if we're having a Friendsgiving...if we're watching TV...if we're celebrating someone's birthday, that's a given." He found "this notion of alcohol was almost overwhelming" and felt judged by some of his friends and other peers. He also struggled because even some of the Muslim students that he grew up with pressured him to drink. Also, like Simone, his position about alcohol caused conflict with his roommates. When he lived off campus, he and his roommates would throw parties. However, he was not willing or comfortable chipping in for the booze because he believes in not encouraging drinking; two of his roommates were okay with this, and one was not. He also knew that his choice not to drink might exclude him from many traditional college activities that he had never even tried to engage in like Greek life and the "spring break...thing."

Dating. Dating was an issue that came up in interviews with some of the Muslim participants and some of the Jewish participants. However, the issue around dating that made each group feel different from the MU norm diverged. The Muslim students largely talked about

not dating or, in the case of Simone, about being engaged already. The Jewish students talked about having to or wanting to date other Jews and the challenges that presented.

Hauwa summed up what several Muslim students told me when she said, “we don’t date.” Simone spoke about how being engaged made her college experience really different from most. Her fiancé was also an MU student. She told me that peers frequently asked her if it was an arranged match; it was not.

Ilana saw marrying a Jewish man as an obligation. For her bat mitzvah, her *bubbe*, that is the Yiddish for grandmother, made her an embroidered wall hanging and told her, “you have to promise me you’ll marry a Jewish boy so you can hang this in your home.” Ilana followed this up with, “I have that in my head...that it’s a requirement for me that I have to marry a Jewish boy.” Lindsay said that she was at a point where she wants “to marry someone Jewish.” Lindsay was also the only participant who talked about dating someone of another religion. She told me the story of a Christian male student who she had been “kind of seeing” for “three years or so.” At the time of the interview, they were no longer involved, and this was clearly painful for Lindsay.

We like each other, but we, like, can’t. It’s kind of a Romeo and Juliet situation...he doesn’t look past my religion. He will look at my religion, and that’s kind of it...we’ve sort of drifted apart...and I think that has a lot to do with my religion...we aren’t going to be together in the end so we just kinda stopped talking...that’s something I don’t fully understand. People ask me all the time, oh, would I be with someone who is not Jewish, and I want to say the answer is yes, but since it didn’t work with him, it’s hard...

(Lindsay, Jewish woman)

Relations between Muslims and Jews. Both my Jewish and Muslim participants talked quite a bit about the other group—not the other participants, obviously, but, rather Jews or Muslims as a group at MU or in the larger environment. While both groups had participants that mentioned the other as being oppressed or marginalized by Christian privilege in the same way that they were, the overall impression about intergroup relations between Muslims and Jews at MU was not positive. I could probably write a separate dissertation about this issue. It may seem unrelated to Christian privilege since Christians are not part of this intergroup relationship. However, pitting minority groups against one another is a common tactic for maintaining privilege and control. This is not to say that the Christians at MU are actively working to sour relations between MU's Jews and Muslims. Rather, pervasive Christian privilege creates a divide and conquer situation for religious minorities.

The Muslim participants largely thought that the Jews at MU received more money, attention, and prestige. Some of them, correctly in my opinion, attributed this to Hillel and its position in relation to MU. This is part of how the institutional structure of MU creates a power imbalance between Jews and other religious minorities at the university as I discussed in Chapter Five. With the exception of Zaza's comment about the donors to her residential college, almost nothing the Muslims said about Jewish life just at MU was overtly antisemitic. However, almost every participant talked about Israel and/or Palestine at some point in the interview. As can be seen in the interview protocol, I did not ask them about Israel, Palestine, or the conflict in that region. However, it was clear that this is a major, if not the major, thing each group associates with the other. The Muslim participants largely saw Jews as co-opting their culture and stealing their land while the Jews viewed the Muslims as well as groups like Students for Justice in Palestine (which several of the Muslim participants are involved with) and movements like BDS

as an existential threat. This issue was so salient for so many of the participants that it would be a disservice to Jewish and Muslim students to not mention it here.

Defining Christian Privilege

It became apparent through analyzing the data from this study that, at least at MU, Christian privilege exists, but there is also a level of Abrahamic privilege enjoyed by Jews and Muslims. Because of their link, whether consensual or not, to Christianity, Islam and Judaism are seen as more legitimate religions than non-Abrahamic traditions. Zaza went as far as to say that sometimes she forgets “that it’s not just monotheistic religions,” in part because she does not see other religions on campus. The majority of the participants only mentioned Christianity, Islam, and Judaism when talking about religion.

Finally, I want to end this chapter by giving voice to the participants’ definitions of Christian privilege and tying the major themes in their definitions back to the literature discussed in Chapter Three. Some of them had definitions and examples that synced nicely with the definitions and examples in the literature. Others had thoughts that diverged, while still others struggled to define Christian privilege. Joey was the only participant who was unfamiliar with social privilege and so was unable to provide a definition for Christian privilege. What follows is a summary of each of the other 12 participants’ definitions of Christian privilege. I include these here because their definitions of Christian privilege reveal a lot about the role of Christian privilege in their lives and the way they understand their experiences as different from Christian students.

Zaza. Christian privilege is being able to represent yourself as an individual in the classroom or in life instead of representing a whole group of people with every word you say. Christian privilege is having your holidays off from school and having the day off from your job.

Christian privilege is being able to generalize other groups of people without having consequences to your own group of people.

Hauwa. Christian privilege is basically where they don't have to worry about whether or not they're going to have a club on campus. There is no matter what...they don't have to think twice about it. They don't have to worry...about whether their food will be provided...it always is. The privilege of having many...churches close by that might help them or boost their presence on campus...you basically don't have to point out that someone is Christian. They either are or they aren't.

Lindsay. Christian privilege is “being able to feel like it's just common in society and just accepted in society and people don't question it.”

Sam. So similarly to how white privilege is the community and the system is built on the ideals and values of that group, things like we have a break over Christmastime because it's built on Christian ideals...Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are our really big holidays, and we get a clause in our syllabus if we have to miss class it's okay...but we don't get a whole break.

Joseph. The ways institutions and society is [sic] structured it accommodates Christian beliefs much better than other beliefs. Basic to life things, it's accessible to you...something as basic as I want to buy a card...let me put it this way, I can go to Target and find a cross or something like that...maybe I'll find a Jewish thing...but unless I live in a place with a lot of Muslims...

Trope. Christian privilege is saying Merry Christmas to anybody and everybody. A lot of more politically correct students say happy holidays...if someone is talking to you and you don't look completely different from them, they're just going to assume you're Christian which I think is a big part of Christian privilege. I think that...taking a break for Christmas is, like, major

Christian privilege...Muslims students don't get a break for Ramadan...none of that...Christian privilege is not needing a Jewish student center or a Muslim student center...it's being able to not necessarily have any problems based on your religion because you're a Christian which I think we see here [at MU].

Shoshana. That would be Christianity being the majority and every other religion acting as the minority. And Christians...almost...[being] seen as superior because it's the majority...it's making more money, living in nicer houses...easier to get to education...if you were Christian...for Passover....they don't go all kosher for Passover...I have to fend for myself...but Christians don't have any dietary restrictions that I know about...cafeterias are kind of made for Christians.

Ilana. “The first thing that comes to my head is WASP...that someone would assume that because they're Christian, they're higher than others...”

Tarek. I feel...the majority of the...population is Christian...majority wins over minority...that's how it goes...I feel like you would have easier...not that I'm getting it difficult, I'm really not...Christians would have it easier or white people would have easier.

Celine-Hazel. I think it kind of plays the same role as white privilege...just like how a white person is favored over a Black person or a Black person is mistreated, I think the same goes for, like, a Muslim and a non-Muslim...depending on the area as well...obviously Christianity is the biggest one in America just like white...kind of similar in that case...if you're Muslim or if you're, like, Jewish...you'll get more looks, more stares...similar to white privilege but not as bad.

Khaotep. Christian privilege would be not having to worry about working on Sunday...explaining your background or religion...people guessing what is your religious

background...people not judging you from your background...not looking at you like you're the Christian representative. You're not generalized.

Simone. I agree [with the idea of Christian privilege]. Because even though people say this country was brought about through Christianity...there are hundreds of religions that people follow from Islam to Judaism to Buddhism...our education system. To me, what happens when you're seeing the same people teaching multiple people of different races and religions, that's Christian privilege...the privilege to teach.

Summary

The definitions provided by the participants have pieces that are unique to the individual students, but they also almost all contain aspects of Christian privilege that are evident in the existing literature. Zaza, Sam, Trope, Shoshana, and Khaotep talked about the calendar, holidays, and time off to properly mark religious observance, an aspect of Christian privilege that was discussed in a large swath on the literature on this topic (Blumenfeld, 2006; Burke & Segall, 2011; Clark et al., 2002; Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016; Seifert, 2007). Khaotep and Zaza both talked about how it was a privilege, a Christian privilege in this case, to be seen as an individual rather than as representative of one's religious group. Both Kimmel (2014) and McIntosh (1989) touch upon this aspect of privilege, acknowledging that those who hold the privilege do not have to serve as representatives for their group in the same way that, say, people of color or non-Christians do. Hauwa and Joseph talked about knowing that there would be groups and structures in place to support them as an aspect of Christian privilege; both Mutakabbir and Nuriddin (2016) and Seifert (2007) identify space as part of privilege, both figurative and literal, as Joseph and Hauwa did. Hauwa, Lindsay, Trope, Ilana, Tarek, Celine-Hazel, Khaotep, and Simone all identified Christian privilege as being considered the norm, common, unquestioned, and not

requiring an explanation. This is exactly why McIntosh (1989) describes privilege as an invisible knapsack; it cannot be seen so it is assumed to be normal. Kimmel (2014) also makes it clear that much of the work of dismantling privilege is making it visible so that one group, in this case Christians, being the standard is no longer seen as the just way things or, worse, the correct way of conducting society.

Sam, Tarek, Celine-Hazel, Khaotep, and Simone compared Christian privilege to white privilege; this syncs up with the way I explained Christian privilege in Chapter Three and McIntosh's (1989) foundation text on white privilege that undergirds the entire understanding of privilege used here as well as in much of the literature cited in this dissertation study. Joseph described Christian privilege as being able to find the things one needs for religion, including something as simple as a greeting card for the relevant holiday; as both Blumenfeld (2006) and Clark and Brimhall Vargas (2003) discuss, having easy access to the trappings of one's religions is a privilege, one that is largely reserved for Christians in the United States—especially outside of major metropolitan areas. Shoshana and Hauwa both talked food in regards to Christian privilege, a theme that came up again and again in the literature and in the entirety of the participant interviews. Seifert (2007), Mutakabbir and Nuriddin (2016), Ali and Bagheri (2009) all noted that food was an axis of Christian privilege that is of particular note for Jews and Muslims because of the dietary restrictions of keeping kosher or halal. Finally, Zaza and Simone talked about Christian privilege being the power to control the narrative and to decide what is—and is not—taught. This is congruent with Burke and Segall's (2011) and Blumenfeld et al.'s (2009) work on Christian privilege and the curriculum.

With the exception of Joey, all of the other 12 participants saw Christian privilege in the world around them, both on campus and off. Many of them were able to provide thoughtful

definitions which suggests that this was not the first time they had given thought to this idea. Additionally, many of them were able to provide specific examples of the manifestation of Christian privilege on their campuses and in their lives at college students. If nothing else, this confirms that Christian does play a role in the lives of many, if not all, Muslim and Jewish college undergraduates.

CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, THEORY, AND RESEARCH

History tells us that religion, particularly Christianity and especially Protestantism, played a major role in the development of the United States and its institutions of and norms within higher education. The path from higher education being for the education of clergy and the Protestant elite to today's environment of religious pluriformity coupled with pervasive Christian privilege is paved with shifts in the understanding of Christianity, changes in the religious demographics of the nation, and increasingly global and diverse international context. While Christian privilege loomed even larger in the United States' (and pre-colonial America's) past than it does today, our new, religiously pluriform nation has a need to address Christian privilege so that we, particularly in higher education, can create learning environments where members of minority religions, including Islam and Judaism, can have a college experience that is equitable to that of their Christian peers. Additionally, as knowledge about Christian privilege and the experiences of minority religion students increase, it may alter the way we think about the history of higher education as well.

The goal of this study was to investigate the role of Christian privilege in the college experiences of Jewish and Muslim undergraduates. Very little empirical research exists on this subject. The study was conducted at a single, large, public institution in the Midwest. Using narrative inquiry, I explored how Christian privilege appeared in the lives and experiences of Jewish and Muslim undergraduates at MU. Additionally, the interviews provided rich data on the overall experiences of Muslim and Jewish students and illuminated how intergroup relations and institutional structure can change the role of Christian privilege in these experiences.

Christian privilege certainly played a role in the experiences of the Jewish and Muslim participants in this study. However, the nature and magnitude of that role varied widely based on the individual experiences, level of religiosity, connection with their own religious community,

whether or not they had a non-white racial identity, and how identifiably non-Christian they were. Some participants were able to identify many ways that Christian privilege showed up in their college experiences while others saw only bits and pieces, and one participant, Joey, did not seem to see Christian privilege at all.

Campus Climate

At MU, Muslim students felt the impact of Christian privilege more than their Jewish peers. This was due, in large part, to the differences in the position each group held within the institution as well as how much external support they were receiving. I found Ahmadi and Cole's (2015) application of campus climate theory to religious minorities to be germane to this study. Christian privilege was enacted by both external and internal forces as well as the "organizational and structural aspects" of the university (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015, p. 180). The external forces of "governmental policy, programs, and initiatives" and "socio-historical forces" were both present though often intertwined (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015, p. 178). For example, almost all of the participants mentioned the presidential primaries with a particular focus on Donald Trump and his religion related hate speech.

All four internal forces were present as well: "(1) historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion; (2) structural diversity; (3) psychological climate; and (4) behavioral climate" (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015, p. 179). There is an historical legacy of inclusion for Christians, particularly Protestants, in U.S. higher education while there is a long, documented history of intentional exclusion of Jews from American higher education through quotas, standardized tests, and other measures. Muslims have only recently reached a critical mass in U.S. higher education, but there is certainly a national history of excluding anyone who is not Christian and, at an earlier point, not Protestant. The structural diversity mattered as well. MU has more Jewish

students than Muslim students, which played a role in each group's experiences, but MU also has far more Christians than Jews and Muslims together, creating an overarching environment of Christian privilege. The psychological climate was something that both groups discussed. Examples were: Ilana's fears about BDS coming to campus, Lindsay's feelings that she needed to be quiet about her religion, Joseph's awareness that he was blamed for an act of hate that he was actually the target of, and Khaotep's suspicion that men who look like him (Arab looking men with beards) or practice like him are never hired as RAs at MU. Finally, the behavior climate was part of how the participants experienced Christian privilege. This was perhaps most evident in the dining hall where institutional and individual behaviors prevented the students who ate kosher or halal from being able to completely meet their dining needs.

The fifth dimension of campus climate for religious minority students is meant to represent "the organizational and structural aspects of colleges," in this case MU (Ahmadi & Cole, 2015, p. 180). In the previous two chapters, I explored the ways in which both MU's organization and structure impacted the role of Christian privilege for Muslim and Jewish students. In the case of MU, its organization and structure, particularly within student government, helped mitigate some of Christian privilege for Jewish students while potentially increasing the role of Christian privilege in the experiences of Muslim students. Additionally, parallel organizations, like Hillel, matter in what role Christian privilege plays in the college experiences of Jewish and Muslim undergraduates.

Study Recap

In Chapter One, I introduced the study, situated within the current context including recent news and events, and told part of my own story. In Chapter Two, I provided a rich history of religion, with a focus on Christianity, in the United States and American higher education; this

history was intended to provide the background story of today's higher education and offer a more complete narrative of the journey to religious pluriformity. In Chapter Three, I defined Christian privilege and described the landscape of Christian privilege in higher education as seen in existing literature. In Chapter Four, I explained the methods and methodology of this study.

Both the Muslim and the Jewish participants experienced Christian privilege in their lives as college students. The manifestations of Christian privilege broke down into two overarching categories: living a (minority) religious life, which I explored in Chapter Five and interacting with others, which is detailed in Chapter Six. In Chapter Five, I looked at how race interplayed with religion in the study and then illustrated the four major categories of Christian privilege related to living a (minority) religious life: the calendar and time off, food, holidays, celebration, and worship, and space and structure. In Chapter Six, I explored the four themes of Christian privilege related to interacting with others: religious literacy and language, secularization of Christianity, safety, and social isolation and intergroup relations. Finally, at the end of Chapter Six, I offered the participants' definitions and understandings of Christian privilege in their own words so that the central concept of this study was not only defined by the literature and by me but also by the participants themselves.

In this chapter, I discuss the implications of these findings for practice, theory, and research. This study has implications for many kinds of practice. My hope is that this research might be part of a groundswell of research on religious minority students so that religious minority populations, including atheists and other non-believers, can receive equitable services and treatment within U.S. higher education.

Implications for Practice

This study has practice implications for faculty, student affairs practitioners, and higher education administrators of many types. It also has a practical implication for the U.S. Muslim community as a whole. Some of these implications are small changes and tweaks that almost any institution could gradually adopt; other are large scale changes that would take a concerted effort at the institutional, or even national, level. The five primary implications for practice are religious literacy, interfaith/interreligious engagement, institutional equity, food, and adjacent support.

Religious Literacy. A lack of religious literacy was at the core of many of the participants' most frustrating experiences, from encountering professors who gave out misinformation regarding their religions to assumptions about why participants did or did not engage in particular religious practices, like Hauwa's frustration with her peers' assumption that she wore a headscarf against her will. While a few participants expressed thoughts about a lack of religious literacy within their religious groups, most participants experienced this from folks who were not their co-religionists. Administrators including student affairs practitioners, faculty, cafeteria workers, and peers all exhibited signs of inadequate religious literacy.

This means that there is a need to increase religious literacy in colleges and universities throughout the institution and at every level. This could be addressed in a number of ways but will likely have to begin with an honest assessment of both the institution's and the individual's level of religious literacy. Once that is known, educational efforts could take place as long or short trainings, a range of professional development, and the incorporation of more information about many religions into the curriculum, perhaps even requiring students to take a course focused on a non-Christian religion or a survey course of world religions and worldviews.

Interfaith/Interreligious Engagement. While I find both interfaith and interreligious to be too limited for what I mean, I will use interfaith going forward because it is the mostly widely understood term. I use the Interfaith Youth Core's definition of interfaith engagement: "mutually inspiring relationships between people of different [religious, faith, or worldview] backgrounds" (IFYC, n.d.). Interfaith engagement and cooperation can create bridges where there were barriers and can take place with multi-religion groups, with non-believers, between different minority religions, or between the Christian majority and one or more minorities (IFYC, n.d.).

I see interfaith engagement happening in two different formats as called for by this study. It is my position that both kinds of engagement should be undertaken by student affairs practitioners and other administrators, faculty, and students. The first is that Christians should be taking part in interfaith engagement with members of minority religions on college campuses. The second is that Muslims and Jews need to engage with one another towards the goal of interfaith cooperation. The two groups, per the data, have minimal interaction even though there is a lot of interest convergence in how Christian privilege plays a role in their college experiences. In the next two subsections, I discuss one of the major barriers to this cooperation as well as a place where the interest convergence between Jewish and Muslim students seems most obvious.

Institutional Equity. At MU, Jewish and Muslim students have inequitable access to student government and, therefore, to money, resources, and support. The JSU has a formal role within student government; the MSA does not. This both perpetuates Christian privilege by giving the religion that Christianity sprang from a special place and further marginalizes Muslims, and likely other minority religious groups that were not part of this study, by not giving them something that is given to another minority religious group.

At different institutions different people control this aspect of the campus. This might be a decision made by students, by student affairs administrators, by other kinds of administrators, or even, particularly at small colleges, by faculty. Equity of all sorts is receiving lots of attention in higher education right now, and religious equity should be no different. An ideal solution might be to create an interreligious council that is part of student government and has representatives from every religious group present on campus as well as representatives for atheists, agnostics, and other non-believers.

Ethical Implications. Eboo Patel and Mary Ellen Geiss (2015) ask, “Given the prominence of religious diversity in both the broader culture generally and in higher education specifically, shouldn’t this dimension of identity be elevated to a similar level of importance?” They assert, and I agree, that religion and worldview should be attended to as relevant aspect of diversity, as relevant, at least for some, as, for example, race or sexual orientation (Patel & Geiss, 2015). Patel has also identified many of the same concerns that I have in this study including the lack of engagement between Muslims and Jews and the ways in which religious students, especially minority religion students, might feel marginalized on campus. “When I go to a campus where the Muslim Student Association and the Hillel are not talking to each other...my question to them is, ‘Who did you feed in Ramallah by not talking to Hillel? Who did you keep safe in the south of Israel by not talking to the MSA?’” (Goodstein, 2011, para. 10). Schools that Patel has worked with, like Loyola University in Chicago, noted that today’s religious landscape is different than the one that higher education leadership grew up in and that addressing this is imperative (Goodstein, 2011).

Patel is leading the push to include religion in diversity work in higher education; this is an issue of marginality and mattering (Schlossberg, 1989). Per Schlossberg (1989), students who

feel like they matter are more likely to succeed in higher education, and conversely, students who feel marginalized are more likely to struggle. Religion is an axis of marginalization in higher education. In his 2015 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Patel reports on two telling stories about how far we still have to go in addressing religion, religious inclusion, and religious marginalization as ethical issues in higher education. First, he tells the story of Rachel Beyda, a Jewish UCLA undergraduate who applied for a role on the university's judicial board. At her appointment interview she was asked, "'Given that you are a Jewish student and very active in the Jewish community, how do you see yourself being able to maintain an unbiased view?'" (Patel, 2015, para. 2). This is a clear example religious marginalization and Christian privilege playing out in higher education.

If I were a betting man, I would wager that if Beyda were black, gay, or Mexican, the student-government representative would have approached those identities more as they did her gender than as they did her religion. The histories, symbols, and solidarities (in other words, the biases) accompanying those identities would have been welcomed and understood as assets rather than liabilities. So why was being Jewish different? (Patel, 2015, para. 4)

So, why was being Jewish different? There could be many answers, but one of them is certainly Christian privilege. This is further demonstrated by another anecdote that Patel offers in the same article:

I recently spoke with a group of progressive student-affairs professionals, the kind of people who lead with their chin when it comes to diversity issues. When I asked how many of them had organized campus programs or protests related to the role of racism in the killing of Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Mo., there was vigorous applause. When I

asked about programs or protests about the role that Islamophobia might have played in the execution-style murders of three young Muslim college students in North Carolina?

Virtual silence. (Patel, 2015, para. 8)

Here Muslims rather than Jews are marginalized, but, again, religion is not treated with the same kind of respect and gravitas as other kinds of identity. If U.S. higher education is to make sure all students matter, religion cannot be ignore (Patel, 2015); to do so only bolsters Christian privilege.

Food. Clearly, food on campus was (and is) a major issue for many Jewish and Muslim students. This was the place where Christian privilege was most easily demonstrable. Increasing the religious literacy of both the management and the workers of dining halls would likely help ameliorate some of the issues the participants in this study encountered. Additionally, more cooperation between Muslims and Jews might give them additional leverage for pushing for solutions that could work for both groups. For example, Joseph noted that one dining hall on campus uses separate tongs for every item served. This eliminates cross contamination, a concern for both Muslims and Jews. This is a simple solution to a real problem that could be advocated for by a coalition of Jewish and Muslim students.

Colleges and universities need to provide for the religious dietary needs of students, and, if that is somehow impossible, those students must be excused from having a dining plan and perhaps from living on campus. More than one participant talked about friends who had meals plans they could never use because of their religious dietary needs, and Simone talked about often eating just one meal per day because of the limited options for her. Serving less pork and rarely or never using pork as a flavoring agent would go a long way towards making eating in dining halls easier for both Jews and Muslims. While it would be ideal to provide for every

single religious dietary need to the fullest extent, even small changes, like labeling what is in each dish for not only allergens but also religious concern ingredients, are appreciated and noticed by students. Oberlin College also provides a potential model, especially for smaller schools, with their Kosher-Halal Co-op, “a proudly interfaith community, following Jewish and Muslim dietary laws, and facilitating interfaith cooperation, education, and friendship” (OSCA, 2015).

Adjacent Support. Every single Jewish participant, even Lindsay who was not currently especially involved, mentioned Hillel as an important part of their support network at MU. For many of them, it was a second home, a place where they found community with their co-religionists. There is no such equivalent national organization for American Muslims. The fact that there is not one is not a negative reflection on the U.S. Muslim community. While there have been Muslims in the U.S. since before it was the United States, Muslims have only recently become a part of American life in sizeable numbers. Also, because of the current political climate, when Muslims organize, they are often viewed as suspect. For example, Zaza talked about how the previous iteration of Students for Justice in Palestine at MU had been shut down by the university because of accusations that they were sending money to Hamas, even though the group had no money at MU.

So, with that in mind, I am hesitant, as someone who is not a Muslim, to tell the Muslim community what they need to do. However, it is clear that Hillel provides a kind of support to Jewish students that Muslim students simply are not getting. If possible, the U.S. Muslim community should work together to create something similar to Hillel (or like Newman House, the equivalent organization for Catholics) for Muslim college students in order to mitigate the role that Christian privilege plays in their college experiences.

Implications for Theory

Since this was primarily an exploratory study, it began with minimal theory. However, the data fit perfectly with Ahmadi and Cole's (2015) proposed "conceptual framework for understanding the campus climate for religious minority students" (p. 178). As is detailed early in this chapter, the participants experienced all of the aspects described by Ahmadi and Cole, and as also mentioned earlier, this study also has implications for understanding the history of religion and higher education in the United States.

Implications for Research

This study is just the beginning of understanding the experiences of religious minority students. I looked only at Jewish and Muslim students and explored their experiences within the framework of Christian privilege. This gives us only a tiny peek at the college experiences of religious minority students.

Similar or related studies should be undertaken with other religious minority populations as well as with atheists, agnostics, and other non-believers. MU is a large, public, research intensive institution in the Midwest so additional studies should be done at other types of institutions and in other parts of the United States. All of the Jews in my study were involved with Hillel to some extent and most were in-state students, so future studies of Jewish students should be sure to include Jews who are not involved with Hillel and out-of-state Jews. Also, all of the Muslim participants were in-state students so future studies of Muslim students traveling out of state for college should be undertaken. Future studies should also attempt to explore how different institutional structures impact the role of Christian privilege on campus. My study was a qualitative study so confirming similar findings through quantitative methods is called for. Future studies should also use focus groups, either in conjunction with or in place of one-on-one

interviews, and there is a need for both intrareligious focus groups and interreligious focus groups since different group configurations would likely produce different kinds of conversations and data. Finally, there should be studies undertaken using Ahmadi and Cole's (2015) framework as the guiding force of the study rather than applied on the back end, as was the case here.

Expanding the History

One of the foundational texts of this study was Geiger's (2005) "The Ten Generations of American Higher Education." Geiger's piece ends around the end of the 20th century. Today Geiger would need to add an eleventh or even possibly twelfth generation of American higher education. Even since the writing of Geiger's piece, certainly since the late 20th century, and definitely over the course of American higher education, the demographics of the U.S. college student population and the population as a whole have shifted dramatically. Protestants are no longer the overwhelming majorities. Almost every world religion is present within the nation's borders. Muslims now live in the United States in number larger than ever before; Jews have slowly come to have a very different social standing than they did until the mid to late 20th century. Jewish quotas are, to the best of available knowledge, no longer part of U.S. higher education nor are there quotas for other religious minority groups. Historically, Christians manifested their need for assurance of dominance through measures meant to keep non-Christians out of higher education through policies like quotas and barriers like the SAT. Today, Christians assert that dominance in different ways like state budget appropriations and large, public celebrations of their most important holidays. An updated "Eleven Generations of American Higher Education" or "Twelve Generations of Higher Education" would particularly

need to address the rapidly shifting college demographics and how that manifests in American higher education.

Summary

I interviewed 13 participants, seven Muslims and six Jews, in order to better understand the role that Christian privilege played in their undergraduate college experiences. The data confirmed themes from the existing literature as well as offered up new themes. Additionally, the study showed that Ahmadi and Cole's (2015) framework for understanding campus climate for religious minority students is a viable framework for empirical studies. Christian privilege played a role in the experiences of all 13 of my participants, and 12 of them were able to articulate that in a variety of ways. However, the role that Christian privilege played was molded by the institutional and larger environmental context and varied, both between the two religious groups and between individual participants.

Conclusion

Christian privilege does play a role in the college experiences of Muslim and Jewish undergraduates. What the impact of that role is, is beyond the scope of this study, but even without knowing what exactly Christian privilege does to the college experiences of non-Christian college students, this study showed a variety of ways that Christian privilege appears in the experiences and lives of Jewish and Muslims college students. It also showed that institutional structure and adjacent support systems play into both how Christian privilege appears in students' lives and what kind of role it plays.

Finally, the culture in the United States and, therefore, on American college campuses is one that allows for people, even highly educated people, to be ignorant of religions that are not their own. Because the vast majority of people in the U.S. are Christian, this means that it is

likely that most Americans have limited knowledge of any religions outside of Christianity. However, religion is a major aspect of many people's identities and ignoring that aspect of self for non-Christian students is not a positive outcome for those students or for colleges and universities. Just as on many, many colleges campuses some combination of staff, faculty, and students are required to take part in trainings on sexual orientation, gender identity, international cultures and customs, and sexual harassment, to name just a few, colleges and universities should be working towards a religiously literate and inclusive campus community. With this kind of education, the lives of non-Christian students, including Jews and Muslims, would make more sense to the people teaching and serving them, and that has the potential to create a campus where non-Christian student can truly belong, not only in spaces like Hillel but also on the campus as a whole.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: A Beginning List of Christian Privileges

Figure 2: A Beginning List of Christian Privileges

a beginning list of christian privileges

1. I can be sure to hear music on the radio and watch specials on television that celebrate the holidays of my religion.
2. I can be sure that my holy day (Sunday) is taken into account when states pass laws (e.g., the sale of liquor) and when retail stores decide their hours (e.g., on Saturdays, they are open about 12 hours; on Sundays, they are closed or open for only a few hours).
3. I can assume that I will not have to work or go to school on my significant religious holidays.
4. I can be financially successful and not have people attribute that to the greed of my religious group.
5. I can be sure that when told about the history of civilization, I am shown people of my religion who made it what it is.
6. I do not need to educate my children to be aware of religious persecution for their own daily physical and emotional protection.
7. I can write an article about Christian privilege without putting my own religion on trial.
8. My religious group gives me little fear about ignoring the perspectives and powers of people of other religions.

9. I do not need to worry about the ramifications of disclosing my religious identity to others.
10. I can easily find academic courses and institutions that give attention only to people of my religion.
11. I can worry about religious privilege without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
12. I can be sure that when my children make holiday crafts, they will bring home artistic symbols of the Christian religion (e.g., Easter bunny, Christmas tree).
13. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my religious group.

Figure 2 (cont'd)

14. I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my religion most of the time.
15. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a "credit to my religion" or being singled out as being different from other members of my religious group.
16. I can, if I wish to identify myself, safely identify as Christian without fear of repercussions or prejudice because of my religious identity.
17. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence and importance of the Christian religion.
18. I can protect my children from people who are religiously different from them.
19. I can have a "Jesus is Lord" bumper sticker or Ichthus (Christian fish) on my car and not worry about someone vandalizing my car because of it.
20. I can buy foods (e.g., in grocery store, at restaurants) that fall within the scope of the rules of my religious group.
21. I can travel and be sure to find a comparable place of worship when away from my home community.
22. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my religion will not work against me.
23. I can be sure when I hear someone in the media talking about g-d that they are talking about my (the Christian) g-d.
24. I can be fairly sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge," I will be facing a person of my religion.
25. I can be sure that people are knowledgeable about the holidays in my religion and will greet me with the appropriate holiday greeting (e.g., Merry Christmas).
26. I can remain oblivious to the language and customs of other religious groups without feeling any penalty for such a lack of interest and/or knowledge.
27. I can display a Christmas tree and/or hang holly leaves in my home without worrying about my home being vandalized because of my religious identification.
28. I can be fairly sure that some hate group does not exist whose goal is to eradicate my religious group from the planet.

Appendix B: Religious Privilege Questions

Figure 3: Religious Privilege Questions

1. It is likely that state and federal holidays coincide with my religious practices, thereby having little to no impact on my job and/or education.
 2. I can talk openly about my religious practices without concern for how it will be received by others.
 3. I can be sure to hear music on the radio and watch specials on television that celebrate the holidays of my religion.
 4. When told about the history of civilization, I can be sure that I am shown people of my religion made it what it is.
 5. I can worry about religious privilege without being perceived as "self-interested" or "self-serving."
 6. I can have a "Jesus is Lord" bumper sticker or Ichthys (Christian fish) on my car and not worry about someone vandalizing my car because of it.
 7. I can share my holiday greetings without being fully conscious of how it may impact those who do not celebrate the same holidays. I can also be sure that people are knowledgeable about the holidays of my religion and will greet me with the appropriate holiday greeting (e.g., Merry Christmas, Happy Easter, etc.).
-
- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. I can probably assume that there is a universality of religious experience. 9. I can deny Christian privilege by asserting that all religions are essentially the same. 10. I probably do not need to learn the religious or spiritual customs of others, and I am likely not penalized for not knowing them. 11. I am probably unencumbered by having to explain why I am or am not doing things related to my religious norms on a daily basis. 12. I am likely not judged by the improper actions of others in my religious group. 13. If I wish, usually I can be exclusively among those from my religious group most of the time (in work, school, or at home). 14. I can assume that my safety, or the safety of my family, will not be put in jeopardy by disclosing my religion to others at work or at school. 15. It is likely that mass media represents my religion widely AND positively. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 27. I can be gentle and affirming to people without being characterized as an exception to my religion. 28. I am never asked to speak on behalf of all Christians. 29. My citizenship and immigration status will likely not be questioned, and my background will likely not be investigated, because of my religion. 30. My place of worship is probably not targeted for violence because of sentiment against my religion. 31. I can be sure that my religion will not work against me when seeking medical or legal help. 32. My religion will not cause teachers to pigeonhole me into certain professions based on the assumed "prowess" of my religious group. 33. I will not have my children taken from me by governmental authorities who have been made aware of my religious affiliation. | <p>without fear of disapproval, violence, and/or vandalism.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 44. The central figure of my religion is used at the major point of reference for my calendaring system (i.e., B.C. and A.D., as well as B.C.E. and C.E.). 45. I can define the belief system of, and/or its practice by, another group as valid or invalid regardless of my level of knowledge of it. <p>There is a two-part strategy to using this handout. The first part includes distributing it to each individual in a group, and having them review all of the examples on their own with four different "lenses" in mind; that of: (1) a Christian; (2) a person from another "traditional" faith (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, etc.); (3) a person from a "non-traditional" faith (Wiccan, Santera/o, Espiritualista, Voodooist, Asatru, Shinto, Yoruban, Druid, Native American, etc.); and (4) an Agnostic or Atheist.</p> <p>After every member of the group has completed this review, the second part of</p> |
|---|--|--|

Figure 3 (cont'd)

16. It is likely that I can find items to buy that represent my religious norms and holidays with relative ease (e.g., food, decorations, greeting cards, etc.).	34. Disclosure of my religion to an adoption agency will likely not prevent me from being able to adopt children.
17. I can speak or write about my religion, and even critique other religions, and have these perspectives listened to, even published, with relative ease and without much fear of reprisal.	35. If I wish to give my children a parochial religious education, I probably have a variety of options nearby.
18. I could write an article on Christian privilege without putting my own religion on trial.	36. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence and importance of my religion.
19. I can travel without others assuming that I put them at risk because of my religion.	37. I can be sure that when someone in the media is referring to God, they are referring to my (Christian) God.
20. It is likely that my religion will not put me at risk from others when I travel.	38. I can easily find academic courses and institutions that give attention only to people of my religion.
21. I can be financially successful without the assumption from others that this success is connected to my religion.	39. My religion and religious holidays are so completely "normal" that, in many ways, they may appear to no longer have any religious significance at all.
22. I can protect myself (and my children) from people who may not like me (or them) based on my religion.	40. My religious holidays, having been legally constructed as "secular," can be openly practiced in public institutional settings without a thought given to the violation of the separation of religion and state.
23. Law enforcement officials will likely assume I am a non-threatening person if my religion is disclosed to them.	41. The elected and appointed officials of my government are probably members of my religious group.
24. Disclosure of my religion may actually encourage or incline law enforcement officials to perceive me as being "in the right" or "unbiased."	42. When swearing an oath in court or for employment, I am probably making this oath by placing my hand on the scripture of my religion.
25. I can safely assume that any authority figure will generally be someone of my religion.	43. I can openly display my religious symbol(s) on my person or property
26. I can talk about my religion, even proselytize, and be characterized as "sharing the word," instead of impos-	

Appendix C: Participant Invitation

Participate in a study about the experiences of Muslim and Jewish college students!

Would you be interested in being a part of a research study of the experiences Jewish and Muslim undergraduates? My name is Brianna (Bree) Becker. I am a doctoral student at Michigan State University in the Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education program. The project is being supervised by Dr. Steve Weiland, Professor in the Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education program at Michigan State University.

I am looking for two kinds of participants:

1. Participants who self-identify as practicing Muslim, are between 18 and 24 years old, have two Muslim parents, are domestic students in at least their second semester at MSU, attended high school in the United States, and were raised with Islam as the only religion in the home.
2. Participants who self-identify as practicing Jews, are between 18 and 24 years old, have two Jewish parents, are domestic students in at least their second semester at MSU, attended high school in the United States, and were raised with Judaism as the only religion in the home

By participating in the study you would be contributing to the scholarly body of work about non-Christian students, specifically Jews and Muslims, and how they experience college. Your participation would include at least one interview—possibly more depending on time constraints—that would take about an hour or two of your time. If you are selected, upon successful completion of the interview, you will be compensated with a \$25 Amazon gift certificate for your time and effort.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can stop participating in the study at any time. Please contact Bree Becker at becker59@msu.edu if you are interested in participating or for more information.

Thank you,

Brianna (Bree) Becker, Study Coordinator

Doctoral Candidate, Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education

Becker59@msu.edu

Steven Weiland, Doctoral Advisor

Professor

Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education

410 Erickson Hall

weiland@msu.edu

Appendix D: Participant Consent Form

Research Study Title: Christian Privilege and the Undergraduate College Experiences of Muslim and Jewish Students

This is a consent form for a research project that will examine the experiences of Muslim and Jewish undergraduate students at MSU. If you choose to participate, we will conduct one (1) face-to-face interview with open-ended questions that will take approximately one (1) to two (2) hours to complete. If necessary due to time constraints, the interview can be split into two (2) sessions. The interviews will take place in a “safe place” agreed upon by both the participant and the researcher where privacy will be respected. Once you have completed the entire interview, you will be given or sent a \$25 gift certificate for your participation.

The researcher will audio record responses. All identifying information will be removed or assigned pseudonyms. Your personal identity will be kept confidential. The results of the survey may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous.

Your participation will contribute to our knowledge of how Jewish and Muslim undergraduates experience college. Brianna (Bree) Becker is the study coordinator for this research project and is working under the supervision of Dr. Steven Weiland.

You must be at least 18 years of age or older to participate. Your participation is completely voluntary. You have the right to answer all of the questions that the researcher asks, or you may skip any that you find too uncomfortable. You may withdraw at any time from this research project. Your responses or decision whether or not to participate in this study will have no penalty of any kind and will not have any effect on your status as a student. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Bree Becker at becker59@msu.edu. You may also contact Dr. Steve Weiland, Professor in Educational Administration, 410 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, by phone: (517)-355-2395, or email: weiland@msu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, you would like to obtain more information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University Human Research Protection Programs at (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, or email: irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 202 Olds Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing MI 48824.

By engaging in the face-to-face interview you voluntarily agree to be in this research project. If you would like a copy of this consent form, one will be provided. Thank you for your participation!

Appendix E: Participant Demographic Survey

Demographic Survey for Potential Interview Participants

First name?

Study pseudonym?

Age?

When did you begin at MSU?

What is your class standing at MSU?

Are you a domestic student?

Major?

Religion?

Sect, tradition, stream, branch of your religion?

Are all of your parents the same religion as you? Your grandparents? (If not, what other religion(s)?)

Was any religion aside from the one you identify with practiced in your home?

Would you say that you currently practice your religion?

How religious/observant would you describe yourself as?

Sex/gender?

Hometown and state?

If you know, when did your family come to USA and from where?

What sort of high school did you attend (public, private, parochial)?

Did you attend high school in the United States?

Approximately what percent of the community you grew up was the same religion as you?

Appendix F: Participant Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

1. What has your experience, as a Muslim/Jew, at MSU been like so far?
 - a. What role has being a Muslim/Jew played in your experiences at MSU?
 - b. Can you give me an example of how being Muslim/Jewish has been a part of your MSU experience?
 - c. How do you see your practice of Judaism/Islam and/or your status as a Jew/Muslim relating to your life as an MSU student?
2. Next, we are going to delve deeper in your experiences as Jew/Muslim in specific contexts at MSU. I am interested both in your experiences individually as a Muslim/Jew and in your observations about how religions and religious groups, both your own and those of others, are treated and discussed in these different contexts. (Remind as needed that the focus is on religion.)
3. First, can you tell me about your experiences and observations in the classrooms?
 - a. Can you give me one or more specific examples?
 - b. Have any of your experiences been particularly positive and negative? Can you give particular examples?
 - c. Is this different in any way inside your major versus outside of it?
 - d. Can you tell more about the role you see faculty playing in these situations? How about your fellow students?
4. Next, I would like to learn more about your living situation at college. Do you currently live on or off campus? Tell me a little bit more about that. (For students past their first year who live off campus ask if they lived in before and then run through these questions for both on campus and off.)
 - a. What is/was your experience like living there? What did you observe?
 - b. Can you give me one or more specific examples?
 - c. Have any of your experiences been particularly positive and negative? Can you give particular examples?
 - d. For non-first year students: what made you choose to live on or off campus?
 - e. For students who are off campus: what caused you to choose to move off campus?
 - f. What role did dining services/the dining hall play in your on campus living experience(s)?
5. What groups and/or organizations are you involved with at MSU?
 - a. What have your experiences been like in that group/org?
 - b. Can you give me one or more specific examples?
 - c. Have any of your experiences been particularly positive and negative? Can you give particular examples?
 - d. Are you involved with any groups related to your religion?
 - i. If yes, what? Can you tell me about the group(s)?
 - ii. If yes, why?
 - iii. If no, why not?
 - iv. If yes, what kind of experiences, support, etc. is that group providing you with? Can you give some examples?

- v. If no, is there something that would entice you to become involved with a religious group?
- 6. Have you had a job and/or internship while at MSU? Can you tell me about your experiences with that?
 - a. Can you give me one or more specific examples?
 - b. Have any of your experiences been particularly positive and negative? Can you give particular examples?
- 7. Have you made use of the student health center and/or the counseling center?
 - a. Specifically thinking about yourself as a Jew/Muslim, what was your experience like?
 - b. Can you give me one or more specific examples?
 - c. Have any of your experiences been particularly positive and negative? Can you give particular examples?
- 8. Have you used any student services (e.g. study abroad, Greek life, athletics, academic advising, identity focused resources like the Multicultural Center, the LBGT Resource Center, The Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, etc.) at MSU?
 - a. Specifically thinking about yourself as a Jew/Muslim, what was your experience like?
 - b. Can you give me one or more specific examples?
 - c. Have any of your experiences been particularly positive and negative? Can you give particular examples?
- 9. How do you think your fellow students see your religion/religious tradition? How do you think they view religious traditions/religions aside from yours?
 - a. Can you give me some specific examples that illustrate this?
- 10. Do you think your experience at MSU differs from students who are not Muslim/Jewish and if so, how?
 - a. (If they do not specifically mention Christian students but affirmed difference:) How do you think your experiences differs specifically from the experiences of Christian students?
- 11. Tell me about how you practice your religion while at MSU. Can you give me some examples of what this practice looks like?
 - a. How easy or difficulty is that practice?
 - b. What has supported you in that practice while at MSU?
 - c. What hasn't?
 - d. Are you aware of any MSU policies that support you in your religion and/or religious practice? Any that are not supportive?
- 12. Tell me about your observations about religion on the MSU campus. What do you see?
 - a. What kind of religious observances are visible on campus?
 - b. Do you see any particular religious group(s) as receiving more attention than other groups?
 - c. Do you see any particular religious group(s) as receiving less attention than other groups?
 - d. What encounters, if any, have you had with other religious traditions, aside from your own, at MSU?
- 13. At MSU, do you think particular religions or religious groups matter more than others?
 - a. If yes, can you give me examples of this? If no, how do you know this is the case?

14. At MSU, do you think particular religions or religious groups are marginalized?
 - a. If yes, can you give me examples of this? If no, how do you know this is the case?
15. Next, I am going to read you a quote, and I would like you to share your response to it with me. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

“The religion of contemporary America is pluriform, more complex and multifaceted than it has ever been before. It is not just that religion has become more pluralistic...but also that the notion of religion itself has undergone major restructuring” (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012, pp. 26–27).
16. Is there anything else about your experience as a Muslim/Jew at MSU that you would like to share with me?
17. Finally, are you familiar with the concept of social “privilege”? (If no, end. If yes, continue.)
 - a. Are you familiar with the idea of Christian privilege?
 - b. Whether you are or are not, can you give me what you think is or could be a definition for Christian privilege?
 - c. Using your definition, can you think of any examples at MSU?
 - i. Ask for specifics about examples
18. Now that you’ve given some thought to the idea of Christian privilege, is there anything more about your experience as a Muslim/Jew at MSU that you would like to share with me?

Jacobsen, D. & Jacobsen, R. H. (2012). *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Appendix G: IRB Exempt Determination

Figure 4: IRB Application with Exempt Status

**MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY**

January 26, 2016

To: Steven Weiland
410 Erickson Hall

Re: **IRB# x16-081e** Category: Exempt 2
Approval Date: January 25, 2016

Title: Christian Privilege and the Undergraduate College Experiences of Muslim and Jewish Students

The Institutional Review Board has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that **your project has been deemed as exempt** in accordance with federal regulations.

The IRB has found that your research project meets the criteria for exempt status and the criteria for the protection of human subjects in exempt research. **Under our exempt policy the Principal Investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of human subjects** in this project as outlined in the assurance letter and exempt educational material. The IRB office has received your signed assurance for exempt research. A copy of this signed agreement is appended for your information and records.

Renewals: Exempt protocols do not need to be renewed. If the project is completed, please submit an *Application for Permanent Closure*.

Revisions: Exempt protocols do not require revisions. However, if changes are made to a protocol that may no longer meet the exempt criteria, a new initial application will be required.

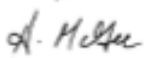
Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects and change the category of review, notify the IRB office promptly. Any complaints from participants regarding the risk and benefits of the project must be reported to the IRB.

Follow-up: If your exempt project is not completed and closed after three years, the IRB office will contact you regarding the status of the project and to verify that no changes have occurred that may affect exempt status.

Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the IRB office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or via email at IRB@msu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Harry McGee, MPH
SIRB Chair

c: Brianna Becker

**Initial IRB
Application
Determination
*Exempt***



**Office of Regulatory Affairs
Human Research
Protection Programs**

Biomedical & Health
Institutional Review Board
(SIRB)

Community Research
Institutional Review Board
(CRIRB)

Social Science
Behavioral/Education
Institutional Review Board
(SIRB)

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