International Male Students' First-Year Experience

by

(Mohd). Rashed Al-Haque

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of four racialized, male, first-year, international students attending a university in southern Ontario and living in university residence. Through four one-on-one interviews, my qualitative study sought to uncover the challenges, needs, and opportunities of these students. In addition to cultural and academic adjustment, my study focused on how the participants preserved their masculine and cultural/religious identities in a Western university. A secondary purpose of my study was to examine how these four international students experienced living in university residences, what challenges they faced, and how their specific needs were met.

Four themes emerged from the interviews. First, the participants outlined their difficulties adjusting to Canadian university culture. While some enjoyed the transition to Canada, others found adjusting their cultural identities challenging. Second, these participants struggled to adjust to the academic rigour and workload during their first year at university. Despite the demands of university academics, the participants generally welcomed the freedom and flexibility of university life, which allowed them to create their own work schedules and engage in their social lives. Third, the participants maintained their masculine and cultural identities, to more or lesser degrees, despite being immersed in the social and cultural norms of Canadian university life. While some felt isolated within Queen's University because of their different cultural and masculine identities, overall, these participants valued their own identities and resolved to preserve them. Finally, the participants discussed the benefits and challenges of living in university residences. While residences tended to provide the participants with a sense

of community and belonging, sometimes it was challenging living in a loud and hectic

environment.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As a Residence Don and mentor for first-year students moving into the university, I have witnessed firsthand how new students adjust to university life. While many cope well, others find the change challenging. Academic responsibilities, new social circles, and increased freedom are among the factors that make the experience both exciting and difficult. In my experience, international students suffer from the added difficulty of adjusting to a new academic environment, a new culture, and a new country. Many of them leave family, familiar customs, and long lasting friends, making their residence experience more disorienting than that of domestic students. As an international student myself back in my first year of university, I have personally experienced some of these challenges.

According to Grebennikov and Skaines (2007), the number of students seeking an education outside their home country will grow from 1.8 million to 7.2 million between the years 2000 and 2025. This trend is evident in the changing demographics of North American society, which is more ethnically diverse now than at any other previous time (Chun-Mei, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). Now more than ever, foreign students form a vital part the student body at universities across North America. According to Rose-Redwood (2010) and Poyrazli and Kavanaugh (2006), there are around half a million international students enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States alone.

The challenges international students face can be exacerbated by many factors, including race and cultural differences, especially if the host university is ethnically and culturally homogenous (Al-Shareideh & Goe, 1998; Rose-Redwood, 2010; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1991) and culturally distinct from the international student's

homeland (Chun-Mei, Kuh, & Carini, 2005; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). University staff members have the opportunity to support their international students and help them transition into university so that these students can adapt culturally and socially into their new environment. University administration, professors, and residence staff may be able to provide opportunities for richer cultural and social exchanges between foreign students and their domestic counterparts to bridge the cultural gap that may exist between the two groups of students. Through institutional support and programming, foreign students may be able to better overcome cultural and societal barriers, as well as dramatically reduce the challenges they face.

While there are numerous quantitative studies including international students' experiences (Chun-Mei, Kuh, & Carini, 2005; Grebennikov & Skaines, 2007; Krause, Harley, James, & McInnis, 2005; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), the students in these studies tend to be international graduate or upper-year students (Brown, 2009; Myles & Cheng, 2003; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Prescott & Hellsten, 2005; Rose-Redwood, 2010; Turner, 2006; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1991) rather than first-year students. Also, most studies are based in the United States. Few have been conducted in Canada (Myles & Cheng, 2003). Finally, these studies mainly focus on academic achievement, social engagement, and the overall university experience, but place little emphasis on residence halls, a space in which first-year students spend much of their time. Thus this study is novel not only in its exclusive focus on the experiences of racialized, international, male students entering a primarily white university environment but in its special emphasis on these students' experiences of living in university residence, and in its framing of their experiences in a Canadian context.

This study has the potential to impact both university policy and practice. It might allow Student Affairs professionals to better meet the needs of international students who require help adjusting to university life. In addition, Residence Dons and other residence staff members could use the findings to understand how racialized, international, male students experience residences, and thereby better support international students. Queen's University provides an excellent setting for this study. Its high reputation attracts many international students. Furthermore, its predominantly white, Canadian population provides an ideal environment in which to examine the experiences of international students in an unfamiliar university setting.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of racialized, male, first-year, international students attending a university in southern Ontario and living in university residence. A secondary purpose of my study was to examine how international students experienced living in university residences, what challenges they faced, and how their specific needs were met. The findings from my study have great potential to help Student Affairs professionals and residence staff provide better support and programs to aid international students adjust into university life.

To guide my research, I asked the following questions:

1. What were the cultural adjustment experiences of four racialized, male, first-year, international students in this Canadian post-secondary institution?

2. To what extent did being a male student affect the participants' university experience in Canada?

3. What were the residence experiences of four international students who were living away from home in a university setting?

Theoretical Framework

I employed two primary theoretical frameworks to inform my research questions and investigation: cross-cultural exchange and masculinity theory. Through these theoretical lenses, I attempted to understand how racialized, international, male students experienced university life in Canada during their first year of postsecondary study.

Cross-Cultural Exchange

Culture is a "learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms, and social practices, which affect behaviour of a large group of people" (Lustig & Koester, 2005, p. 25). Culture seeks to "organize, integrate, and maintain the psychological patterns of the individual primarily in the formative years of childhood" (Kim, 2001, p. 46). These definitions highlight that culture is learned, that it is shared across groups of people, and that it is holistic in its impact as it affects every aspect of an individual's life. From an early age, individuals go through an unconscious, enculturation process that involves learning from the home culture. Enculturation forms the cognitive, affective, and behavioural response to society (Kim, 2001).

When individuals move from one culture to another, they engage in cross-cultural interaction. There are two forms of cross-cultural interaction. The first involves intra-social exchange, which is contact between cultures within a multicultural society or country. Within a multicultural country, many different groups of people representing a

variety of cultural, racial, and religious groups exist within the population. Within this multicultural, pluralistic society, the different groups of people engage in cross-cultural interaction and exchange ideas, norms, and cultural traditions. The second involves cross-cultural exchange, which is contact between different societies. Cross-cultural exchange can occur as a result of immigration or migration to societies that are culturally different from the home culture. During cross-cultural exchange, an individual may need to cope with stress associated with adapting from one culture to another. Cross-cultural exchange involves cultural learning with cultural knowledge and skills providing valuable resources for cross-cultural adaptation (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

The cross-cultural exchange between foreign students and their new host environment can lead to cross-cultural adaptation. Cross-cultural adaptation is a process in which newcomers and immigrants gradually change their identity within a new environment. There are two forms of adaptation. A short-term adaptive process is known as cultural adjustment, whereas a long-term adaptive process is known as acculturation. Unlike cultural adjustment, acculturation involves the integration of new norms, values, and symbols of the host culture into an individual's identity. However, both forms of cross-cultural adaptation involve identity change and present four major challenges for newcomers: divergence, introduction to host culture, loss of symbols, and loss of identity. First, there are often divergences in core beliefs and values between one's home culture and host culture. Second, as newcomers enter a host culture, they are introduced to the host's cultural symbols and images. The divergences in core beliefs and introduction to new cultural symbols in turn may result in an eventual loss of

newcomers' valued images of their culture and the symbols that represent their cultural identity. This loss of identity is yet another challenge within an unfamiliar new environment. In addition, the newcomer's lack of social competence to respond to the new setting appropriately and effectively makes the adaptation process difficult (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Regardless of the extent of cross-cultural adaptation, newcomers need to negotiate new roles and standards of engagement to fit into their host society. Adapting to these standards can prove stressful, and can impact newcomers' self-identity, self-efficacy, and adjustment to their new society (Colvin & Jaffar, 2007).

Different individuals adopt different strategies of cross-cultural adaptation, ranging from total immersion within their host culture to complete detachment from it (Burnapp, 2006; Pires, Stanton, & Ostenfeld, 2006; Ye, 2006). For many, it is a balancing act, which involves both adapting to the new culture and striving to retain their own cultural identity (Brown, 2009; Pires et al., 2006). Newcomers have to ask themselves two questions: whether or not they want to retain their cultural identity and whether or not they want to relate to the host culture. There are four possible outcomes based on the responses to these two questions. Newcomers can integrate themselves by retaining their cultural identity and by relating to their host culture. Second, they can disassociate from their own culture and then relate to their host culture. Newcomers can also either separate themselves from the host culture by retaining their cultural identity and refusing to relate to their host culture. Finally, individuals can marginalize themselves fully by forsaking both their cultural identity and their host culture (Lustig & Koester, 2005; Ward et al., 2001).

Ward et al. (2001) propose the ABC (Affective, Behavioural, and Cognitive) approach to conceptualize cross-cultural adaptation that explains how newcomers to a society will navigate their personal emotions, behaviours, and attitudes during the cross-cultural adaptation process. The affective element impacts the psychological outcomes of a cross-cultural adaptation, which involves confusion, anxiety, disorientation, and often a desire to flee. The behavioural element impacts a person's sociological experience and may involve difficulty initiating and maintaining relationships and/or underachieving socially and professionally. Finally, the cognitive element impacts both the affective and behavioural elements, which determine if newcomers will adapt, assimilate, separate, or be marginalized in the host culture (Ward et al., 2001). All cross-cultural adaptation occurs along three dimensions – affective/emotional, behavioural, and cognitive/perceptual (Anderson, 1994). The three dimensions may work in synchronization with each other to aid the individual with the adjustment process. Second, these three dimensions may be at conflict with each other to create dissonance within the individual. A third possibility is that these three dimensions act independently of each other where, for instance, behavioural change may not necessarily coincide with one's emotional, attitudinal, or cognitive change (Anderson, 1994). Thus the cross-cultural adaptation process can be stressful for the newcomer who might need to rely on social support to adapt. The newcomer needs to learn new sets of behaviours, social competencies, and non-verbal and verbal communication skills within the new culture to gain the sociological abilities to adapt to the host culture and be psychologically well (Ward et al., 2001).

Cross-cultural exchange and ultimately cross-cultural adaptation involve a dialectic process that has the possibility of being a positive yet stressful experience for people who engage in cross-cultural interactions. Cross-cultural interactions can occur on an individual level, between people of different backgrounds. By the time I interviewed the participants for my study, they had been in Canada for a short period of time. Therefore, my research used the sense of cross-cultural adjustment of racialized, male, first-year, international students at a Canadian university by employing the Affective, Behavioural, and Cognitive dimensional approach to cross-cultural adaptation (Ward et al., 2001).

Masculinity

For my study, I adopted the three-part model of gender identity development proposed by Edward and Jones (2009). The first and second parts of this model chart the movement of individuals from their initial awareness of the societal norms governing the expression of gender to their more-or-less successful efforts to conform their behaviour to these norms. My examination of the societal norms governing gender expression was informed by the "social construction" theory proposed by pro-feminist men's studies scholars (e.g., Connell, 2005; Kimmel & Messner, 2007; Levant, 1996), who emphasized the key role of social structures and contexts in the production and reinforcement of masculine gender roles, hereby accounting for the multiple forms of masculinity that co-exist within given socio-cultural contexts. The third part of the base model examines the cognitive phase in which individuals may leave behind their efforts to conform to the norms of gender expression and attempt to redefine masculinity to reflect their own individual values and beliefs. My study of the third phase of masculine

self-creation was informed by the "multiple dimensions of identity" (MDI) model

proposed by Jones and McEwen (2000), which provides a method for measuring the

contributions of a "core sense of identity" (comprised of personal attributes and

characteristics), non-gender identifications (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, religion, sexual

orientation), and contextual influences (e.g., family background, life experiences) to the

individual's self-created masculinity.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The transition into university can be difficult and stressful, which may negatively affect the lives of university students. International students' experiences in Western universities, particularly those of racialized students from non-Western societies may be more stressful than those of their domestic counterparts because international students have to adjust socially and culturally to their new environment. Lack of realistic expectations, coping with cultural differences, racialized identities, English language barriers, and unfamiliarity with the Western educational system exacerbate the stressful transition into university for foreign students. Their religious identities interact with their cultural and racialized identities to further complicate their adjustment to university. Furthermore, being a male adds to the pressures of adjusting into university life. While stresses of university can prove to be challenging for many international students, Student Affairs staff may be able to help these students cope with their stresses and provide students with tools to adapt to their new academic, cultural, and social environment.

Cultural Adjustment

Coping with cultural differences makes adjustment into university life challenging for international students and adds to their stress levels. International students face the same problems as domestic students coming to university for the first time, but they also experience issues related to immigration and cross-cultural adjustment that make it difficult to be involved in campus activities and participate in leadership roles (Kaczmarek, Matlock, Merta, Ames, & Ross, 1994). Once in university, frustration, depression, and homesickness due to their lack of familiarity with their new setting are

all common traits among international students. These students tend to report higher levels of psychosocial mal-adjustment than their domestic peers (Church, 1982; Tochkov, Levine, & Sanaka, 2010). Prescott and Hellsten (2005) highlight international students' "less than amicable transition into the Australian academic environment" (p. 91). Furthermore, upon arriving at university, many of these international students are unfamiliar with prevalent cultural norms, this unfamiliarity making it difficult for them to interact with others and meet social and academic demands.

Cultural distance between the host country and the students' home countries can be isolating and lead to stress. For example, an international student from the United Kingdom might have an easier time adjusting to a North American institution than a student from Africa would, due to the vast cultural differences between Africa and North America (Tochkov, Levine, & Sanaka, 2010; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992). Second, international students often struggle from a lack of available social networks for encouragement and support (Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992).

International students need to be able to cope with the cultural challenges associated with the host culture and adjust themselves into their new environment to succeed socially and academically. International students who can adapt to North American culture, and thereby learn to effectively interact with North American students, may be more successful in avoiding personal problems, meeting their everyday needs, and fulfilling academic demands. The formation of strong ties with their domestic peers leads to emotional gratification, fills the void of lost ties with friends and family from home, promotes higher self-esteem and a greater sense of security, and improves capacity to cope with a new environment (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998). Adjustment can

also be accelerated with the help of nationality clubs on campus, which gives students a sense of belonging (Rose-Redwood, 2010). These clubs and ethnic communities help newcomers transition by acting as cultural bridges, aiding communication, providing support with lectures, promoting meaningful learning outcomes, celebrating the students' home cultures, and helping them adapt to their new environments while maintaining their international identities (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Colvin & Jaffar, 2007; Pires, Stanton, & Ostenfeld, 2006). These groups also provide informal support for those who feel uneasy about approaching university support services (Lee & Rice, 2007).

International students with racialized backgrounds may endure a challenging and stressful transition into a Western university. Racialization on its own may create challenges for many students attending predominantly white institutions. Lack of support for diversity on campus, an unwelcoming campus environment, and lack of representation from racialized students often makes adapting to university problematic for these individuals. These students may not experience the university environment as inclusive, feel as though they do not belong, maybe treated differently, and feel tolerated as "others" by the white majority. They are more likely to experience racial-ethnic hostility and racism than other groups (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Daniels & Damons, 2011; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). Racialized students may also encounter blatant racism on campus. Even if the students are targeted by discrimination, they feel uncomfortable openly objecting to such behaviour, which adds to feelings of alienation (Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). Racialized students are more likely to experience greater pressure to conform to stereotypes (Ancis, Sedlacek,

& Mohr, 2000). These experiences are aggravated by discrimination and lack of institutional support for racialized students. Participants in Jones, Castellanos, and Cole's (2002) study noted that "institution administrators spoke a lot about diversity but acted minimally toward creating a culturally diverse, tolerant and sensitive environment" (p. 28). The lack of institutional support, silent response by administrators during racist incidents, and the celebration of mainstream identity reinforce a culture of whiteness and hinder non-racialized students from opening their minds to diversity (Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). Furthermore, racialized students are more likely to experience less equitable treatment by faculty, staff, and teaching assistants and more faculty racism within a predominantly white university (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000).

Being international may further complicate the university experience of racialized university students. Racialized foreign students may face difficulties in negotiating university life as a result of experiences ranging from being ignored to verbal insults and confrontation. International students are often subject to discrimination and negative remarks, both in and outside of the classroom by their peers, faculty, and members of the local community (Lee & Rice, 2007).

Lee and Rice (2007) found that not all international students faced the same hardships. The authors' interviews revealed that students from Western and English-speaking countries encountered minimal to no discrimination. In comparison to international students from Western and English-speaking countries, students from non-Western countries were subject to discrimination and racism on campus. Ancis, Sedlacek, and Mohr (2000) found similar trends in their study with white students who consistently reported less racial tension, fewer expectations to conform to stereotypes,

and fairer treatment by faculty. In comparison to their racialized counterparts, white students seemed relatively immune from the hostile environment. Because of their different experiences, white students lacked the recognition that interracial tensions and conflicts existed within the university campus (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000). The various forms of discrimination and prejudice undermine international students' ability to fully integrate into university life and obstruct the students' intellectual and social growth (Lee & Rice, 2007).

Once in university, students are faced with challenges posed by a new learning environment, new learning techniques, new social groups, and, for international students, a new society. Stress can also result from academic disappointments and from the inability to meet social expectations. A quantitative study by Smith and Wertlieb (2005) showed that many first-year students have unrealistically high expectations, both academically and socially, which might contribute to lower grade-point averages at the end of the year, lower academic achievement, and less academic motivation. First-year students needed to adapt to the academic rigour of university, develop greater social responsibility, and cope with new social and emotional stressors related to university life. These challenges and stressors were accentuated for students attending university in a foreign country. Many first-year international students did not find that their academic or social expectations were met by their university experience (Krause, 2005; Krause, Hartley, James, & McInnis, 2005). They struggled to meet the expectations they set before leaving home, to cope with the challenges of university life, and to adjust to a country that was culturally and socially different from their own.

Lack of English language proficiency may additionally exacerbate the racial tensions foreign students experience in Western universities. Lee and Rice's (2007) study found that international students who were not fluent in English often felt isolated by their peers and professors in the classroom. In some instances, participants of the qualitative study noted that instructors were impatient when it came to trying to understand students with English language difficulties. These students were often subject to negative remarks about their home countries and cultures, and were met with hostility due to their non-fluency in the English language (Lee & Rice, 2007). Of all the factors that make international students' transition into university challenging, lack of English language skills was a leading cause of stress among international students (Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992). In most cases, international students whose first language is not English have to modify their English usage for effective communication. International students' lack of fluency in English can lead to frustration and may require them to spend time reading material over and over again to understand it. Unlike their domestic counterparts, they tend to have a hard time understanding lectures, due to the instructor's pace and accent. Language barriers could also be responsible for international students' unease about seeking help or support from faculty members (Prescott & Hellsten, 2005; Turner, 2006). Moreover, due to language barriers, international students often feel uneasy working in groups (Turner, 2006) and other social settings. Andrade (2006) highlights specific English-related skills as factors that cause stress and hinder the adjustment process for international students. Listening ability, lecture and reading comprehension, note-taking ability, oral communication, vocabulary, and writing skills often cause problems for these students. Even though

many of the students in Andrade's study "work[ed] hard," they were not excelling in academics due to the language barrier.

The lack of English language proficiency coupled with unfamiliarity with the Western educational system can challenge international students at university. The study by Turner (2006) illustrates the experiences of Chinese graduate students studying in the United Kingdom. Much like Wan, Chapman, and Biggs (1992), Turner (2006) concludes that life in the United Kingdom was not easy for international students who faced challenges to fulfill university expectations and achieve academic success. These students were unaccustomed to the differences between Western and Chinese pedagogy. The Chinese students were used to propositional and teacher-centred learning, and had difficulty adapting to the more student-centred and discovery-based teaching and learning methods common in the West. Many of the study participants noted that the British lecturers showed students the first steps and expected the students to discover the rest by themselves, whereas Chinese lecturers gave all the instructions and expected the students to follow them. The students' inability to effectively adjust had negative consequences for their marks. Many felt as though they were poor students, which resulted in lower levels of personal happiness (Turner, 2006). The inability of international students to adjust to new learning techniques is also remarked upon in studies by Colvin and Jaffar (2007) and Prescott and Hellsten (2005). Both of these studies show that international students often feel lost in a Western educational system that is based on independent learning, debate, and questioning. International students in these studies claimed that their previous methods of communication and problem-solving skills were no longer effective in their new settings.

Religious Adjustment

Students' religious affiliations are often an important aspect of their identity. Participation in religious and spiritual activities on campus generally helps students perform better academically, helps them maintain their mental and emotional health, and provides them with group support in times of personal crisis (Margarita, 2010). Religious students who attended religious services once a week, or more during their last year of high school, reported higher grades in college, than those who did not attend religious services regularly in high school (Margarita, 2010). Attending regular religious services tends to provide students with structure and guidance, which may help improve their academic dedication and performance in college (Margarita, 2010). As a result, religious students reported having better concentration, studied more for exams, partied less, and devoted more time to extracurricular activities (Margarita, 2010). Thus students with a faith background tend to engage in less anti-social behaviours, perform better academically, and have lower rates of substance abuse that can undermine a successful university career (Sherkat, 2007). Religious students also generally promote satisfactory social relationships and are often better at personal adjustment in university. These students on average have better self-esteem, have a better sense of purpose to study (Margarita, 2010), are more satisfied with their lives (Schludermann et al., 2001), and have a greater sense of community than those who are not religious (Bohus et al., 2005).

Religious participation tends to decline once students enter university. Bryant, Choi, and Yasuno's (2003) study showed that participation in regular religious services dropped from 46% to 27% during the first year for incoming freshman students.

Students not attending any religious services or events climbed from 16% to 43%.

However, there seems to be little to no impact on declining religiosity of university

students when compared to those who do not attend university (Uecker, Regnerus, &

Vaaler, 2007). Hill (2009) argues that most university students simply do not have the

time to participate in religious events due to their hectic university careers. Most

students are primarily concerned with negotiating social relationships and seeking to

compete favourably in the job market after graduation, which are activities that pose an

unexpected threat to religious life. Hill (2009) also finds that religious participation on

campuses goes down not because of academic knowledge or anti-authoritarian

attitudes but rather due to lack of formal religious institutions on campus, geographical

relocation, and preoccupation of succeeding in the adult world. During college, religious

decline is rooted in the social arrangements and institutional constraints of student life

and not in the abandonment of organized religion (Hill, 2009).

Religious students form affiliations with religious and faith groups on campus,

which provide students with the support they need to adjust to the challenges of

university. A study by Frankel and Hewitt (1994) at the University of Western Ontario in

Canada explored how students affiliated with a religious organization compared

psychologically and mentally to students who were not affiliated to a religious group.

Religious organization-affiliated students had a strong inward sense of religiosity,

despite being in a predominantly secular university. In secular institutions, the majority

of students were not affiliated with any particular faith organization (Frankel & Hewitt,

1994). Religion played little to no role in the day-to-day activities of these students.

However, students who belonged to a faith group were healthier and happier and

handled stress better than those with no religious group affiliation. These religious students were also more satisfied with their lives and expressed more positive psychological states than their non-affiliated counterparts. Thus the involvement in campus faith groups acted as an expression of inward religiosity and proved beneficial to students (Frankel & Hewitt, 1994). The social support aspect of religious groups and the formalized religious ritual performed by its members benefited the students academically more so than their individual religious beliefs (Walker & Dixon, 2002). Because many religious groups oppose alcohol consumption or condemn drunkenness, students affiliated with these groups engaged in healthier social activities than students not affiliated with a religious group. Commitment to religious groups also precluded negative behaviours such as excessive partying and promoted going to class and completing assignments. Instead of engaging in socially and personally harmful activities, religious students and groups were more involved with volunteerism and activism on the university campus. This sense of community promoted through a religious bond provided students with a sense of purpose and made social support easily available to religious group members. Religious groups also helped combat isolation, deal with loneliness, and alleviate mental health problems for affiliated students (Sherkat, 2007).

Students affiliated with a religious group in evangelical colleges had a greater sense of community than students who were not affiliated with any form of religious organization. Through Bible studies, retreats, and discipleship programs, students, particularly male students, formed a healthy sense of community and support, which helped facilitate their transition into university (Bohus et al., 2005). A study of Algerian

international students in an Arab, Muslim university in Kuwait showed that men's religiosity led to better mental health (Abdel-Khalek & Naceur, 2007). Even though Abdel-Khalek and Naceur's (2007) study did not deal with vast cross-cultural adjustment issues, the authors' results correlate religiosity with positive mental health in men.

Within secular universities, students who are part of a religious organization use their religious group in two distinct ways. First, they use the religious group as a way to protect themselves from secular influences of society and academia. Because of the supportive nature of group participation, being around like-minded students helps religious students maintain their faith and ultimately their core identity. Second, students who are affiliated with a religious group use the group as a tool to connect themselves with the non-religious, intellectual, and social life on campus. These students, who form a "subculture identity," may actually develop their religious identity more by attending an exclusively secular institution, which may help strengthen their faith more. There has been speculation that university experience, predominantly secular university experience, decreases the religiosity of religious students on campus. However, within this secular environment, religious students use their faith to engage and cope with secular college life (Hammond & Hunter, 1984; Hill, 2009). Thus secular universities do not necessarily hinder students' religious identity nor do they necessarily contribute to long-term secularization on the individual level. On the contrary, pluralism may help nurture "strong religious subcultures that thrive in their minority identity" (Hill, 2009, p. 532).

Spirituality and religiosity tend to be more important within the minority communities on campus than among White European students with African Americans,

Latinos, and Asians generally being more religious than their White counterparts (Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, & Lewis-Coles, 2006; Margarita, 2010; Sherkat, 2007; Walker & Dixon, 2002). Spirituality revolves around believing and behaving as if non-observable and non-material life-forces govern everyday life. It does not necessarily involve an institutionalized religious authority nor does it focus heavily on religious participation. Religiosity, on the other hand, involves a more active participation in religion. It encompasses activities such as attending a house of worship and attending public and private religious events (Walker & Dixon, 2002). The studies I examined (Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, & Lewis-Coles, 2006; Margarita, 2010; Sherkat, 2007; Walker & Dixon, 2002) showed that more than spirituality, one's religiosity and the active practice of one's faith helped students alleviate academic and social stress. While female university students are more religious than their male counterparts on average (Abdel-Khalek & Naceur, 2007; Sherkat, 2007), religious men are more active within religious groups and circles, especially on Evangelical colleges and universities (Bohus, Woods, & Chan, 2005). They are also better at personal adjustment to university culture (Schludermann, Schludermann, Needham, & Mulenga, 2001).

In two studies with African American students (Constantine et al., 2006; Walker & Dixon, 2002), the researchers highlighted the benefits of religiosity among racial minority groups studying in predominantly White universities. Through prayer and worship, African American students in predominantly White campuses overcame their racial insecurity, higher levels of stress, and lower self-esteem, which all negatively impact university adjustment, wellbeing, and overall academic performance. Thus

African American students reported higher levels of spiritual beliefs and religiosity than their White counterparts. Despite having to deal with negative attitudes studying in a predominantly White university, African Americans' religious beliefs were associated with greater self-esteem, better mental health, and better university adjustment. Furthermore, religious African American students had fewer academic suspensions and probations than African American students who did not ascribe strongly to their faith (Walker & Dixon, 2002). Constantine et al. (2006) reported that African Americans' faith was an important factor for career development during their university years. These students' faith helped them aspire to seek relevant educational opportunities and provided them with critical emotional support during the process of choosing a professional career after university. Because African American students lacked positive role models within predominantly White universities, their faith helped "make a way out of no way" (p. 237) and helped them deal with adversities such as racial discrimination and prejudice. Often university faculty and staff members along with White peers questioned minority students' abilities to succeed in university. African American students were often presumed to have less potential for success in university, which contributed to a great deal of emotional stress among these students. However, through prayer, Bible studies, and church gatherings, African American students learned to cope with the challenges of academia and the stresses of university life. Prayer and other acts of worship thereby acted as outlets for reflection, provided students with an opportunity to connect with a Higher Power, and gave students the courage and strength to carry on in difficult times (Constantine et al., 2006).

Masculine Identity Adjustment

Being a male student adds to the challenges faced by racialized international students. Unlike women, men are more likely to have greater difficulties coping with university life and are consequentially more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol (Harris, 2010). Men are also more likely to be reprimanded for antisocial behaviour, to underachieve, to be homophobic, and to disengage from campus programs (Harris, 2010).

Harris' (2010) investigation found that male university students arrive on campus with traditional notions of masculinity handed down to them from their parents, peers, and the larger society. Many such men identify confidence, self-assurance, respect, authority, toughness, and leadership ability as characteristics with which they identify themselves. While most men characterized themselves in such forms, Harris observed that there were both privileged and unprivileged masculinities. Men who belong to a fraternity, and/or identify as competitive, athletic, physically fit, and sexually active, are considered privileged and are more popular than those who do not fit these criteria. While this privileged group is small in numbers, it is very visible within the campus. Men who are part of an ethnic minority, part of the queer community, and/or who display effeminate characteristics are regarded as less masculine. Due to the diversity of the university environment, however, many men agree that the university allows for a wide range of masculine expression, and that this diversity provides them with a richer experience. Nevertheless, at times, this diversity challenges their understanding of their own masculinities (Harris, 2010).

Many men experience mental health illnesses such as depression and alcoholism (Branney & White, 2008). Men are less likely to approach counselling services to address their mental health issues than women. As a result, fewer men than women are diagnosed with depression in the developed world. Additionally, men are more likely to be prone to committing suicide. Oliffe and Phillips (2008) note men's experiences, expression, and triggers of depression are strongly correlated with their dominant ideals of masculinity. Unlike women who tend to use emotion-focused coping mechanisms to deal with stressors and depression, men generally use a more direct, problem-focused coping strategy to overcome stressors (Branney & White, 2008). In many cases, aggressive behaviour and emotional distress in men might indicate depression. However, men are less likely to report their mental health illnesses in comparison to women. According to Pederson and Vogel (2007), self-stigma associated with seeking counselling, hesitation to disclose distressing information, and attitudes towards seeking counselling affect men's ability to seek out mental health support. Men who experienced greater gender role conflict were more likely to self-stigmatize and less likely to self-disclose their mental health issues (Pederson & Vogel, 2007). Because men from a very young age are socialized to suppress their emotions, they have less positive attitudes and less willingness to seek counselling, and are less likely to report their mental health illnesses to health care professionals and get the proper care that they need as compared to women (Branney & White, 2008; Pederson & Vogel, 2007).

Men are more prone to alcoholism and risky behaviours influenced by alcohol (Harris, 2010; Locke & Mahalik, 2005; Peralta, 2007). Public drinking is an expression of

masculinity among college men. A sense of masculinity is constructed through social drinking behaviours such as creating trophies that showcase physical evidence of alcohol use, sharing drinking stories, boasting about the body's ability to tolerate large quantities of alcohol, and engaging in activities that promote mass consumption of alcohol. Men who limited their alcohol consumption or did not drink at all were labelled by their peers as weak, queer, and effeminate, further implicating alcohol use with the construction of masculinity in university (Peralta, 2007). Men who used alcohol problematically and conformed to specific hegemonic masculine norms were more likely to display sexually aggressive behaviour and endorse rape myths claiming that rape results from uncontrollable male passions. Masculine norms, such as having power over women, being a womanizer, hostility towards gay men, being dominant, being violent, and taking risks, are generally prevalent among male Western university students (Locke & Mahalik, 2005).

International male students from non-Western cultures may be new to Western notions of masculinity and the pressures associated with conforming to them. The need to conform to the culture of drinking on campus, access to recreational drugs, academic pressures, adjustment stress, unfamiliarity with campus health resources, and unfamiliar notions of manhood can add to the stresses of international male students. These masculine notions, coupled with new pressures, create greater challenges for men and make it vitally important to study international male university students from a gender-specific perspective.

The Role of Residence Life and Student Affairs Services

Student Affairs and university residence staff members can help racialized international male students alleviate some of the stresses they face and provide them with support that will help enrich their first-year experience. The first step to supporting students is providing them with information before they leave their home countries. Overseas foreign students preparing to attend universities find it difficult to obtain clear information and timely feedback from the universities while in their home countries (Grebennikov & Skaines, 2007). As a result, these international undergraduate students are significantly less satisfied with course selections, provisions of facilities and resources, and access to these facilities and resources than their domestic counterparts. Once on campus, international students have fewer resources to help them cope with the challenges of a new academic and social environment. International students in Western universities are likely to experience academic pressures, poor health, interpersonal conflicts, and loneliness, as well as have problems with their finances, autonomy development, culture shock, and adjustment to change (Kaczmarek et al., 1994; Shaikh & Deschamps, 2006). The stress of being away from home, academic pressures, new routines, depression, fatigue, insomnia, and the absence of guidance are problems faced by many students. Student Affairs and university residence staff members may help students, particularly international and racialized students, cope with these challenges. Because many first-year students are not aware of the external residence support services available to them on campus, they rely on internal residence support from peer advisors and Residence Dons/Advisors to help them cope (Shaikh & Deschamps, 2006). Residence staff can help students by

providing residents with programming and information about a variety of issues. Programming that highlights the importance of sleep, promotes safe alcohol consumption, endorses seeking counselling when needed, and provides skills to address roommate conflicts help considerably in supporting residents throughout their first year in university (Dusselier et al., 2005).

One of the most important benefits of living in residence is the sense of community and belonging it provides first-year residents. Johnson et al. (2007) claimed that living in residence fosters a sense of belonging that results from membership within a community, influence from peers, integration into one's new home, fulfillment of needs, and a shared emotional connection. According to their study, students living in residence halls reported higher levels of peer support and social interaction, due to the intimacy and intensity of the relationships formed in first-year residence, than those who did not live in residence. These experiences in turn helped foster a sense of community among the residents, particularly among racialized students. Residences, with the help of residence life staff, fostered an appreciation for diversity, including race/ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation (Johnson et al., 2007). Students found residence halls academically supportive as a result of peer-helping opportunities. Due to the sense of community within a supportive academic and social environment, students reported a greater sense of belonging to their institution. Furthermore, because residence allowed students to get to know their peers, make new friends, live with roommates, and seek out peer support, they reported a smoother transition into university than those who lived off-campus.

Summary of Literature Review

International students who leave their home countries to attend university in Canada have to cope with immigration and cross-cultural adjustment issues once they arrive on campus (Kaczmarek, Matlock, Merta, Ames, & Ross, 1994). Due to the vast cultural distance from one's home country and the lack of familiarity with local culture, customs, and people, students may experience frustration, depression, and homesickness in their new environment (Church, 1982; Tochkov, Levine, & Sanaka, 2010; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992).Thus adaptation to the host culture and its peers greatly helps international student adjustment. Because racialized students experience racial-ethnic hostility on campus more so than other groups from both faculty and students in an intolerant and culturally diverse environment (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Daniels & Damons, 2011; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002), affiliation with nationality clubs helps international students feel accepted, which in turn helps the adjustment process (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Colvin & Jaffar, 2007; Pires, Stanton, & Ostenfeld, 2006). The lack of English language proficiency adds to the acculturation stress, limits international students' interactions with those around them, and makes international students feel isolated from their peers and professors (Lee & Rice, 2007). This sense of isolation is accentuated by unfamiliarity with the Western educational system that is based on independent learning, debate, and questioning (Colvin & Jaffar, 2007; Prescott & Hellsten, 2005).

Participation in religious and spiritual activities on campus generally helps students perform better academically, helps them maintain their mental and emotional health, and provides them with group support in times of personal crisis (Margarita,

2010). Religious students also generally have satisfactory social relationships and are often better at personal adjustment in university. These students on average have better self-esteem, have a better sense of purpose to study (Margarita, 2010), are more satisfied with their lives (Schludermann et al., 2001), and have a greater sense of community than those who are not religious (Bohus, Woods, & Chan, 2005). Additionally, students who belong to a faith group tend to be healthier and happier and handle stress better than those with no religious group affiliation. The involvement in campus faith groups may act as an expression of inward religiosity and prove beneficial to students (Frankel & Hewitt, 1994). The sense of community promoted through a religious bond provides students with a sense of purpose and makes social support easily available to religious group members. Religious groups also help combat isolation, deal with loneliness, and alleviate mental health problems for affiliated students (Sherkat, 2007). Spirituality and religiosity tend to be more important within the minority communities on campus than among White European students (Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, & Lewis-Coles, 2006; Margarita, 2010; Sherkat, 2007; Walker & Dixon, 2002).

Being a male student adds to the challenges faced by racialized international students. Male university students arrive on campus with traditional notions of masculinity handed down to them from their parents, peers, and the larger society. Many such men identify confidence, self-assurance, respect, authority, toughness, and leadership ability as characteristics with which they identify themselves. Men who are part of an ethnic minority, part of the queer community, and/or who display effeminate characteristics are regarded as less masculine (Harris, 2010).

Once in residences, first-year university students are not aware of the support services available to them on campus and rely on peer advisors and Residence Dons/Advisors to help them cope (Shaikh & Deschamps, 2006). Living in residence fosters a sense of belonging that results from membership within a community, influence from peers, integration into one's new home, fulfillment of needs, and a shared emotional connection (Johnson et al., 2007).

Even though there are many studies that focus on international students' experiences at university (Chun-Mei, Kuh, & Carini, 2005; Grebennikov & Skaines, 2007; Krause, Harley, James, & McInnis, 2005; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), most researchers focus on upper-year or graduate students (Brown, 2009; Myles & Cheng, 2003; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Prescott & Hellsten, 2005; Rose-Redwood, 2010; Turner, 2006; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1991). My study, on the other hand, focuses on first-year international students to understand how they adjust to their new academic and social environment. Unlike upper-year international students, first-year international students are new to the challenges of university and have specific challenges, needs, and opportunities once they arrive on campus.

Additionally, unlike previous studies that are mostly quantitative, my qualitative study provides rich, detailed insights into the experiences of four first-year international students. Through four one-on-one interviews, my qualitative study sought to uncover the challenges, needs, and opportunities of four racialized, international, first-year students. The interviews helped me hear and understand my participants' experiences in their own words to accurately outline how international students cope in a Western university. In addition to cultural and academic adjustment, my study focused on how

my participants adjusted their masculine and cultural/religious identities in a Western

university. Moreover, my study placed a special emphasis on residence life, a focus

lacking in previous studies, to understand how students experience living in university

residences and their familiarity with the support services available to them.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

My study explored the university and residence experiences of four racialized, international, male students at a predominantly white, Canadian university through individual interviews. This qualitative approach provided a holistic view of the students' experiences. Through four different case studies, I attempted to uncover the needs, wants, feelings, and experiences of a select university demographic. These multiple case studies shed light on the different experiences of each individual student and identified key themes within these experiences (Stake, 2006).

A multiple case study approach was the best way to conduct my research because it helped me explore the issue of international student adjustment through a variety of lenses. The four individual case studies revealed the multiple facets associated with international student adjustment and helped me understand the four students' unique experiences. Stake (2006) and Yin (2003) highlight that case studies are based on a constructivist paradigm, which recognizes that truth is relative and that this truth is based on one's perspective. Thus, by conducting a case study, I, as the researcher, was able to collaborate closely with the participants, enabling them to tell me their stories, and describe their views and experiences. This process helped me better understand the participants' experiences. Additionally, I wanted to understand how international students adjusted to university given the context of their surroundings and racialized identities. Because the participants were all racialized students in a predominantly white university in Canada, away from home, it was important for me to conduct individual interviews to understand how each participant's race, masculine

identity, and new cultural and social environment affected his adjustment process (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003)

Procedures

Setting

The setting for this study was Queen's University, a medium-sized, research-intensive university in southern Ontario with a predominantly white student population. Recent years have shown an influx of international students to the campus, with the university taking an active role in recruiting more international students (MacDonald, 2007). Racialized students, especially international racialized students, make up a small percentage of the student body. Based on the 2010 university student headcount published by the university's Equity Office, only 10.5% of the undergraduate population and 11.9% of the graduate population are "visible minorities." These percentages are approximately 5% lower than the Ontario population, aged 15-24 (Queen's University Equity Office, 2011). According to an article in *The Journal*, the Queen's University student newspaper, approximately 98 different nationalities are represented within the Queen's community. International students constitute about eight percent of the student population (Ryan, 2009).

Ethics Clearance

Before conducting the study, I completed the *Course On Research Ethics (CORE)*. After its completion, I sought ethical clearance from the Educational Research Ethics Board (EREB) and the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at Queen's University. It was only after ethical clearance that I sought participants for the study.

My role as Senior Residence Don in one of the university residence buildings posed an ethical issue. Because of my power and authority over first-year residents in my building, I risked being biased towards the study participants. My previous interactions with residents in my building could have affected how my participants and I perceived each other. To alleviate this threat, I did not recruit any participants from my own residence building and sought participants from other residences on campus.

Participants

For this study, the participants were first-year male university students, who lived in first-year, co-ed residence halls. All first-year students are supported by a Residence Don on the floor and share washrooms and common areas. The students were recruited in their second semester of study. Using first-year residents from second semester was most effective as they were able to reflect clearly on their first few months of university and elaborate on their experiences.

I recruited four participants from residence halls across the university. There are 13 university residence halls at Queen's University. Most of these halls cater to a co-ed, first-year population. Three of them are all female residences. One caters to only graduate students, and another is reserved for international exchange students and other internationally-minded Canadians. Two of the 13 residence halls are modern-style buildings in which each student receives a single room and a semi-private washroom shared with one other person. To ensure that the living conditions of each participant were identical, I initially tried to omit participants who lived in modern-style buildings. However, due to a lack of participants, I included one student from one of the modern-style buildings.

These students had been in Canada for at least four months. During their first four months at university, they lived in residence and became accustomed to their new home and Faculty. By the end of their first semester, these participants had experienced being a full-time student, had started to adjust to their new environment, and had balanced multiple aspects of their university career, such as academics, residence life, and social circles. Qualitative data collected from these participants shed light on their initial responses to and experiences with living in a new setting, as well as how they progressed culturally, socially, academically, and personally during their year. Participants were asked about their greatest challenges and supports both inside and outside of residence. They were also asked about how they had adjusted to their new environment and how they grew as individuals over their first year.

I recruited my participants by putting up posters around the residence buildings, placing recruitment ads at the International Office, and sending out invitations for participants through the various nationality and cultural clubs on campus. Unfortunately, all of these methods proved unsuccessful. The International Office was not able to send out individual invites to potential participants because their database did not allow them to do so. While they sent out a mass email on my behalf, the email did not help the recruitment process. Only one graduate student replied to me directly after seeing the email from the International Office. However, seeing that the student was a graduate student, I did not invite him to participate in an interview. I also put up posters around the residence buildings and around campus. However, the posters were unsuccessful in recruiting participants in the short amount of time that I had to interview students. Ultimately, I asked my fellow Residence Dons and Residence Facilitators to help me

identify international male students on their floor. I informed my colleagues about the

nature of my study and asked them to pass on the information to residents on their floor

who met my selection criteria. My colleagues passed on my contact information to their

students and, within two weeks, I had three participants for my study. I gathered the last

participant of my study through snowball sampling. My first interviewee mentioned that

one of his friends was an international student and might be interested in being

interviewed. I procured my last participant's email address and invited him to the

interview with him becoming my fourth and final participant. Seeing that I did not have

an excess of participants, there was no need for me to create a shortlist.

Participants were sent a personal invitation to participate in the study. In the

email invitation, I briefly explained the nature of the study to the participants (see

Appendix A). I also asked the students to confirm their status at the university as either

a domestic or international student, identify their country of origin and ethnic

background, and reveal how long they had lived in Canada. Each participant was given

a 20-dollar honorarium upon completion of the interview.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a series of one-on-one interviews. The participants

were interviewed one-on-one, in a comfortable setting, with little to no distraction. Each

participant was provided with a Letter of Information detailing the purpose and nature of

the study, who was conducting it, what sorts of data the researcher was seeking, and

why the research was being conducted (see Appendix B). Each participant was

informed of the confidential nature of the study (to the extent possible), provided with a

Consent Form to sign, and was informed that his real name would not be used to

identify him. The interview length was set at 60 minutes, which gave the participants enough time to answer questions and share their experiences. A follow-up interview was planned if further clarification was needed.

A semi-structured interview style was used in which the participants were asked a series of open-ended questions concerning their overall university and residence life experiences. I used a set of pre-determined, open-ended questions to begin each interview. Additional questions emerged in the course of the interview. I also added and/or replaced pre-established questions if I thought the replacement questions flowed better with the interview (Glesne, 2011). While the questions were mostly asked in a systematic and consistent manner, at times I probed beyond the prescribed questions (Berg, 2009) and answered any questions the participant might have had during the interview. This style provided some structure to the interview, allowed for the gathering of the required information, and gave the participants enough flexibility to talk about their experiences. This style allowed me to conduct the interview within the set time and permitted effective comparisons across the different participants.

I started the interview by gathering a few facts about each participant, to uncover his background. Questions included where the students were from, their ages, what residences they were in, and what they were currently studying. This set of questions was followed by a three-part interview. The first part of the interview focused on the students' overall adjustment to university. I began by asking the participants why they decided to attend a Canadian university, and then asked about their adjustment to university culturally, socially, and academically. The second part of the interview asked the students about their masculine identity. During the second portion of the interview, I

began by asking them to identify qualities and characteristics they associated with being male. I asked these participants how their racial identity affected their masculine identity and in what ways their masculine identity had been affected by attending a predominantly white, Canadian university. The third part of the interview asked about the students' experiences living in residence. In this section, they were asked about their thoughts on residence orientation, how they found the living accommodations, and how they interacted with their floor-mates. Overall, the questions covered the participants' feelings, opinions, values, and knowledge about university and residence life (see interview questions in Appendix C). Focusing on these three areas helped me put the students' experiences into cultural, academic, personal and residence contexts, thus providing holistic experiential evidence.

Originally, I wanted to pilot my questions to international students in my own residence building to help me identify flaws within my research design, understand how my interview would flow, and refine my interview questions and make the necessary revisions prior to the implementation of the study. However, by the time I went to colloquium and defended my research proposal, it was already mid-February. I only had two months to gather my participants and collect my data. Seeing that I was having difficulties finding participants, let alone finding students to pilot my interview questions, I decided to abandon the pilot phase of my study. Instead, I focused on gathering participants before their final exams in April and concentrated on gathering all my results before the end of the academic year. As I conducted one interview after another, I became more and more comfortable with the questions and was able to be more thorough in my approach to the interview. I was able to ask follow-up questions more

effectively when I needed clarification about an answer or wanted my participants to elaborate on their experiences. There was little need to refine or readjust my questions. Thankfully I completed all my interviews and gathered all the necessary information I needed to conduct my study.

During the interview, a digital recorder was used to record the conversation and the participants' responses. I wrote down any observations that the participants made that might not be captured by the audio recorder and took field notes to help me understand the participants during the data analysis phase. These field notes included the participant's ease at which he answered the questions, his English language ability, and his general comfort level with the interview. The final question of the interview invited the participants to add anything else they would like. As the interviews came to an end, I thanked the participants and reminded them that they could get in touch with me via email if they had any further questions. I also asked them if I would be able to email them about clarifications or follow-ups if needed. While I did not have to ask clarifying questions, the participants agreed to be emailed if the need arose. Once the interviews had been transcribed, they were emailed out to each respective participant for member checking. This process allowed the participants to verify their answers to the questions and clarify or add anything they felt was necessary.

Initially, I intended to conduct a focus group discussion about the participants' experiences to allow me to gain a better understanding of the participants' attitudes, behaviours, opinions, and/or perceptions surrounding the research topic (Hennink, 2007). The focus group was also intended to identify the range of participants' views on the research topic, gain a better understanding of their perspectives, provoke them to

discuss and explain the issues raised, and broadly confirm their experiences. In addition, the group study would have delved more deeply into the participants' experiences as a group and identified the common aspects of their experiences as racialized, male, international students at a white Canadian university.

However, due to time constraints and a lack of interest from participants, I had to omit the focus group portion of my data collection. Initially, when I advertised the study, I asked participants to commit two hours for the study on two different days. One hour was supposed to be devoted to the one-on-one interview, whereas the second hour was intended for the focus group with the other three participants on a different day. When I described the data collection phase of my study to several early participants, the participants claimed that they were too busy with academics to commit two full hours on two separate days. Seeing that I was not attracting students for my study, I omitted the focus group and included a 20-dollar honorarium for participating in the interview. This change meant that I had to be more thorough with my questions during the interview and ensure that I was probing enough to gather enough information to paint an accurate picture of my participants' experiences during the interview.

Data Analysis

I transcribed the recorded interviews. Transcribing the data by myself allowed me to get more intimate with my data and gave me an opportunity to highlight recurring themes and ideas that permeated throughout the four interviews. The purpose of coding the transcripts is to fix meaning to the data and construct a viewpoint based on the transcribed interviews. The early stages of coding are similar to indexing the data, in an effort to highlight interesting bits of information (Barbour, 2008).

The transcript was coded based on themes arising from the interviews (Harris, 2010). Once the codes were placed, I went through the data set to ensure the codes were credible. I used open, axial, and selective coding to deconstruct, reassemble, and interpret the data in ways that provided insight into the participants' experiences in university (Harris, 2010). During the open coding phase, I examined each transcript piece-by-piece and assigned a word or phrase that captured my initial response to the data. I took notes during the open coding phase and tagged my data with words and phrases I thought were relevant to the interview. Open codes such as "challenges with adjusting," "academic unfamiliarity," "freedom/independence," "masculinity," "happy with residence," "adjustment to new educational system," "sticking to people from own culture," "food/missing home/cultural differences," "drinking and alcohol," and "ethnic insecurity" were used to initially code the data. Once the open coding was complete, I used axial coding to group the coded responses and concepts into categories based on similarities to the shared university experiences. During the axial coding phase, I grouped my data into four categories. These four categories were "freedom and how it impacted the participants' experience with academics," "preservation of one's masculinity and culture," "satisfaction with residence life and unfamiliarity with support services," and "cultural challenges associated with drinking, meeting new people, food and ethnic insecurity." Finally, selective coding was used to understand the relationships among the codes that emerged during the axial coding phase. This coding process allowed for a thorough analysis of the rich qualitative data and helped me to understand the participants' experiences on an individual and holistic level (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). During the selective coding phase, I synthesized the various categories

into four themes: cultural adjustment, academic adjustment, preservation of culture and

masculinity, and experience with Residence Life and Student Affairs Services.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

I selected four racialized international male students studying in their first year of university for my research: Haris, Mohammed, Niwat, and Tam. Through one-on-one interviews, these students revealed their experiences in their first year of university in a predominantly white, medium-sized Canadian university in southern Ontario. Participants discussed their adjustments to university academics and social life. They explained how their experiences affected their masculine and cultural identities and how they adjusted to living in university residences.

Haris

Haris is a first-year international student from Pakistan who was introduced to me via email by his Residence Don. I emailed him about my study, and he agreed to meet me during the afternoon to conduct the interview. Haris lived in one of the newer residence buildings on campus, in which he had his own single room and shared one washroom with another male student.

It was rather difficult to get a hold of Haris for the interview because of his busy academic schedule. I interviewed him in a student common room, two weeks after contacting him via email. Due to academic commitments, Haris was only available for one afternoon for the interview. During the interview, he revealed that he had recently immigrated to Canada as a permanent resident to start his university education in Canada. While he is originally from Pakistan, Haris lived a large portion of his life in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). While in Dubai, he attended a British school and was introduced to people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. According to Haris,

Dubai, much like Canada, is very multicultural, which made his transition into Canada smooth.

Even though Haris has few language barriers, I initially had difficulty engaging him in the interview. Even though Haris was fluent in English, he had difficulties understanding the meaning behind my questions and sometimes was unsure of what I was looking for. Time and time again, I would have to rephrase the questions and break them down to get Haris to elaborate his answers more and delve deeper into his university experience. The interview lasted a little less than 30 minutes, after which I thanked him for his participation in the study. While he seemed a little rushed at the interview, Haris was able to answer all the questions sufficiently to provide me with a sense of his university experience.

Cultural Adjustment

Haris was "already adjusted" before coming to Queen's University because the "amount of international students was probably as much or even more diverse than Queen's University." He "met all kinds of different people" during his time at a British school. From his experience, he additionally believes that "Canadians are definitely nicer" than some of the other nationalities he met. As Haris was accustomed to interacting with those who were different from him, "it [Canadian society] wasn't really very different."

Having lived in large cities, "which is freaking crazy," while growing up, Haris feels a little disappointed by the quiet atmosphere of Kingston, Ontario. "Coming to Kingston, which is quiet, you don't have much," as there is "less ... to do." However, because Haris has "friends everywhere [in Kingston, he] can do more normal stuff."

"You have snow over here; we go sand. So we're going to enjoy the snow," Haris adds, trying to make the best of his situation.

Once on campus, Haris was exposed to the drinking culture at Queen's University. "Campus culture hasn't really been [a challenge for Haris] ... besides the drinking part." As a result, he has not had to change his behaviour to adjust to Western social norms. Haris has a large group of Pakistani and Muslim friends with whom he hangs out as an alternative to attending drinking parties with his other peers. Instead of drinking parties, Haris plays cricket with his Pakistani friends. "If you feel like playing cricket, if you haven't played for a long time, you can play with the Pakistani people." This interaction with his own group of people from his home country helps Haris adjust to his new environment and gives him a sense of community within Queen's University.

One of the biggest adjustments Haris had to make in Canada was getting used to the food. Living in residence, he eats regularly at the cafeteria where his meal choices are limited because of the lack of Halal foods. As a practicing Muslim, Haris only eats meats that have been slaughtered and prepared according to Islamic rites: "Residence food, you know, the Halal menu isn't really ... that good." Haris misses the foods and meals he left behind in Dubai and wishes that the Halal meals in the cafeteria could be similar to the foods with which he is accustomed. He can "have the vegetarian and all that stuff," but prefers food that is familiar to him. "It's not as bad as [he] thought but still pretty bad..."

Academic Adjustment

Haris' coming to Queen's University in Canada was motivated by his brother, who was "already a 3rd year university student [at the University of] Western Ontario,"

and "a few friends" who were going to be attending Queen's University with him. Furthermore, near the time of his application, Haris' family became Permanent Residents to Canada, which contributed to his decision to seek higher education here. Haris' other "choice was either America or England." He did not "want to do the SATs" to enter an American university.

Because of his experience with the British A-Levels back in high school, Haris' transition into university academics was somewhat smooth. The A-Levels prepared him well for the academic rigour of university. The A-Levels are "a year ahead, so some of the ... basic theories of some of the courses, like economics ... was already there and wasn't that difficult." As a result, "some concepts" are easy to understand, whereas "some concepts are still different," as "some of the basics are there and some are new concepts." However, Haris is optimistic about the future, as some of the information "might be picked up later in the year or maybe [the] next year."

While class tutorials were a new concept to him, one of the major differences Haris experienced in university academics is related to assessment and evaluation. Back in high school, "just the final exam mattered." "Even if I failed throughout the year, it really didn't matter," because, by the end of the year, he would "just cram everything" for a final exam that was worth 100% of his total marks. Unlike the British school system, Haris had to adjust to having his marks spread out over several assignments and tests and "study properly throughout the year." "Over here, it's 30%, 30%, 30%," Haris reminds me. "If you fail something, it really does matter." Haris' brother explained the system to him but "you don't really listen to it; so you have to learn from experience."

Because of Haris' experience with the A-Levels, the difficulty level at university is manageable. While academic rigour "[picks] ... up a notch from high school or A-Levels ... it wasn't anything too drastic." He is not performing "as well as [he] wanted to" in school as "the 30%, 30% really messes it up at some point."

Additionally, Haris seems reluctant to change his study habits to adjust to the academics at Queen's. "The [hardest] thing is well, studying every day," he claims, citing that "once you ... you pick up the habit, for 12 years, of studying towards the end, it's hard to study throughout the whole year. " Despite the challenges, Haris seems optimistic about the prospects of his university education and adjustment. He reassures me that once he is fully familiar with the academic system at university, "it's just straight forward" from there, and he is "ready for 2nd, 3rd, and hopefully 4th year."

When I ask Haris about what he is excited about with regards to university academics, he enthusiastically declares that, "one of most exciting would be the fact that you can do anything when you want. So instead of having the time to review, you can make the time. You can chill with friends whenever you want." Haris is especially pleased that "obviously, there is way more freedom and that's always enjoyable." Despite the new, unfamiliar academic environment, Haris has a true appreciation for the flexibility and freedom awarded to him in university.

Preservation of Culture and Masculinity

Being a Pakistani Muslim at Queen's, Haris values his identity and cultural heritage. One of the ways Haris maintains his identity, culture, and masculinity is by affiliating himself with people from his own Muslim and/or Pakistani community at Queen's University. Despite the predominantly white student population at Queen's,

Haris feels comfortable when hanging out with like-minded Muslim and/or Pakistani friends, adding, "I do say this that Queen's is quite a white university ... [I] always … find people like [me]. I do have Arab friends, I do have Pakistani friends." He feels "happy" when he is around friends from Pakistan. "When I am with Pakistani[s] ... you can relate with them in a different aspect ... some things you'll understand with your Pakistani friends you won't understand with your other friends." His sense of community gives Haris a comfortable social setting within Queen's as "it's always good to have friends from your same group."

Haris' friends are one of the sources of his identity and masculine characteristics. He "subconsciously" compares himself with his friends and associates observable traits to his own masculinity. Citing that he gathers a sense of identity and character "throughout his life," Haris also credits his "family, friends, cousins ... and teachers" as models for his own identity. Being "less willing to compensate," "less willing to wait for something to be [understood]," and having a "lack of patience" are several qualities Haris associates with masculinity and being stereotypically male. He sees "female teachers being more compassionate, more patient," and contrasts those feminine traits with masculine traits.

According to Haris, living in a predominantly white environment "makes you more masculine" since he has to preserve his own cultural and masculine identity from being affected by Canadian university culture. While Haris hesitantly acknowledges, "I'm not going to say racism, there is no .... there's no negative attitudes towards your culture," Haris seeks to preserve his identity and resists losing himself to Western culture. He "act[s] more masculine to protect [his] own culture," and stands his "ground with [his]

culture," so that he "always [keeps] a piece of [his] culture with him instead of going towards the Western culture." While "integrating to Western culture is good," Haris knows that "keeping your own will make you more masculine because you'll always be trying to protect it." Thus Haris equates preserving his cultural identity and protecting it from Western influences as a sign of masculinity. For Haris, masculinity involves holding on to the cultural values that shaped his own masculine identity. I ask him if his masculinity has been affected by being in Canada. "No, not at all. No," Haris replies. Despite social expectations towards men at university, Haris is able to maintain his own values and masculine identity.

When faced with behaviours that are contrary to Haris' values within campus culture, such as drinking and sexual promiscuity, Haris finds refuge amongst his like-minded group of friends. "That's when that other friend group comes into. You can chill with them [his Muslim and/or Pakistani friends]. None of them do that." His Muslim and Pakistani friends "who don't drink" help Haris escape from foreign social behaviours. He feels no compulsion to conform. "I stick to my ground to what I do," Haris adds, illustrating his perseverance to maintain his identity. "Everything's become so much flexible now. It's … you don't really need to change at all." Haris' experience "coming from ... Dubai" helps cushion his transition to Canadian society as he is "already integrated in that kind of culture" (i.e., Westernized culture).

Experience with Residence Life and Student Affairs Services

Haris' residence orientation at Queen's was "really good" and "helped [him] integrate [into] the floor." He "really liked [his] Don" as "she was really nice." Haris' "floor mates were pretty cool" as well. While Haris would like his air conditioning to work

properly and would like to have larger windows in his room, he seems quite satisfied with his living conditions in residence. He was especially pleased in "the way they introduced us [the residents] and integrated us." Because the integration was done "through students, fourth year students, third year students instead of having a teacher, professor, someone older," Haris was "comfortable" adjusting to his new living quarters.

For Haris, "the fact that you're living in residence is that you got your own room and at the same time, your floor mates are your friends, people your age." These characteristics represent some of the enjoyable qualities of living in residence. While living in residence is "a different atmosphere to your family," Haris is pleased to have found a new community of friends during his time at Queen's. His interaction with his floor mates is "pretty good" and "not too bad," as it "obviously depends on what people are there." Living in the hall that he does, Haris is fortunate enough "to get his own room and just one person to share a bathroom with," which helps minimize personal tensions between him and his floor mates.

Haris regards international student tuition fees to be "one of the biggest problems for international students." Even though Haris pays domestic student fees because of his Permanent Resident status, he realizes that international student fees are close to "four times more" than those of domestic students.

Other than catering better food for Muslim students, Haris does not have any specific recommendations on how to make the international student experience better in residence. While "obviously it's a work in progress," Haris thinks "they're doing a pretty well job, helping integrating everything." He enjoys having clubs like "the QPSA [Queen's Pakistani Students Association], the MSA [Muslim Students Association], all

that kind of stuff … because that really helps you integrating people from your culture."
Instead of adding anything, Haris suggests "enhancing what's already there" and
"improve what's already there."

Haris indicates that "I haven't used any" of the additional services offered to him
through Residence Life and Student Affairs. "I'm sure they're good, but I haven't used
any." While he "[needs] to find out about the [health] insurance [he] gets from Queen's,"
he would "probably call" or "ask [his] Don first or else call the Registrar's office" to
gather any information. Haris only wants better access to "leisure activities" on campus
and wants to have more places for students to go and socialize. He does not "have a
problem with Queen's. I have a problem with Kingston maybe," as "Kingston is really
small, coming from Dubai." But Haris is optimistic about his time at Queen's and
acknowledges that "once you do [get adjusted], it's good."

Summary

Haris' first-year university experience has been a balancing act between
maintaining his cultural and religious heritage and adapting to his new academic
environment. Haris is new to Canadian university academics, grading, and the amount
and timing of work assigned to students. Coming from a British educational system,
Haris had to change his strategy for success in his academics in Canada. No longer can
Haris leave material to the end of the term and hope to perform well on a final exam. He
realizes that, to succeed, he needs to maintain a steady study habit and perform well
throughout the academic term to keep his grades up to where he wants them to be. For
Haris, this adaptation process will continue throughout his university career as he hopes
to fully familiarize himself with the academics at Queen's.

In some aspects, Haris' past has equipped him to adapt to the socio-cultural changes he experiences in Canada. Dubai's multicultural environment exposed him to a diverse community of people. Furthermore, being in university grants Haris the liberty and flexibility to work at his own pace and prioritize his academics and his social life as he sees fit. However, being new to Western university culture and social norms, Haris struggles to integrate himself into the mainstream university culture. His religious identity is important to Haris, which prompts him to abstain from alcohol and eat Halal foods.

While Haris wishes the food at university resembled what he ate back home, Haris is satisfied with his living conditions. However, his desire to maintain his religious and cultural identity limits his interactions with others around him, especially those who are culturally and religiously different from him. Haris vigilantly guards his faith, his culture, and his masculine identity in the face of Western cultural norms and behaviours he regards as contrary to his faith.

Shying away from some of his peers, he identifies closely with his Muslim friends who share his common attitudes towards drinking, partying, and Western university culture. This association helps Haris form a sense of community on campus, but may limit the cross-cultural interaction between him and those who are different from him.

Mohammed

Mohammed is a Bangladeshi student in his first year of post-secondary studies in Canada. I was introduced to him by his Residence Don via email. Mohammed lived in a single room in a co-ed first-year residence. I emailed Mohammed about my study and invited him to participate in the interview. Mohammed got back to me promptly and was

eager to help me understand the experiences of first-year international students at Queen's University.

I interviewed Mohammed in a student common room within days after contacting him. During the interview, Mohammed mentioned that, even though his first year of university was his first year in Canada, he had lived in the United Kingdom for a year during 2002-2003. Mohammed's living experience in the UK exposed him to "Western-like" lifestyles, customs, and culture, which Mohammed claims familiarized him with the "problems" he would face adjusting to Canada.

The interview lasted around 45 minutes. At the start of the interview, Mohammed seemed pretty nervous and was soft spoken. As a second language English speaker, Mohammed had some challenges communicating his experiences to me. As the interviewer, I reiterated the questions, broke questions down into simpler form, verbally reflected his experience in my own words back to him, and affirmed the adjustment challenges Mohammed faced during his transition into an English-language, Canadian university. Doing so relaxed Mohammed and helped him open up to the questions. By the end, Mohammed was very engaged with me as the interviewer and provided me with in-depth accounts of his first-year experience. He was eager to share his story and hoped that his experiences would inform my research.

Cultural Adjustment

One of Mohammed's major concerns before coming to Canada revolved around his race and how his background would impact his experiences in Canada. "Before coming, I knew it was different ... race was one of the parts, you know. I'm brown. And, you know, race always plays a part." While Mohammed has not "seen any racial

attitudes towards [him]" being in a "white dominant area," Mohammed feels that his

"race" and his "religion" are both contributing factors to his anxiety in Canada and at

Queen's University. Since Mohammed is "a Muslim," he "always got this feeling that you

might get a bit" discriminated against. Once Mohammed arrived on campus, he was

"really happy, like how people behaved towards [him] and how they treated [him]."

"It was ... very cold when [Mohammed] came here, especially [the] winter," even

though Mohammed's first Canadian winter was "one of the warmest winters when

compared" to previous winters. Mohammed is also getting used to the food available to

him in Canada. He is "ok with [the] food here," although he "still [misses] food from back

home." He has access to Halal foods at the cafeterias on Queen's University campus,

which makes his cultural adjustment at Queen's smoother than he expected. "They

even provide Halal food over here ... in Leonard Caf, Ban Righ, everywhere." While

Mohammed is adjusting to some aspects of Canadian culture, "there are a lot of things

you don't adjust [to] and you don't want to adjust with." For Mohammed, the drinking

alcohol at university is one aspect of campus culture from which he chooses to stay

away because of his cultural and social values.

Adjusting to the social culture within university was difficult for Mohammed

because of "barriers" between him and his peers. His peers, who do not share his

culture, his identity, and his background, do not understand the references he makes

during conversation. These differences make it difficult for Mohammed to communicate

with others around him. Coming from Bangladesh, "if [he talks] about cricket, they don't

know." For Mohammed, these are "the difference[s] in religion, and in culture basically."

Despite the challenges, Mohammed has "adjust[ed] to [the barriers]," as "it's not a big

factor since when I talk to them ... it's not weird or something. It's ok." He "mix[es] with them pretty well" and is able to interact with them during meal times, while playing sports, and in conversation.

From time to time, Mohammed "actually [misses] back home a lot" and "[wants] to go back home after [his] exams, because ... [he misses his] loved ones and stuff." However, even though he misses Bangladesh, Mohammed is adjusting well to his new environment. While it is still a process for him he "[likes] the life here and I like the friends here."

Academic Adjustment

Mohammed's leading motivation for coming to Canada was his family, as his "parents always wanted [him] to study abroad." Due to the high "quality of education" in the West, Mohammed decided to leave his native Bangladesh to study overseas. He applied to the United Kingdom and the United States as well, but ultimately decided to study in Canada because "a lot of [his] friends chose Canada" to study. "When I was researching, among my options, Queen's University was a very good option for [his subject field]. So that's one of the reasons why I chose Queen's." Unlike the other universities in Canada, Queen's University gave Mohammed an unconditional acceptance based on his marks.

Back in Bangladesh, Mohammed studied at a school where English was the language of instruction. "English wasn't the major problem for me," Mohammed assures me. However, when Mohammed "first came here, I was in a mess, in terms of getting things," such as his daily class schedule. "It was all in a mess," so that he "missed frosh week" and "didn't know a lot of stuff." Mohammed cites visa delays for not landing in

Canada on time for frosh week, which made his orientation into university more

challenging than that of his peers.

Academically, Mohammed is enthusiastic about his experience at Queen's.

"Here, I really like the lectures, actually. Compared to Bangladesh, I think the lectures

over here are better, in terms of the teachers are more, like you know, their lectures are

more, they communicate with you much better." While tutorials are a new concept to

Mohammed, he responds to them positively: "you have lots of backups you know." He

feels supported academically. "They communicate with you."

Mohammed faced challenges with the differences in instruction for a few

courses. "I [have] problems as well, like in math," Mohammed explains. "I've done a lot

of things back home. And then over here, they're doing the same thing. But they're

having a different approach to maths and mathematics." For example, the rules on

doing math in university are different from what he was used to. "Back in Bangladesh, I

did one rule and here for example, they're doing another rule ... because you're learning

it over here and they tell you to use this rule."

"I actually really enjoy [my subject matter] to be honest," he claims, indicating his

enthusiasm for his program despite the increased workload. He is trying to do better in

some of his courses, although "sometimes you get a bit depressed because you have a

lot of courses and you have to adjust to all of them." To cope with the stress,

Mohammed talks with his parents and peers, finds solace within prayer, and plans out

his work so that he can "get through all of them."

Despite the academic rigour of university, Mohammed really enjoys the freedom

and flexibility of university life. "Sometimes, the thing I didn't have in Bangladesh was

the freedom. Ok, so now you're independent. You have this freedom. Ok. You study

and then you can go, you know." Even though in Bangladesh he had access to maids

and servants to help him do chores, in Canada, his freedom enables him to "live

independently." "When you come here," he states, "you learn a lot of things."

Mohammed values his new found freedom and flexibility of university life as both allow

him to study as his own pace, prioritize his academic learning, and organize his day.

Mohammed prefers extending the freedoms granted to him in university into his

personal life and uses the flexibility in his academic schedule to learn to live on his own.

Preservation of Culture and Masculinity

Mohammed always expected his transition to university and to Canada to be

difficult. Maintaining his identity, his Muslim faith, and his culture continue to be some of

the challenges Mohammed faces while studying at Queen's University. While adjusting

to university, Mohammed "always expected something like this," realizing that for him,

"some things ... are a bit difficult." Specifically, "the culture differences," "the Western

culture," and "sticking to your religion" are all "a bit difficult" for Mohammed. Drinking

activities make him uncomfortable as "sometimes it is hard to adjust with it all." He often

feels "this pressure" to conform. "I don't want to drink, or they didn't even tell me to drink

... but since everybody's drinking and you're not, you always, a bit left out."

Like-minded Muslim and Bangladeshi friends offer Mohammed moral support

when he feels isolated from certain socializing activities. He is adjusted to finding "other

people like me here," and is "happy to find other people like me ... so I do not feel left

out." Thanks to his friends, Mohammed is able to shield himself from Western cultural

differences and norms as he deliberately tries "to stay off these things," such as drinking

alcohol, sexual promiscuity, and other aspects of campus culture. "The thing is, it's widespread over here, but since most of the times, I go hang with my Muslim friends. So it doesn't affect me that much."

Preserving Mohammed's masculine identity in university is yet another challenge. His Muslim heritage and his adherence to Islamic values often clash with social norms at university. Islam helps Mohammed shape his masculine identity. "One of the duties ... as a male ... to have a stable job in the future, to pass with good grades and eventually get a good family and you know support my parents and stuff." These qualities are what his "religion tells me." Even in his appearance, Mohammed is inspired by his faith. "I grew my beard. I can say, in Islam, that's, I try to follow the Prophet, Peace Be Upon Him. He had a beard and that's what I think is a part of manliness as well." Finally, being active, participating in sports, and being with friends influence Mohammed's identity.

Mohammed is aware that certain stereotypes may be projected towards him because of his beard and overall appearance. "Because of my beard ... because of the stereotypes about Muslims ... people might think I'm a terrorist." As a consequence of his appearance before leaving for Canada, Mohammed's friends and family feared that he might fall prey to stereotypes and warned Mohammed "oh you have a beard; they'll call you a terrorist." However, Mohammed chooses to maintain his identity within Canadian society. Despite having "this feeling that people are watching me, [I] keep my beard because of religious concerns [and am] sticking to it" out of "respect [for] my religion,"

Even though Mohammed feels a sense of fear and insecurity about being a racialized minority, Mohammed once again finds comfort amongst his friends. "There are other Muslims here, other people like me so when you go there, you feel a lot better in the sense that you're not the only one." Because Mohammed is part of the Muslim Students Association at Queen's and the Bangladeshi Students Association, he is surrounded by like-minded friends who can keep him company throughout his university career.

Mohammed has not faced any overt discrimination at Queen's. On the contrary, Mohammed acts as an ambassador for his faith as "a lot of people ... talk to me [regularly]." His peers and others ask him questions about his faith, his background, and his culture. The people who interact with Mohammed compliment him, saying "you`re such a nice person," despite having preconceived notions about Islam, Muslim, and students from different parts of the world. This change in perceptions illustrates people's changing attitudes towards Muslims on campus. "People ... can also understand, you know, just because I have a beard, it doesn't mean that I'm a [terrorist]." Because of the changing attitudes of people, Mohammed feels more comfortable in his new surroundings. While he notes that people in Canada are "taller, much more fit ... than in Bangladesh, or me even," Mohammed claims "that's not a big factor which affects me per se." Asked if he is comfortable under his skin, Mohammed replies, "Yeah, I'm comfortable."

Experience with Residence Life and Student Affairs Services

"Before coming here, [Mohammed] actually knew a Queen's alumni," and a professor at Queen's. The professor acted as Mohammed's "guardian" and "helped

[him] a lot in terms of showing me around the campus at the beginning." At first, Mohammed was overwhelmed with the campus: "I was like 'oh my God, it's so confusing.'" But once he familiarized himself with the campus map and his course locations, Mohammed had an easier time navigating his way through the campus.

Mohammed missed his residence orientation by the time he arrived on campus due to visa issues. When he arrived on campus, his Don "had a meeting just for [him] … and everybody greeted [him] and it was friendly," which made him "really happy." Mohammed's Don was helpful when Mohammed "had a problem, in terms of what I should do, or classes." The amount of help he received was "ok." He "never felt like [he] needed more help. If [he] needed [help, he] … went to her." Mohammed seems to be aware only of his Don and the health services available to him on campus saying, "I use my health service, because I got sick so. And that was pretty useful. And then, Don, she's always been there." He seems generally unaware of any other resources that are available on campus.

Living in residence is a bittersweet experience for Mohammed. "The people … who were there [in residence], they were nice and friendly … that's exciting." However, Mohammed encounters challenges and "chaos" over the weekends when his peers "usually get drunk" and engage in parties. When Mohammed first arrived in residence, he "used to live in [his] room." Mohammed "used to feel very bad that time," as "they used to party … [and he] used to avoid it." Mohammed "didn't want to get into that, in drinking," so he "would desert [himself] from those activities." Staying inside his room, Mohammed would "feel alone sometimes." Despite residence rules surrounding quiet hours after a certain hour of the night, Mohammed found his peers "making a lot of

noise," while he was sleeping during weeknights and especially during weekends. "But you being the only one, I could not just go and shout at them." Even though Mohammed is adjusting to the challenges of communal living, Mohammed regards the noise violations associated with excessive partying as one of his "biggest problems." To cope, Mohammed would seek refuge and "would probably go to another Muslim friend's, probably stay in their house or something."

Mohammed has limited contact with most of his floor mates and limits his interaction to a few close friends on the floor. He has one, non-Muslim, white friend on his floor to whom he connects with. "I have one person, like who's really close to me," he says, while "the other people … I'm ok with them. I don't actually talk to them as much as him, the other guy." Mohammed watches movies with his close friend, "talk[s] to him for a while actually, like you know, about a lot of stuff, about studies, how time just flew by and stuff like this," and eats together with him. His friend "lived a big portion of his life in the Middle East … [and] he knows a lot of things" about Mohammed's cultural and religious background. "He's actually the first friend I met on my residence. So, since then, he's been, he's always helping" Mohammed's transition into Canadian society and into the academic rigour of university. "You know, so we support each other and so it feels good sometimes." Mohammed has "a few other close friends but not as close. And there are other people who like, you can say, just 'hi and hello' basically." Because of his "religion [and] culture," Mohammed is distant from most of his floor mates and doesn't have "a lot in common" with most of them.

Most of Mohammed's needs are being adequately met by the university and by residences. Mohammed was worried if he would have to miss his Friday prayers due to

classes or his academic schedule, but his professors accommodate Mohammed by allowing him to watch the lectures online or by moving around quizzes if they conflict with his Friday congressional prayer times. Mohammed is also pleased that the cafeterias provide Halal foods and help Mohammed observe his Muslim dietary laws. As for making his experience better, Mohammed wishes the rules and regulations in residence were "maintained properly." "If alcohol is prohibited on residences, they should actually take a stance, you know," Mohammed says, wishing Dons would address drinking and partying in residence more thoroughly and "take a stance." Mohammed wants students to "at least follow those [rules] because that might disturb other students, like me for example." Despite the challenges of living in residence, Mohammed is generally happy with his experience at Queen's. "Overall, I enjoyed here, at Queen's. You know, especially, you're doing all these things, get a degree, a nice degree, from Queen's; and good quality of education, good support overall. So, I'm happy."

Summary

In many ways, Mohammed is a representative of his culture, his customs, and the Islamic faith on the Queen's University campus. Having been exposed to the West previously in his life, Mohammed is aware of the challenges he faces while guarding his faith, identity, and individuality.

Throughout his interview, Mohammed highlights his Muslim faith as the crux of his identity. In both appearance and behaviour, Mohammed aspires to embody the teachings of Islam. From keeping a beard to attending communal Friday congressional prayers, it is important for Mohammed to hold on to traditions, despite being surrounded

by people who behave in ways contrary to his faith. While Mohammed seems to be adjusting well to the academics of university, he struggles to identify with Canadian social customs and norms. Mohammed often feels isolated from the majority of his Western peers because he chooses not to drink and thus misses out on the socializing with his peers. He escapes to his Muslim friends to shield himself from alcohol, excessive parties, and the noise within residences.

Mohammed favours holding on to his values over integrating himself to Western culture. On the one hand, the university accommodates Mohammed`s needs to the best of its ability. Mohammed is provided with Halal meals at the cafeteria and is allowed to miss class to partake in Friday prayers. However, on the other hand, Mohammed struggles to maintain his cultural and religious identity within Canadian society, feeling marginalized and alone when others around him are socializing. This paradox is the basis of his university experience and provides a challenge for Mohammed to fully integrate himself with others. He is selective about those people with whom he chooses to be friends, having few "Western" friends and preferring to make friends with those who share his faith and culture. Association with like-minded individuals provides Mohammed with a sense of security and stability within his new environment and gives him the support he needs to carry on with his academics at Queen's.

Niwat

Niwat is a Thai international student at Queen's University. One of my previous participants introduced Niwat to my study and mentioned that Niwat might be interested in participating. I contacted Niwat via email and asked him if he would be interested in

being interviewed. Niwat got back to me within a few days, upon which we arranged to meet in a student common space to talk about his university experience.

Niwat shared a room with another Asian student in a first-year, co-ed residence building. Despite being an international student, Niwat lived in the Maritimes for two years to complete high school and also lived in the United States before moving to Canada. Even though he lived in Canada for a few years before starting university, he claims that moving to Ontario was an adjustment for him since people in Ontario are "slightly different from what [he] was used to in the Maritimes."

During the interview, Niwat seemed reserved and shy. As a second language English speaker, Niwat had a few challenges understanding some of the questions, which required me to repeat them to allow him to answer. One of the challenges I faced was getting Niwat to elaborate upon his answers. At times, I had to ask follow-up questions or ask for examples to understand what he experienced during his first year. Time and time again, I would reiterate and reflect his answers to ensure I was getting an accurate account of his story. While the first few sections of the interview went slowly, Niwat slowly opened up and was able to answer most of the questions to the best of his ability. The interview lasted a little over 30 minutes after which I thanked him for his participation in the study.

Cultural Adjustment

Moving from Thailand to the United States, then to the Maritimes and then finally Kingston, Ontario, Niwat had to adjust to a variety of changes to his everyday life. His year in the United States and two years in the Maritimes exposed him to Western

society before he moved to Queen's University in Kingston. "The food in general, the food is just, it's not the same as back home," as "it's not rice." Unlike Thailand where Niwat "can just really eat anywhere you want for 24 hours," in Canada, "you have to go by schedules," which are different from what Niwat is accustomed.

Furthermore, Niwat faced "language difficulties," trying to communicate with his peers at university. "Sometimes people don't understand my accent." According to Niwat, "it's not their fault right, it's my fault, most of the part." He feels as though he should be able to communicate with others effectively, without an accent, so that people could understand him. While he does not "have any problems with that [his accent]" most of the time, he particularly feels held back by his accent at parties. "It's kind of hard when you like, let's say you go to a party, and then, you try to uh, I mean like, to be with some girls." For Niwat, his accent is a source of embarrassment that prevents him from approaching others and initiating contact. He finds that, at parties, the girls are predominantly attracted to white men. When I ask him if he believes that "white girls" are attracted to "white men," Niwat replies "well, I would say so. Here, yes." According to Niwat, in order to cope with the competition, he and his other racialized friends "just keep up" with other men at these parties.

Niwat also witnesses preferential treatment towards white students in matters of hiring leaders for student orientation activities. "Lots of [Niwat's] friends applied to" be second-year Bosses, who are orientation leaders for first-year students. According to Niwat's observation, "mostly the people elected to be Boss next year, they're all like, white male and stuff." When Niwat's racialized friend called to ask the hiring committee why the friend was not chosen to be a Boss and what he should do to improve his

chances, the committee responded, "you couldn't get it because we have an ethnic quota on our thing." Niwat and his friend were both "surprised about that," and Niwat "felt bad" for his friend. "Personally, I disagree with that. But like, you can't do anything." Evidently, as a minority student, Niwat feels powerless to challenge the status quo and believes that "Well, if that's what they want to do, I guess, we have to go with that."

Academic Adjustment

Niwat had been attending high school in the Maritimes for two years before moving to Queen's University. He chose Queen's "partly because I got accepted here. And I have been going to high school here for 2 years already, so might as well continue here." His experience in Canadian secondary education was thus a motivating factor for him to continue university studies in Canada. In addition, "and partly, it's better once you ... graduate from [here] and go back home to Thailand. You will have more [chances] to get accepted [into] jobs and stuff," hinting that future job prospects back in Niwat's native Thailand are better with a Western education. Niwat chose Queen's University rather than other Canadian universities because "well according to McLean's and other rankings I went to, [Queen's University] is the number one university in Canada. And that's like, mostly the reason I came here." Thus Queen's University's reputation and academic ranking played a significant role in attracting Niwat.

Niwat had to make adjustments to his academic learning since moving to university. His workload is much higher in university: "Frankly, I've had to read a lot here ... I'm in [an] arts program and I have readings ... it's kind of hard to adjust to that." Niwat sometimes feels unmotivated at university, partially due to the amount of free time

he has here. "I have time to do a lot of other things as well," Niwat explains, adding "sometimes, I feel like, I [do not] want to go to class, because I have so much time."

Niwat feels more independent as a result of this greater free time. "Yeah, independence. It's just, sometimes, it can be good, but sometimes, it's not good for me." By "sometimes," Niwat means that "the good part is like, ok, I have time to explore, to learn by myself. But mostly, I don't use those times to learn. I use those times to do something else, like hang out with friends, playing games." Freedom is a double-edged sword in Niwat's case. On the one hand, it gives him the flexibility in his day-to-day schedule. However, he struggles to manage his freedom accordingly. "The freedom is a little bit hard," he says. According to Niwat, his independence enables him to delay his studies and "cram the assignments and test that [he has] to do." Niwat indeed is more immersed in his social life than in his academic life. "Is academics taking a back seat?" I ask him, to which he laughs and replies, "wouldn't say back seat but for right now, it is back seat."

All in all, Niwat seems generally pleased with his educational experience. Optimistically, he reassures me that "it's not that hard if [he tries]." He sees his transition in positive terms: "Yeah, everything is going fine." Niwat is "excited for next year…to actually go into more specifics about [his course of study]." He finds the introductory courses boring, he is not enjoying the courses as much as he hoped he would, and he is looking forward to more specific courses.

Preservation of Culture and Masculinity

For Niwat, being able to "just do whatever I want" is a masculine character trait. Having the freedom to decide if he wants to go to class is one example of what Niwat means by "[doing] whatever I want." He also identifies masculinity with "independence" and the ability to say and do what he desires. In addition to independence, going "to the gym" and "being strong" represent another characteristic Niwat associates with masculinity.

Being a racialized minority at Queen's University affects Niwat "a little bit but like, not too much." In the face of adversity, he consciously "stick with what I want to do, and then say 'ok, I want to do this' and don't care about a lot of people." Despite being different, Niwat is comfortable doing what he wants to do and disregards the opinions of others. For example, at keggers and other drinking-related parties, he feels isolated. "Me and my roommate. He's an ethnic minority as well. When we go to a party and stuff, like all, most of the keggers. They're all white dominant keggers." At these parties, "the majority of them are [white]," making it difficult for Niwat, "to reel in girls when it comes to that."

Furthermore, when Niwat is at an event, surrounded by predominantly white students, Niwat feels more comfortable going with a white friend rather than his non-white friend. "If I go with a white friend [to a kegger], I'm like 'yeah, this is cool, this is pretty cool.'" However, when Niwat is "with a bunch of [people from his ethnicity] and go to the kegger, I feel like, slightly uncomfortable." Despite the uncomfortable feeling, Niwat knows that "it's all very on yourself." He realizes that if "[you do not care] ... you

don't care about it. But if you think about it, you think about it." He adds, "something I'll
be like thinking about it. But once we have some more drinks in us, it's like 'whatever!'"

Niwat feels comfortable being around most of his male friends as "mostly my
friends, I hang out around, just, we just, whatever, we're just chilling, we're not
comparing to each other." However, some acquaintances of Niwat "always want to
compete all the time." Niwat claims that this competition stems from academics, where
male peers will probe him about his academics and his marks. They ask Niwat "'what
did you get on your mark?; what did you get?' and stuff like that." The academic
competition amongst his peers sometimes makes Niwat uncomfortable in his
surroundings.

Experience with Residence Life and Student Affairs Services

Niwat thinks that having residence orientation is "a really good idea," as it was
"really fun." He enjoyed "the whole week of not doing anything and just ... having fun."
While he was not enthusiastic about any specific activity during orientation, he enjoyed
the overall experience of familiarizing himself with the campus, his residence, and those
around him. Particularly, Niwat enjoys Queen's rich tradition and heritage. He "really
liked the integration part, when [he] was in Grant Hall and the town crier read out the
proclamation." It made him, "feel like [he belongs] here a lot."

"At first, it was kind of challenging to break out between people on the floor,"
because Niwat does not "talk much." Additionally, "being international student as well,
it's kind of hard" for Niwat to integrate himself with the others on his floor. The other
residents on Niwat's floor "mostly come from white [cities] in Ontario. And then,

sometimes it's just hard for them to relate … to … me personally." While living in the Maritimes for two years prior to Queen's University, Niwat was one of the few Asians in his community. Because he was "exotic" back in the Maritimes and a "minority there ... they would talk to me," be curious about his origins and ask him "so, where are you from?" However, in Ontario, Niwat finds that most people regard him as "just another Asian guy." However, once he "got to know them better and get to meet them, and see them outside of and in comfort zone, then we just get along well."

Niwat enjoys the freedoms and liberty he experiences living in residence. This freedom includes "go to bed whenever and wake up whenever, and leave on your own." However, Niwat is aware that at times "the freedom just slips away and holds me back from my academics." In terms of living in residence, Niwat does not "find any problem with that at all." His transition into moving and living in residence "was smooth," because back in "[the Maritimes], and [the Midwestern United States], I didn't live with my family. I was with a host family." Niwat claims that living with a host family is "pretty much the same to residence."

Niwat connects with other members of his floor by "playing video games" and "[going] out together" on Friday nights. He describes his interactions as "pretty fun." While he is "mostly neutral with everyone and then there will be a little group of people that I am close with," Niwat goes "to supper, mostly every night together," with those with whom he is close. For those with whom Niwat is not close, they "just mostly say hi in the hallways," and at times play "game consoles ... because we all have to go to them and play with them." His Residence Don also helps encourage interaction among the residents on the floor through "floor dinners every Wednesday night," where residents

"can decide to go or not." However, Niwat notices that "not a lot of people show up."

"And then, sometimes he [the Don], he took us to Wolfe Island and laser tag for floor

interactions," which helped the students to bond.

Being an international student, Niwat's needs are being met by the university.

While he is satisfied with the services provided to him, at times he is unsure about what

else is available. He thinks that "they [the services] are very organized, but it's kind of

confusing which one I might need to go to, to meet my needs." He is unfamiliar with the

Main Campus Residence Council (MCRC), unfamiliar with the different student staff in

the building, and unfamiliar with how the staff members are hired. When I ask him if

anything can be improved upon, Niwat recommends residences "to have a buddy, an

international buddy that they can help us transfer into Queen's, more like, the one ...

you can go to talk to," perhaps even an "upper year." Through a buddy program, Niwat

would be able to talk about his "personal feelings ... classes and stuff." The buddies

"would just know what I have to go through, as an international student. And second of

all, I guess you can have a connection as well." Niwat thinks that such a program in

residence "would definitely help," and wishes he "had someone" as a "mentor" to "teach

me stuff" during his first year in residence. When I inform Niwat about a similar program

at the Queen's University International Centre, Niwat seems largely unaware of the

program. "I've been like twice to pick up my healthcare [University Health Insurance

Plan]," Niwat says, adding that he does not use the International Centre much.

Summary

One of the hallmarks of Niwat's university experience is his passion for the social

life at Queen's. Time and time again during the interview, Niwat focuses on going to

parties, keggers, playing video games with his peers, and trying to attract girls. While he knows that academics are important, he admits to being more involved in his social circles than his studies. The freedom he finds in university acts as a double-edged sword for Niwat where, on the one hand, it gives him the flexibility to work on his own terms. However, on the other hand, it hinders him from his academics and encourages him to get more involved with his social life. Being a racialized minority within Queen's University, Niwat faces a variety of challenges that limits his interactions with those around him.

Niwat's accent and his ethnic identity represent a source of embarrassment for him within the Queen's campus. Being surrounded by white students, Niwat feels inadequate compared to his peers. When he mentions his accent, Niwat blames himself for being incomprehensible at times. Even though Niwat is a second language English speaker, he places high expectations on himself to be able to communicate with others.

When comparing himself to others, Niwat realizes he has more difficulty attracting girls at parties, claiming that white girls are attracted to white men instead of him. Niwat's ethnic insecurity is a reoccurring theme, where his ethnic insecurity is directly linked to his inability to make a connection with women. Even being around friends of his ethnicity in a predominantly white social setting is a source of embarrassment for Niwat, highlighting his heightened self-awareness and perceptions of inferiority. Despite the challenges, Niwat strives to maintain a vibrant social life within the Queen's community, whether it is with his white friends or those of his cultural group. In the face of competition and challenges, Niwat keeps up with the others and makes the most of his university experience.

Tam

Tam is a first-year, international student from Thailand who was the first participant I interviewed for my study. He lived in a single room and had access to two Residence Dons from his large, co-ed floor of over 50, first-year residents. He was introduced to me via email by one of the Residence Dons with whom I worked. I contacted him about participating in the study and provided him with details about the nature of the interview. He got back to me within a few days and was eager to participate, citing his desire to help me understand how international male students adjusted to university life in Canada.

I met Tam at one of Queen's University's libraries at which time we went into a quiet room to conduct the interview. Tam was gregarious throughout the interview and was able to share his experiences when I asked him questions regarding his transition to university, his masculine identity, and his experiences living in university residence. During the interview, Tam provided me with clear and descriptive accounts of his experiences at Queen's University.

Tam was exposed to a variety of people from different cultures back in Thailand, where he attended an international school in the capital city, Bangkok. Despite being from Thailand, Tam spoke fluent English and had no difficulty communicating. The interview lasted a little over 30 minutes after which time I thanked him for participating in the study. He in return wished me all the best and hoped that my study would inform university administration and Residence Life professionals at Queen's University about international students.

Cultural Adjustment

When Tam left Thailand, he "thought it wouldn't be a significant shock coming here, but I was wrong about those assumptions." Coming to Canada "for the first time ... took a lot of adjustment," especially in terms of "adapting to the local atmosphere" and adapting to "social customs, norms, what to expect ... as well as how people treat you." It was difficult for Tam "to change, as in ... integrate myself into Canadian community," and it took him "two to three months of work" to adjust to his surroundings. For Tam, his only option was to "try to integrate myself into ... my surroundings, even if it means ... changing certain aspects of myself."

Despite Tam's experience meeting people from a variety of backgrounds, he acknowledges that "nothing really mitigates the shock of going through the culture shock." Comparing Canada to Asia, Tam notices that "in Asia you always put on this façade of cooperation, of congeniality whilst here it's more appropriate to show if you're displeased with someone directly."

"The loss of family, the loss of culture, and the loss of community, being dislocated from your society was massive" for Tam once he moved to Canada. For the first two months of his stay, Tam "was fine, but the third month, I started to get homesick." Unlike many of his peers who moved from cities and provinces in Canada to come to Queen`s, Tam had "to move across an ocean, 12 different time zones" to get to his destination. Moving such vast distances, "you feel like your sense of community, your sense of belonging within a community and within a society has been completely severed." Similarly, "the feeling of wanting to go home sometimes" is a feeling international students are denied when they move to university in Canada. Unlike his

peers who had family in Toronto, Tam cannot simply take a bus to Toronto to go see family on long weekends. Because Tam's family is back in Thailand, he remains on campus, in residence during the holidays.

This severed connection makes Tam feel "neither here, not there," as he is "not part of the Canadian society and community ... yet." He knows that he has to "slowly work my way up." Leaving Thailand, Tam left both his family and his community. The loss of both family and community contribute to Tam's culture shock. However, Tam places special emphasis on the loss of community as something "a lot of international students went through." Students "don't feel like they belong, they don't feel like they relate on the same sense than other people." International students may not know what it is like "to have a snowball fight," go out to "play hockey," cheer for "the Leafs," or revel in the excitement of going "to Whistler," when they encounter these quintessential Canadian activities. Unlike his peers, he "can't relate to any of those things ... as in, you know, I'm a Canadian, you're a Canadian, we have things that relate to each other." Being part of a community, "people help each other out ... look out for each other, because we're all Canadians." Being an international student, Tam feels excluded from this society as the feeling of community is "completely gone when you go overseas."

Instead, Tam is met with curiosity, intrigue, and, at times, sheer ignorance. People who encounter Tam for the first time ask him "'oh you're Thai … oh where is Thailand from?' 'Do you guys ride elephants?' 'Oh ok, that's cool!'" and "treat me like an exotic thing rather than someone who comes here and we'll be my friend, we'll look out for each other." Tam gets the "sense" that people want to "hear a little bit about me"

because they are "fascinated by me." Once people's fascination with Tam ends, they "go somewhere else," to find the next "exotic" person on campus.

To help international students integrate into their new home and have a sense of community among those in similar situations, Tam would "like the opportunity to get them all together in the single time and place." While Tam is aware that there is an international student orientation day, Tam claims that it is "spread through the word of mouth." "I know so many people that didn't hear about it, much less attend." A more organized and better advertised event would help international students feel more comfortable at Queen's University. In this setting, "international students would come together in a single place and be able to spend an evening talking to each other," about each other's "experiences, what they've learned, [and] some mistakes they've made." In Tam's view, "that would be very, very helpful," as it would "mitigate" international students' "feelings of being detached and a lot of the shock that comes with transitioning."

Academic Adjustment

Tam came to Canada because of the reputation of its universities. Tam was aware that, for lower tuition costs, he would have access to quality education that is "just as good as the United States and Europe." While university allowed for greater academic and personal freedom for Tam, university has turned out to be vastly different from his experience back in high school. The first thing that strikes Tam as different from high school is the independence: "you get so much more independence here than you usually would." Unlike in high school, in university, "the viewpoint of [the] instructors matter considerably more than what I have been used to ... in the past." In Tam's

experience, university professors are more specific about how they want an assignment completed and have higher expectations of their students than high school teachers. Tam got a B- in his first university assignment, which was much lower than what he had expected. Although that mark was "atrocious" for him, he recovered his marks by the end of the first term and finished the semester with a 4.1 GPA.

For Tam to recover his marks, he had to go beyond the classroom to seek out the academic supports that would ultimately help him secure a better academic standing. This academic adjustment "wasn't the same as ... the international education experience I had been exposed to previously." To adjust to the university academic environment, Tam had to be assertive and "go in and talk to a lot of the professors" to find out what they required for him. Tam tried to "incorporate" himself into the education system at Queen's University and find out specific details about what professors were looking for in his writing and papers.

Despite the challenges, Tam seems optimistic about his transition into Queen's University. The changes were not "overwhelming." Even though there were "some things that I needed to adapt to," he feels capable of rising up to the challenge and responding to it accordingly. Tam acknowledges the ongoing nature of the adjustment process. As Tam states, "it's an ongoing process, of course. I can't say that I'm complete with it, but it does not feel like I'm being excluded or ostracized."

Preservation of Culture and Masculinity

Tam identifies "courage, decisiveness, strength, responsibility, conscientiousness, responsibility to your community, towards your peers" as

characteristics of masculinity. "A lot of that has formed out of my own experiences because, in Thailand, every Thai male has to serve in the military."

Tam credits "a composite of both cultures, my upbringing and lived experiences that I brought over" that led to his sense of masculinity, including his parents and his military background. With respect to Tam's parents, "my parents definitely emphasized success. They are both very hard working, successful workers; career people, both of them. And I learned a lot from them." With respect to the military, "in terms of responsibility, and kind of repressing some of those impulses, or urges, I get that from the military." Furthermore, Tam's Thai heritage helped him shape his characteristics. This heritage emphasizes that you "keep in control in public; you're not supposed to embarrass yourself. You are always supposed to project this sense that you are calm and you know what you are doing, you have everything together, you're not sloppy."

At Queen's University, Tam does not feel "representative of the entire Queen's population at large." He "converges with others [who] share similar characteristics" as him. As a result, "most of my male friends are the same," in that "they are high performers in both academics, while in work they share some of the same values as me." Having like-minded friends, Tam "reinforces my own set of values because they all embody what I embody."

Tam gets "the impression that in terms of masculinity, and being racialized, there are certain assumptions" that get placed on him. Being competent in math is one of those assumptions. Despite being surrounded in a predominantly white environment, Tam strives to maintain his masculine and cultural identity. He is aware that he is "living

within Queen's a predominantly white university," and that "my behaviour, my notion of masculinity, may not be the same as the majority of people."

Tam has "a firm conviction that my idea of masculinity is right for myself and right for my situation in life." He disassociates from mainstream university culture and stereotypical masculine behaviours: "I'm sure as many people are involved in significant parties, drinking, and certain irresponsible behaviours, culture at Queen's. And I don't necessarily associate myself with people who do that." Being dedicated to his work, Tam is "very immersed in my academics as well as my work outside of academics, as well as social situations which don't put me in those sort of kegger parties, things like that." When he is asked to attend drinking parties and keggers, Tam "politely declines" and says, "no thank you" to the offer. "I politely reject the offer, because what I view as being masculine, what I think is masculine is responsibility, curbing your impulses to act irresponsibly." His version of masculinity thus differs from what he see as others' views; "rather than embodying, to me, these false ideals of drinking or you know, just, I guess that whole hooking up with a lot of girls." He has a "different conception of what masculinity is; that is responsibility, temperament, success, knowing your priorities." For Tam, his own perception of masculine identity helps him see his "future in a clearer light and emphasizing my future prospects for success."

For Tam, maintaining his roots and his identity is a pivotal aspect of his experience in Canada. He doesn't "try to pretend to be somebody I'm not, so I don't go out to these parties, wanting to feel 'you know this is Canada. I should do what the Canadians do and drink and puke on the floor.'" Tam values having "control" and doing things in "moderation." When Tam encounters friends behaving recklessly, he says to

himself "that's not masculine ... what I'm doing now embodies my gender role ... I do not feel a need to conform ... I don't feel a compulsion to change it, based on what is happening around me." When Tam sees behaviours that he warrants as "antithetical" to himself, it "only strengthens [his] own conviction" that maintaining his identity within his new environment is right for him.

Experience with Residence Life and Student Affairs Services

Overall, Tam had a very successful transition into Queen's University largely due to residence orientation during his first three days on campus. He thought that residence orientation was "immensely helpful," crediting his Dons as "the stars" of his experience. He does not "know how [he] could've done it without them [his Dons]." They were very supportive of Tam and had answers to "every questions that I had," during move-in day. While the main challenges for Tam were "the culture shock" and "having to adjust," Tam "never felt lost" and "never felt out of touch" during his first few days at Queen's. "Living alone has always been a big transition to move into, especially in a different country" for Tam. However, "it wasn't necessarily something that was overwhelming" for him on this occasion.

Throughout the year, Tam faced a few stressors and challenges living in residence. General cleanliness, the "lack of adherence to the rules," and "blatant disregard for the rules" are some of the "big" stresses for Tam. He "[tries] to remind people that 'when it's quiet hours; you can't have this many people over; you can't be screaming on the top of your lungs.'" However, warning his peers yields little results at times. Even though Tam knows that there "are mechanisms in place to ensure order,"

he does not "want to resort to that because that would sour my relationship with people that I want to get along with."

Despite the stressors, Tam is pleased with his experience in residences and his level of engagement with the residence council. One of "the most exciting thing is the degree of student inclusion in the decision-making process" within the residence council and administration. Tam is more than satisfied working with the Main Campus Residence Council (MCRC) and commends the equitable treatment of those who work there. "They [MCRC] don't discriminate based on, I mean, who you are, where you come from, international student," which made getting involved easy for Tam. He senses "a lot of excitement … from the fact that you are exposed to so many opportunities" within residence life and MCRC. "You could work, you can advance yourself, and you could pretty much settle into whatever kind of routine or lifestyle that you want to go into."

Tam interacts with his floor mates and other residents in the building on a positive, "social basis." He connects to his friends on the floor "on a daily basis" and also has a "very close" relationship with his Don. Furthermore, Tam "interacts with them [residents] by being a first-year events advisor in my building." As a first-year events advisor, Tam organizes events for the building, "so I find out about their interests and what kind of events they want to host." He openly communicates with his fellow students and gets their input on where building money should be spent and what events should be organized for the residents.

While Tam is happy with his residence experience, he is largely unaware of many of the support services available to him through Residence Life and Student Affairs. Given a list of such services, he briefly compliments the Queen's University International Centre (QUIC). "QUIC was really good for basic things, like the international insurance … all the tax registration for international students." However, Tam "[gets] the impression that … [while] they do organize events," Tam "feels like it could be marketed a little better because I find myself forgetting about the QUIC at times." Tam only uses the QUIC for "urgent" matters. Furthermore, Tam finds the "wait times" at the Health, Counselling, and Disability Services (HCDS) to be "ridiculous" and wishes the service were more efficient for all students.

Summary

Despite the challenges of university, Tam is doing well in his new setting. Tam is a successful example of how international students can effectively involve themselves into the Canadian university system but still maintain their identity. Tam juggles maintaining his identity at university and fully integrating himself into the social and academic environment of university life in Canada. He highlights various differences between Thai and Canadian societies, claiming that Thai culture focuses on outward appearances and perceptions. Being in Canada, Tam tries to navigate Canadian society while maintaining pieces of his home with him.

In terms of academics at Queen's, Tam strives to do well in his classes and achieve high marks but, at the same time, get involved with other opportunities that come his way. In many ways, Tam has been successful integrating himself within the Queen's community. His desire to succeed along with his communication skills help

Tam adapt to Canadian society. Despite his success, Tam misses his home and the familiarity of being around like-minded individuals. While he is able to find a community of friends within residence, he stresses not being able to connect to his peers and share in moments that are significant to his Canadian friends. Tam wishes that he had more opportunities to connect with other international students who are going through some of the same emotional experiences that he is. Tam is confident that a social gathering of international students within the university residences would help him and others like him to get a sense of community where they can feel supported through each other's trials and tribulations of leaving home and moving to a different country to study.

Preserving his individual and Thai identity is critical for Tam at university. Based on his values, Tam shies away from excessive drinking parties and disruptive behaviour. He is unhappy with the drunken behaviour of his peers and finds the disregard for residence rules a challenge to living in residence. Even though Tam seems well adjusted to his new environment, he holds true to his own masculine identity and denies stereotypical male bonding activities in university to prove his masculinity to others. Tam is very self-aware and is sure about his priorities at university. He realizes that his academics are important and strives to maintain a healthy balance between academics and his social life.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of four racialized, male, first-year, international students attending a university in southern Ontario and living in university residence. Through four one-on-one interviews, my qualitative study sought to uncover the cultural and academic challenges four participants endured during their first year in university. In addition to cultural and academic adjustment, my study focused on how these participants adjusted their masculine and cultural/religious identities in a Western university. A secondary purpose of my study was to examine how these four international students experienced living in university residences, what challenges they faced, and how their specific needs were met.

Cultural Adjustment

Most of the participants either had had prior experience living in Western and/or Westernized cities or had been exposed to people from a variety of different backgrounds, which helped their transition into university in Canada. The participants had some knowledge of Canadian society and were aware of some of the challenges they would face. Haris' experience living in Dubai, Mohammed's year in the United Kingdom, Niwat's high school education in the Maritimes, and Tam's experience studying in an international school in Bangkok exposed these men to Western society and gave them a sense of what to expect once they moved to Canada. Thus the limited cultural distance between Canada and many of the places the participants lived in helped mitigate their initial reaction to moving to Canada for university (Tochkov, Levine, & Sanaka, 2010; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992). They were familiar with some of the cultural challenges associated with moving to a Western society and had some

understanding of cultural norms and practices. However, despite this similarity, the cultural adjustment experiences of these participants were unique in their own ways. Haris' and Mohammed's experiences were united in their Muslim faith, while Niwat's and Tam's experiences were connected through their Thai heritage. However, all four participants had individual experiences transitioning through the first year of university in Canada, which exemplifies the distinctive nature of each one of their journeys.

Each of the participants in my study had a strategy for the cultural adjustment process in Canada ranging from immersion within his host culture to detachment from it, as indicated by previous studies (Burnapp, 2006; Pires, Stanton, & Ostenfeld, 2006; Ye, 2006). Niwat seemed to want to assimilate into Canadian and university culture but was held back by his ethnic background and English language difficulties. Because of Niwat's accent, he felt as though people did not understand him from time to time and thus felt marginalized at parties he attended. Even though he was aware of his accent, Niwat blamed himself for his inability to communicate effectively with his peers. At parties, Niwat wanted to attract "white girls" but saw them as not attracted to him because of his race, ethnicity, and command of the English language. As noted by Ancis, Sedlacek, and Mohr (2000), racialized students like Niwat may feel the need to conform to stereotypes, similar to Niwat's need and desire to attend keggers with his white peers and attract white females. Furthermore, inability to effectively communicate in English with others has been shown to be yet another barrier to successful adaptation. Lee and Rice (2007), for example, noted that international students who were not fluent in English felt isolated and marginalized by their peers, and Wan, Chapman, and Biggs (1992) claimed that the lack of English language skills was a

leading cause of stress among international students. This stress was further amplified in group settings where Niwat was expected to connect with others on a social level (Turner, 2006). Even though Niwat did not experience blatant racism and discrimination on campus, he witnessed preferential treatment towards white students in matters of hiring leaders for student orientation activities. Jones, Castellanos, and Cole (2002) highlighted that, in such situations, students felt uncomfortable challenging such behaviours, which only perpetuated discomfort and alienation.

Unlike Niwat who tried to assimilate into Canadian society, Mohammed separated himself from various facets of Canadian and university culture. He held on strongly to his Muslim and cultural identity, which prompted him to reject certain activities in university, such as drinking and partying. Even though Mohammed was tolerant of Canadian winters and satisfied with the Halal food offered to him on campus, he strongly rejected the drinking and partying culture within the university. Thus one of the leading causes of stress for Mohammed was the cultural distance between Canada and Bangladesh. Various studies showed that a large cultural distance between an individual's home country and host country can lead to stress associated with cultural adjustment (Tochkov, Levine, & Sanaka, 2010; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992). As a result of this cultural distance, Mohammed experienced "barriers" between him and his peers. Those around him did not understand his cultural references nor did they identify with Mohammed's religious identity. Both these factors made it difficult for Mohammed to adapt to Canadian society and were among the reasons he missed home. Unlike Niwat who wanted to assimilate, Mohammed, much like participants in previous studies (Lustig & Koester, 2005; Ward et al., 2001), chose to separate himself from the host

culture by retaining his cultural identity and refusing to relate to certain Canadian societal practices.

Haris and Mohammed were both Muslim students and held on to their Muslim cultural identity with the help of like-minded friends on campus. Studies have shown that having friends from a similar background can support people in adjusting to new cultural environments (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Colvin & Jaffar, 2007; Pires, Stanton, & Ostenfeld, 2006). Even though both Mohammed and Haris had like-minded friends to whom they could retreat if they needed support, Haris sounded more confident in his ability to adapt to Canadian society. Haris had lived a large portion of his life in Dubai and completed his schooling in a British school. This experience possibly exposed Haris to various facets of Western culture more so than Mohammed's one year in the United Kingdom. Both Haris and Mohammed highlighted the drinking culture at Queen's as one of the challenges to adapting to university culture. However, the drinking culture affected Mohammed more than it affected Haris. Haris' greater tolerance for the drinking culture could largely be influenced by his experience living in Dubai or his experience residing in one of the newer residence buildings on campus where he had his own room and limited interactions with his floor.

Food was yet another adaptive challenge for Mohammed and Haris. While Mohammed was satisfied with the food, Haris missed the food from back home and wished food on campus were similar to what he ate in Dubai and Pakistan. Mohammed was simply thankful that the university catered to Muslim students, whereas Haris expected the food to be of better quality.

Of the four participants, Haris and Tam were the two who seemed to want to adapt to Canadian society. Even though both Haris and Tam were on two opposite ends of the adaptation spectrum, they both seemed to want to balance their cultural identities along with adapting to some of Canada's customs and norms. Brown (2009) and Pires et al. (2006) noted that those who can balance their cultural identities with the cultural norms and societal practices of the host environment are best fitted for cultural adjustment. Tam's greater success in this regard could largely be because of the religious differences between Tam and Haris. Religion was a recurring theme in Haris' interview, whereas Tam did not associate himself with any faith background. Tam acknowledged that leaving Thailand was challenging for him and echoed the cross-cultural stressors associated with moving countries highlighted by various authors. Lack of familiarity with his new setting, loss of family, and unfamiliarity with cultural norms were some of the challenges that Tam highlighted during his interview. The findings during my interview with Tam are congruent with those of various other studies that highlighted the lack of familiarity with the cultural norms of the host country (Church, 1982; Kaczmarek, Matlock, Merta, Ames, & Ross, 1994; Tochkov, Levine, & Sanaka, 2010).

One of the characteristics that set Tam apart from the other three participants was his command of the English language. He was very fluent in English and lacked any noticeable accent in his speech. Tam's command of the English language may have helped Tam adjust to Canadian society and university in general. Even though Tam outlined many of his challenges to adapting to Canadian society and university culture, during the interview, he was very eloquent in his speech and seemed rather

confident about his experience at university. Various researchers have pointed out that lack of English language proficiency caused stress and hindered the adjustment process for international students (Andrade, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Prescott & Hellsten, 2005; Turner, 2006; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992). Tam's fluency with the English language alleviated some of this cultural adjustment stress, helped him make important connections with his peers, and let him be involved in extracurricular activities in residences and across the campus.

Academic Adjustment

All of the participants chose to come to study at Queen's University and in Canada because of Queen's University's reputation as an excellent institution of higher education and the overall quality of tertiary education in Canada. Mohammed and Haris had friends and family members studying in Canadian universities who vouched in favour of studying here, whereas Tam and Niwat came to Queen's because of the quality of education and the promise of better jobs after university.

Once on campus, all four participants reported having to adjust to the assessment methods in university along with the increased workload. These trends are in line with literature surrounding international students studying in Western universities, which have highlighted the difficulties around adjusting to a new academic system. Wan, Chapman, and Biggs (1992), Turner (2006), Colvin and Jaffar (2007), and Prescott and Hellsten (2005) showed that international students faced obstacles to fulfill university expectations and achieve academic success in university because these students were unfamiliar with the Western educational system. Haris, for instance, had to adjust to the way he was being assessed at Queen's. Unlike his British school, where

the primary focus was to do well on the final exam at the end of the year, Haris found himself having to keep up with his studies and doing well in the many quizzes, assignments, and midterms throughout the academic year. Similarly, Mohammed noted having trouble with mathematics because his professor at university preferred students to use a specific method to solve mathematics problems than what Mohammed was taught back in Bangladesh. Tam specifically mentioned that he was upset that his grades dropped in his classes from high school to university, a trend that was common among university students in Turner's (2006) study. Because Tam was unsure about how his professor wanted Tam's assignments completed, Tam was unable to achieve a satisfactory mark and had to seek assistance from his professor outside of class, highlighting the need to go beyond what one learns in class to be successful in courses.

Despite these apparently minor setbacks, the participants were overwhelmingly satisfied with their educational experience in their first year of university, generally enjoying what they were studying. While Niwat wished that the first-year courses in his field were less general, all of the participants, including Niwat, seemed happy to be learning what they were studying at university. Even though they were all adjusting to the rigour and load of university academics, none of the study participants found academics overwhelmingly difficult. They all realized that university education was different from high school education but seemed to take the added workload rather well. Tam, for instance, acknowledged that adjustment was "an ongoing process," whereas Mohammed used specific activities, such as prayer and planning, to cope with the added stress. Additionally, Haris and Niwat said they were excited about the years ahead of them and were looking forward to upper-year courses in their field. Therefore,

despite the challenges of Canadian university academics, all of the participants hoped to make the necessary adjustments to adapt to the changes in the next few years.

Such ease with university academics can likely be explained by the participants' educational backgrounds. All of the participants received their high school education in English-language schools that were modeled after the British, Canadian, and/or American educational systems. These participants studied in English and were likely familiar with Western university academics to some degree, which made their academic adjustment less stressful than might be expected.

One final aspect of university academics about which the participants commented was the increased amount of freedom and flexibility that being in university gave them. Unlike high school where classes were more structured, these participants highlighted the freedom to make their own schedules in university. For example, Haris noted that he could hang out with his friends when he wanted and study at a time that was more convenient for him. Mohammed and Niwat talked about the added freedom and flexibility in university, which helped them prioritize their academics and balance both social life and academia. Niwat, however, described the detriments of increased freedom and flexibility as both distracted him from his academics and enabled him to stay immersed in his social life.

Preservation of Culture and Masculinity

Despite some of the similarities among the four participants, all had a unique understanding of what it meant to be male, what it meant to be part of their cultural

heritage, and how they balanced their identities in a pluralistic country like Canada and a predominantly white university like Queen's.

Being racialized males meant that all four participants were susceptible to stereotypes, some of which were quite blatant. In Tam's case, people assumed that, because he was Asian, he would be good at math. Some people asked him unintelligent questions about his native Thailand, and treated him as a novelty. In Haris' and Mohammed's cases, their racialized Muslim identity created a perception in their own minds where they felt others were judging them based on their racialized background. Mohammed specifically seemed hesitant having a beard at first, expecting people to associate the beard and therefore Mohammed with Muslim extremists and terrorists. While Mohammed assured me that no one actively confronted him about this stereotype, he felt being watched by those around him. Niwat's ethnicity and background were sources of insecurity for him. Time and time again, Niwat spoke to how being non-white limited his ability to "reel in girls" at keggers attended largely by white university students.

Despite the challenges, the stereotypes, and the insecurities that the participants experienced, all of them strove to maintain and preserve their individual cultural and masculine identities during their first year of university in Canada. Overwhelmingly, these participants held on to their valued culture and customs amidst a foreign culture. For example, in Haris' case, being a minority at Queen's encouraged him to preserve his identity. Being at Queen's and in Canada did not alter his sense of self. The same was true for both Mohammed and Tam who valued their individual identities. Even Niwat, who struggled to fit in, assured me that being a racialized minority at Queen's

University affected him "a little bit but like, not too much." Even though Niwat was not as outspoken about preserving his identity, he was comfortable doing what he wanted to do and disregarding the opinions of others.

All of the participants were surrounded by predominantly white students in residences and across the Queen's University campus. Some of these students were engaging in behaviours such as drinking and excessive partying that were contrary to the ideals and behaviours of some of the participants. Niwat was the only one who mentioned participating in parties and drinking activities. The other three participants were adamant that they would not engage in such behaviours. Research by Ancis, Sedlacek, and Mohr (2000) suggested that racialized students were more likely to experience greater pressure to conform to stereotypes, a sentiment that was echoed by Haris, Tam, and Mohammed. They strongly opposed the drinking culture on campus, did not feel a need to conform to fit into their new social environment, and held onto their masculine and cultural identities stronger than before.

Of the four participants, Haris' and Mohammed's masculine and cultural identities were informed by their Muslim and South Asian backgrounds. However, they differed in the extent to which their Muslim faith and cultural backgrounds influenced them. Haris' friends greatly influenced his masculine identity. In accordance with the literature (Harris, 2010), Haris compared himself to his friends and adopted a lot of their traits unto himself. Additional sources for Haris' identity were his immediate family, his friends, and his cousins. While Haris identified as a Muslim during the interview, his Muslim background had limited impact on his sense of self in comparison to Mohammed and more impact on his behaviours on campus. Much like Mohammed,

Haris told me that he did not drink, was not promiscuous, and did not engage in the risky behaviours that scholars have associated with male university students (Harris, 2010; Locke & Mahalik, 2005; Peralta, 2007).

Compared to Haris, Mohammed's Muslim background was one of the main sources of his masculine and cultural identity. Mohammed's Muslim faith influenced his actions, his behaviours, and his views on certain social and cultural practices in Canada and in university. When I asked Mohammed about the sources of his masculine identity, he credited the Prophet Mohammed. For Mohammed, his Prophet was the paragon of masculinity, who encouraged Mohammed to act and behave in accordance with Islam. Unlike Haris who associated masculinity with a lack of patience and a lack of compassion, Mohammed associated masculinity with having a stable job and future so that he could support his family, in accordance with what his culture and faith expected of him. Furthermore, Mohammed's appearance was influenced by his faith. Mohammed highlighted the Prophet as his motivation to keep a beard and follow in the Prophet's footsteps. Harris (2010) noted that racialized students feel insecure on campus because of their minority identity. Similarly, Mohammed was a little insecure being a racialized Muslim minority on campus. However, he was determined to guard his faith, his masculine identity, and his sense of self. Thus despite both being practicing Muslims, Mohammed's religious background influenced his identity far more than it did for Haris.

Haris and Mohammed did not experience blatant racism on campus because of their Muslim identities. They associated with like-minded Muslim, South Asian friends when they felt uncomfortable around the drinking and partying culture found on campus. Previous research has shown that religious and racialized students like Haris and

Mohammed would affiliate themselves with cultural and religious clubs on campus to be near those who were similar to them. By doing so, these students developed a strong inward sense of religiosity, were healthy and happy, handled stress well, avoided risky activities such as drinking and partying, had a greater sense of community, and were less prone to isolation, loneliness, and other mental health problems, as shown previously by various studies looking at the impact of having like-minded friends in a new environment (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Colvin & Jaffar, 2007; Frankel & Hewitt, 1994; Pires, Stanton, & Ostenfeld, 2006; Sherkat, 2007; Walker & Dixon, 2002). Similar to the participants in Hammond and Hunter's (1984) and Hill's (2009) studies with university students, Haris and more so Mohammed used their faith to engage and cope with college life at Queen's University's secular environment.

Religion was not a factor in determining Tam's and Niwat's masculine and personal identity. From the interview, it was difficult to know what the source of Niwat's masculine identity was. Niwat mentioned being around friends and being compared to other friends with regards to academics. Niwat indicated that one of his friends would constantly compete with Niwat and demonstrate academic superiority over him. Harris (2010) shows that competition among male university students is common, with men using their alcohol tolerance and promiscuity as markers for masculinity and a strong personality. In both Harris' study and my investigation, competition among men was used as a way to assert oneself over another.

Unlike Niwat, Tam was clearer in his masculine identity, possibly because of his military background. Tam identified "courage, decisiveness, strength, responsibility, conscientiousness, responsibility … and being in control" as characteristics of

masculinity. These traits are similar to the strong personality traits of confidence, self-assurance, respect, authority, toughness, and leadership ability with which Harris (2010) found his participants identifying.

Tam did not associate himself with any religious background during the interview. However, much like Haris and Mohammed who credited Islam and their respective cultures for shaping their cultural and masculine identity, Tam acknowledged his culture, upbringing, lived experiences, parents, and military background as sources of his cultural and masculine identity. Like Haris and Mohammed, Tam mentioned that his heritage helped him shape his characteristics. Much of Haris', Mohammed's, and Tam's experiences paralleled literature, such as that by Harris (2010), who found that male university students arrive on campus with traditional notions of masculinity handed down to them from their parents, peers, and the larger society. Similar to Haris and Mohammed, Tam did not feel "representative of the entire Queen's population at large" and "converges with others [who] share similar characteristics" as him to help him reinforce his cultural and individual values.

Experience with Residence Life and Student Affairs Services

The four participants lived in university residences during their first year at Queen's University. Overall, they were largely happy with their residence experiences. Additionally, those who attended residence orientation found orientation helpful to familiarize themselves with their residence and those around them. The participants also highlighted their Residence Dons' support to help them adapt to their new home in Canada. They relied on their Dons for information during their first few days and months of living in residence (Shaikh & Deschamps, 2006). Haris liked how his residence

integration was led by Dons in their upper year of university. His Don's knowledge and expertise helped Haris feel comfortable in his new living quarters. Despite Mohammed missing residence orientation, his Don supported and helped him to integrate with others on the floor when he arrived. While Mohammed claimed that the amount of help he received was "ok," Mohammed knew that, if he needed anything, he could rely on his Don for academic advice, support, and guidance. For Niwat, his Don acted as a mediator between Niwat and his floor. Niwat found it challenging to connect with the residents of his floor once he arrived on campus because of his international background. Niwat's Don encouraged interaction among the residents on the floor through residence programs, "floor dinners every Wednesday night," and floor trips to help the residents bond. Dusselier et al. (2005) noted that programs throughout the year helped students engage more with one another and that Residence Dons played a crucial role in helping students adjust socially within university residences. Tam credited his Dons as the "the stars" of his experience. He found the Dons "immensely helpful" during residence orientation. The Dons answered many of his questions, and Tam did not "know how [he] could've done it without them [his Dons]."

Despite having Residence Dons to support them, the four participants were largely unaware of the variety of services offered to them by Residence Life and Student Affairs. While some of the participants remembered getting the information during their orientation week, they were not able to recall the services offered to them, other than Health, Counselling, and Disabilities Services (HCDS), the university health clinic, and the Queen's University International Centre (QUIC), the last as a place to

pick up their University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP). They were largely unaware of the events that took place at the QUIC and could not list other support services offered.

Even though the participants were unaware of these services, their experiences of living in residences ranged from sweet to bittersweet. While some were able to thrive in their new environments, others found it challenging to fully connect with those around them and associate with residence and university culture. Haris did not have many problems adjusting socially to his floor. Haris lived in one of the newer residences, in a single room, where he shared one washroom with one other student. This arrangement helped Haris minimize tensions between him and his floor. Haris only complained about the quality of the food in residence as it was vastly different from what he was used to at home. The type and lack of quality of residence food was one common thread across participants. They suggested improving the quality of the food in the cafeterias and wished that the food resembled what they ate in their home countries. Niwat also had an overall positive experience living in residence after an initial struggle to fit in. Niwat really enjoyed the freedom he had in residence, which allowed him to "go to bed" when he wanted, socialize when he wanted, and create a schedule that worked best for him. While Niwat was treated as a novelty once he arrived on the floor, eventually Niwat got along well with those around him. Unlike Haris who connected better with friends outside of residence, Niwat largely had positive interactions with his fellow residents. He formed a close group of friends in residence with whom he socialized. Similar to Johnson et al.'s (2007) study where positive interactions between students and their floor fostered a sense of belonging, the healthy interaction between Niwat and his floor

fostered a sense of belonging and a sense of community for Niwat that facilitated his transition into Queen's University.

Of all of the four participants, Tam thrived best in his new environment. He enjoyed interacting with his Dons and was pleased with his experience in residences and his level of engagement with the residence council. His interactions with residents on his floor were positive and healthy. Furthermore, Tam was involved in his residence as a first-year events advisor, which helped him mingle with those around him and interact with them on a personal level. Tam's stressors living in residence revolved around noise levels, issues with general cleanliness, the "lack of adherence to the rules," and "blatant disregard for the rules."

While Tam was able to overcome these stressors, Mohammed found it difficult to adjust to his floor because of the noise and "chaos." Mohammed predominantly stayed in his room and consequently felt isolated, lonely, and depressed in residence (Kaczmarek et al., 1994; Shaikh & Deschamps, 2006). Much like Tam, Mohammed disliked certain residents' disregard for the rules and the excessive noise associated with late night and weekend partying. Unlike Tam, however, Mohammed struggled to adjust to the behaviours of his peers and sought refuge with his Muslim friends, off-campus. While Tam and Mohammed wanted residence rules to be enforced, Mohammed was more outspoken about Residence Dons making sure the floors were quiet so that students had a safe, quiet, and healthy place to sleep and work. It is quite possible that because of the "chaos" Mohammed experienced in residence, he was unable to connect with the people on his floor and thereby limited his interaction with those around him. Because of his background, he only connected with one close friend

on his floor and kept his distance from the rest of the residents. In the end though, Mohammed said that, despite the challenges of living in residence, he was generally happy with his experience at Queen's. He valued his academics, the quality of the education, the promise of a degree, and the overall support he got from his Don and like-minded friends.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of four racialized, male, first-year, international students attending a university in southern Ontario and living in university residence. Through my interviews with four participants, I uncovered the cultural challenges they experienced adjusting to Canadian society and the hurdles they encountered adjusting to university academics. I also examined how they maintained their unique cultural and masculine identities and their experiences living in university residences.

I used two theoretical frameworks to inform my study. First, my research used the sense of cross-cultural adjustment of racialized, male, first-year, international students at a Canadian university by employing the Affective, Behavioural, and Cognitive dimensional approach to cross-cultural adaptation. Cross-cultural adjustment theory helped me understand how my participants psychologically and sociologically adjusted to their new environment. Second, I used the "multiple dimensions of identity" (MDI) model to measure the contributions of a "core sense of identity" (comprised of personal attributes and characteristics), non-gender identifications (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation), and contextual influences (e.g., family background, life experiences) to the individual's self-created masculinity.

From the interviews, four themes emerged that helped me answer my research questions. I found that the four participants had a range of experiences adjusting culturally to Canada while they studied at Queen's University. Some of the participants enjoyed the transition to Canada, while others found adjusting their cultural identities challenging because of the cultural distance and differences between them and their surroundings. Those who adjusted well to the new environment balanced parts of their cultural and personal identities with the social norms of Canada and university life. Those who struggled had difficulties fitting in because their values and behaviours clashed with those of their peers. These participants did not adjust well to their new environment and instead opted to separate themselves from the rest of their peers.

Academically, the participants had some difficulty adjusting to the academic rigour and workload during their first year at Queen's University. Even though the participants were new to the demands of university academics, they generally welcomed the freedom and flexibility of university life, which allowed them to create their own work schedules and engage in their social lives.

Furthermore, being a male student, particularity a racialized male at university, encouraged the participants to preserve their masculine and cultural identities, to more or lesser degrees, despite being immersed in the social and cultural norms of Canadian university life. Some of the participants felt isolated within Queen's University because of their different cultural and masculine identities. Despite the social challenges, these participants valued their own identities and resolved to preserve them. In instances of isolation, the participants sought out like-minded peers who helped ease the adjustment

process, gave these participants a sense of belonging, and supported their struggle to hold on to their unique individual cultural, religious, social, and gender identities.

The residence experiences of the participants ranged from sweet to bittersweet. Each one of my participants had slightly different experiences living in university residence. Some participants adjusted well to the living environment whereas others struggled to fit in. The participants were largely unaware of the external support systems and resources available to them outside of residences, and were unhappy about the sometimes loud, hectic, and unruly nature of some of their peers living in residences. However, overwhelmingly the participants lauded their Residence Dons for supporting them throughout their academic year and creating a sense of community.

My study outlines several key factors that affected how successfully racialized international students adjusted to life in a Canadian university. Participants who were most successful in adjusting to university were those who integrated themselves into Canadian society by retaining their cultural identity and by relating to their host culture. Participants who separated themselves from their host culture by retaining their own cultural identity and refusing to relate to their host culture faced challenges and various stressors adjusting to life in Canada. Furthermore, factors such as English language proficiency, association with religious organizations and like-minded friends, previous exposure to Western societies, level of interaction with peers, and support from Residence Dons assisted the transition of the four racialized international students interviewed in my study.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

This research, while providing information about four racialized, first-year male students at Queen's University, had five primary limitations, which might be addressed in future research. First, I was unable to conduct a focus group interview with the participants regarding their university experience. I had hoped that, through a focus group, the four participants would be able to share their common struggles and accomplishments with each other, which would have potentially generated a lively discussion about how international male students adjust to university life in Canada. However, due to participants' time constraints, I was unable to schedule a focus group. Future researchers doing similar studies should allot themselves and their participants enough time to conduct both the interview and the focus group. Researchers should also be aware of what time of the year they plan to conduct the interviews. Because I had to conduct my interviews during the exam season, many participants simply did not have the time to commit to my study. Moving the interview nearer the start of the semester when students have less academic stress might be better.

Second, my four participants had very similar backgrounds, which gave me a limited view of international male students' experience adjusting to the first year of university. Two of the four participants are Muslim South Asians, while my other two participants are Thai. On the one hand, it was beneficial to have similar participants as it let me cross-reference their experiences and pick out similarities between students of similar backgrounds. Because it was challenging to recruit participants near the end of the academic year, I did not have a large pool of participants from which to choose. In the future, a researcher should strive to attract a variety of students from different

cultural, ethnic, faith, and national backgrounds to examine a wide range of student experiences. Furthermore, three of the participants had prior experiences living outside their native countries. While their experiences helped them adjust to Canadian society, I wanted to find out how first-time international students with no prior international experience adjusted to Canadian university and culture. In the future, researchers should endeavour to select a more varied sample to understand first-time experiences of international students' sojourn in Canada.

Third, English language barriers limited my ability to communicate with the students. For some participants, a limited command of the English language restricted their ability to expand upon their experiences adjusting to Canadian university culture, academics, and their experiences living in residences. Most of the students did not initially understand how to define their masculinity. Time and time again, I had to break down the question on masculinity into smaller components, provide examples, and explain what I was looking for. Thus the language barrier between me and the participants might have skewed my interview data. Future researchers should keep in mind their participants' fluency in English and craft questions that convey simple ideas one step at a time and are easy to comprehend. Researchers should also be patient with their participants, invite their participants to ask clarifying questions, and be open to adjusting the order of the interview to help participants answer questions to the best of their ability.

Fourth, my study only explored the experiences of students in one university in southern Ontario. My study did not examine the impact of larger university campuses with more diverse populations on international student adjustment, nor did it examine

how international students adjust to small universities with less student diversity. Because there are several other universities across Ontario and Canada, each with their different campus and student profiles, researchers could choose to conduct this study at multiple universities across the country. Future research might involve replicating the study at larger and smaller institutions at different cities across Canada to examine if and how the university location, university size, and overall structure affect an international student's experience.

Finally, my own biases and experiences had the potential to affect the interview and the interpretation of the data. Because of my own experiences as an international student coming to study in Canada, my own views of adjustment to Canadian society, and my experience living and working in the university residences, I might have focused more on some aspects of the interview over others. While I went in with a set of questions to ask, I did expand on the interview by asking clarifying questions and probed further into the participants' experiences. Furthermore, although I attempted to account for my biases and expectations while interviewing the participants and analyzing the data, it is possible that my perceptions and predispositions affected aspects of the investigation, which in turn affected the data I acquired and the analysis I derived. Therefore, it is important that researchers replicate and expand upon my study so that they could find new perspectives and domains that would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the components examined in this investigation.

Recommendations for Practice in Residence Life

While the four participants were satisfied with their Dons and overall living experience in residence, most were unfamiliar with the different student services

available to them. International students were mainly aware of the Health, Counselling, and Disability Services (HCDS) at Queen's and were familiar with the Queen's University International Centre (QUIC), primarily for setting up university health insurance for international students. When asked about the other services, however, my students could barely list the services that were available to them.

It seems as though the university overwhelms students, particularly international students, with an abundance of information over the summer and especially during orientation week. The front-loading of information may mean that students forget about the many services available to them and only seek specific services when the need arises. Coming to Queen's University as an international student myself when I started my undergraduate studies here, I remember being primarily concerned with registering for my health insurance, sorting out my class schedule, familiarizing myself with the physical layout of the campus, and meeting new people. Many of the participants experienced a similar trend, where struggling to settle in meant that they forgot about a lot of the available support services. Most of them approached their Don when they needed anything. University staff could provide reminders about the services available to students throughout the year. Monthly email reminders with a focus on a specific service might be a great way to remind students of these support services.

One of the services the participants mentioned time and time again was the QUIC. Most of them had a vague idea of where the QUIC was located but were unaware of the range of services the International Centre offered to students. The participants remarked that they mainly accessed the QUIC at the start of the academic year to sign up for health insurance. For the remainder of the year, students forgot

about the QUIC and were unaware of the various events held there, such as sessions on how to get used to Canadian winters and meet-and-greets with other international students, to help students adjust to life in Canada. The International Centre should take more initiative to attract first-year students from the university residences and invite them to attend the various QUIC events. Much like peer-health educators who act as student liaisons between the Health, Counselling, and Disability Services and the residences, the QUIC could use upper-year international students to act as liaisons between the International Centre and first-year students living in residences. Through these liaisons, the QUIC would be able to promote its events to an exclusively first-year international student population and provide international students with the tools to adjust to Canada and university for the remainder of their undergraduate career.

Residence Life at Queen's University could also play a more active role in helping international students adjust to their new environment. Residence Dons and Council members go through an extensive training program prior to residence move-in day. Given the short amount of time Residence Staff have to train and the volume of material that needs to be covered, often the specific needs of international students are lost beneath the needs of students in general. Throughout the interviews, students remarked how the Residence Dons were their go-to persons for information and helped students settle into their new home. However, some of these participants, who felt lonely or isolated because of the cultural and societal differences between their own culture and Canada, had to seek out other avenues to cope with their struggles, leaving their Dons seemingly unaware of the issues. While it is difficult for a Don to be fully aware of how each student is doing on his or her floor, it would be beneficial for Dons to

be aware of the unique challenges international students face during their adjustment to university.

Residence Life can undertake four initiatives to help international students adjust to their new academic and social environment. First, Residence Life can inform its Residence Dons and Professional Staff about the opportunities with international students, the challenges international students face adjusting to Canada, and the support international students need during their time in Canada. Because Residence Staff training is often saturated with training sessions, Residence Life can opt to provide Professional Development (PD) sessions throughout the year to inform staff members about the needs of international students and how to cater to them. PD sessions are a great way to educate staff about the specific challenges international students go through. Residence Dons who have international students on their floor could be encouraged by their Residence Life Coordinators (RLCs) to attend these sessions.

Second, Residence Life, in partnership with the QUIC, could initiate a buddy program for international students living in residences. While the QUIC does have a similar buddy program, it was clear from the interviews that the participants were not aware of this initiative. One participant in particular expressed the desire to have an upper-year buddy who could act as a mentor and confidant to first-year students. Because upper-year students have already adapted to Canadian society and university academics, first-year students could rely on upper-year students for a wealth of information and support. First-years could approach upper-years with regards to socio-cultural adjustment and help with university academics; they could even approach upper-years to cope with culture shock, loneliness, isolation, and homesickness.

Because the QUIC already has a similar program, Queen's University Residences can approach the International Centre and ask if the QUIC volunteers would be willing to come into residences and form ties with international students who might be struggling.

Third, Queen's University Residence Life can organize meet-and-greets with international students living in residences and provide an opportunity for international students to meet other international students. One of the participants, Tam, remarked that such an event, where he would be able to connect with others in his situation, would help to mitigate the shock of transitioning into a new country. From such an encounter, students could learn from each other's mistakes, celebrate each other's accomplishments, and form friendly bonds with each other to help overcome future challenges. Such an event would be most helpful a month or two after move-in day when students have had some time to adjust to their residences.

Finally, Queen's University Residences, in partnership with Hospitality and Food Services, could provide foods at the cafeteria that closely resemble what international students ate at home. While the cafeteria staff try their best to vary the food they serve, the participants were generally unhappy with the food situation at Queen's and missed the foods they usually ate. Given the wide range of palates the cafeteria staff tries to accommodate, it might be difficult to provide all of the foods that the many international students crave. However, even inviting international students to submit recipes for the cafeteria staff to try and replicate might be a creative and active way to engage international students with the food served in the cafeterias and give them a sense that the university was truly trying to help international students feel at home.

Final Thoughts

Like many of the participants in my study, I was determined to move to a

Western country for my post-secondary education as an adolescent. It was a toss-up

among Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Finally, after

hours of deliberation, I decided to come to Canada and specifically Queen's University

at Kingston, Ontario for my university education.

Hearing these participants speak about their motivations to move to Canada to

study and their experiences coping, adjusting, and, in some cases, thriving in their new

environment helped me reflect upon my own experiences as a first-year international

student back in 2006. Each participant's experience resonated with me as I recalled my

initial reaction to moving to Canada, living in residences, and adjusting to the rigour of

university academics. My years of experience working as a Residence Don also

enabled me to meet many international students, hear about their challenges, and help

them adjust to their new home. For me, my research has been both personal and

academic. On the one hand, my research informed me about the experiences of

racialized international university students studying in Canada. On the other hand, my

study reinforced and validated my own experiences as a university student and my role

as a Residence Don on campus.

I hope my research helps future researchers and university staff members to

understand the needs of students, particularity international students. I hope we

understand that students are all unique, influenced by their background, faith, gender,

lived experiences, and multiple facets of their identity. As university staff members, we

owe it to our students to help them on their journey through one of the most

transformative stages of their lives and help them succeed in the future. While there is no one solution to their problems, I hope that my research helps by shedding light on a small fraction of the university student population and inspires researchers and university staff to strive to better the student experience.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT POSTER

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Queen's University

<u>PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN</u>

<u>UNIVERSITY STUDENT EXPERIENCE</u>

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study that examines the first-year student experience at Queen's.

For this study, you need to:

➢ Identity as **racialized/non-White**
➢ Identify as **male**
➢ Be an **international** student in first-year
➢ Be **living in university residence**

As participants in the study, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview, and a focus group with three others. Each will last about 60 minutes.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

Rashed Al-Haque
Faculty of Education
At
613-449-8689
Or
rashedhaque88@gmail.com

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Letter of Information for "International male students' first-year university experience"

You are invited to participate in a study that explores the experiences of racialized, male, first-year, international students attending a university in southern Ontario and living in university residence. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of racialized, male, first-year, international students attending a university in Southern Ontario and living in university residence. A secondary purpose of my study will be to examine how international students experience living in university residences, what challenges they face, and how their specific needs are met. The findings from my study will hopefully help Student Affairs professionals and residence staff provide better support and programs to aid international students adjust into university life. The study is being conducted by Rashed Al-Haque, a Master's student in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University, with the support of his supervisor, Dr. John Freeman.

This study was granted clearance by the General Research Ethics Board for compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans, and Queen's policies. As a participant, you will be invited to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions about your experiences adjusting to first-year university-life in Canada, your experiences being a racialized, male student, and your experience living in university residence. You will be asked for a commitment of one hour of your time. The interview will be about 60 minutes in length and will be voice recorded using a digital recorder. Twenty dollars ($20) will be provided for participating in this study as remuneration.

There are no significant, foreseeable risks associated with participating in the study. You should not feel obliged to answer any questions that you find objectionable or that make you feel uncomfortable. Participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time with no consequence, with no effect to your standing in school. If you withdraw, you may request removal of all or part of your data. To protect your identity, a pseudonym will be used in any published material and in transcriptions of interviews. There will be no adverse consequences of choosing not to participate in the study.

Please note that by volunteering to participate in the interview, you will be revealing personal information about yourself to the researcher. Every effort will be made to maintain your participation in the study and the data collected confidential to the extent possible. However, given the small number of participants taking part in the study, the researcher cannot guarantee it. At no point will any participant be identified in the final study. By participating in the study, you agree to maintain the confidentiality of other members during the focus group discussion.

In accordance with Queen's University policy, the collected data will be retained for a minimum of five years, after which it will be destroyed. The results of this research may

also be published in professional journals or presented at conferences, but any such presentations will report only anonymous quotes carefully selected so as not to breach individual confidentiality to the extent possible. Any questions about study participation may be directed to Rashed Al-Haque at 5mra1@queensu.ca or 613-449-8689, or his supervisor, Dr. John Freeman, at freemanj@queensu.ca or 613-533-6000 ext. 77298. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's University policies.

Consent Decision

Project Title: International male students' first-year university experience

Participant's Name: _____

By selecting "I agree to participate" below you confirm that you:

1. Understand that the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of racialized, male, first-year, international students attending a university in southern Ontario and living in university residence. You also understand that secondary purpose of my study will be to examine how international students experience living in university residences, what challenges they face, and how their specific needs are met.
2. Understand what is required based on reading the letter of information. You understand that you will be required to take part in a 60 minute interview, where you will be asked about your university experience.
3. Understand that you will have to commit a total of one hour of your time (in the form of a one-hour interview).
4. Understand that digital audio recording devices will be used to record your responses and that the data will be kept for a minimum period of five years before they are destroyed.
5. Understand that you will be provided $20 as remuneration for participating in this study.
6. Understand that your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without any effect on your standing in school without consequence.
7. Understand that if you withdraw, you can request removal of all or part of your data.
8. Understand that every effort will be made to maintain your participation in the study and the data collected confidential to the extent possible. However, given the small number of participants taking part in the study, the researcher cannot guarantee it.
9. Understand that any questions about study participation may be directed to Rashed Al-Haque at 5mra1@queensu.ca or 613-449-8689, or his supervisor, Dr. John Freeman, at freemanj@queensu.ca or 613-533-6000 ext. 77298. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca

_____   _____

     Signature   Date

PLEASE RETURN ONE COPY TO THE RESEARCHER AND KEEP ONE COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS

APPENDIX C: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Adjustment to University

1. Why did you choose to come to a Canadian university?
2. How are you adjusting culturally to your new environment?
3. What are some of the adjustments you've had to make in your academic learning since you moved to university?
4. What are you finding most challenging about your learning experience? What are you finding most exciting?
5. How are you adjusting socially to the university environment? Classes? Clubs? Tutorials/Labs?

Masculine Identity

1. What qualities/characteristics do you associate with being male?
2. How does your racial identity affect your masculine identity?
3. In what ways has your masculine identity been affected by attending a predominantly white Canadian university?
4. How does the campus culture affect your masculine identity?
5. How do male-peer group interactions affect your masculine identity?

Residence Life

1. How did you find residence orientation as an international student?
2. What are the challenges you face living in residence? What aspects of residence do you find exciting?
3. In what ways do you interact with your floor-mates and other residents?
4. Being an international student, do you have any unique needs that are different from the needs of domestic students? If yes, what are those needs? How are your needs met?
5. Overall, how satisfied are you with the support services available to you in residence? What services do you use most often? What services are lacking that might address your needs?