

Identity Development among Muslim Indonesian-American College Students: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

An increase of the Muslim population in the United States results in a growing number of Muslim-American young adults entering post-secondary education. However, they are frequently misunderstood and have become increasingly scrutinized and prejudiced since the event of 9/11. An insufficient understanding of this group of students has hindered institutions and their agents from identifying their needs and providing necessary supports for enhancing their experiences and development during in college. Most of existing research studies on Muslim-American students in college focused more on Middle Eastern descent students. This study to understand Muslim Indonesian-American college students' experiences and their identity formation. This study utilizes the Reconceptualised Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (RMMDI) proposed by Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) as a lens in understanding experiences and identity formation shared by Muslim Indonesian-American college students. The following research questions guided this study: (a) What are the lived experiences of Muslim Indonesian-American college students regarding their identity development in college? and (b) What are salient identities to Muslim Indonesian-American college students? Through purposeful sampling, six participants were selected in this qualitative study. Questionnaire and interviews were utilized for data collection. The collected data were analysed using the analysis procedures proposed by Moustakas (1994) including epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and the synthesis of structural/textural descriptions. The study revealed the salience of four identity dimensions for Muslim Indonesian-American students; religion, culture, social class, and gender. These identity dimensions were found to be impacted by varied contextual factors such as family, the 9/11, peer support, and college support.

Keywords: identity development, Indonesian, Muslim-Americans, phenomenology