Gender Identity and Religious Practices of First-Generation Muslim Women Immigrants in the U.S.

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Abstract
This study discusses gender and religious identities of first-generation Muslim women living in the U.S. based on a sample of 33 respondents. All women participating in this research have identified themselves as practicing Muslims and have come from countries where Islam is the dominant religion. The study reports the everyday life challenges these women face practicing Islam, as well as the prejudice and rejection they face as Muslim women. Additionally, the study addresses the dominant and persistent impact of Islamic religion on the gender norms practiced by these women. These women, regardless of their education, age, national origins, and years living in the U.S., expressed unyielding support for these traditional gender practices. The study concludes that these first-generation Muslim women have resorted to the traditional cultural and gender-specific norms and practices to negotiate their identity, rather than succumbing to the dominant American culture.

Introduction: Islam and Gender Identity
Historically, the U.S. has been receptive to continuous waves of immigrants representing diverse national origins, racial and ethnic

backgrounds, political convictions, and religious groups. The number of Middle Eastern immigrants has grown exponentially over the past decades, from fewer than 200,000 in 1970, to nearly 1.5 million in 2000. Within this group, an estimated 73 percent, or 1.1 million, are followers of Islam (Camarota 316). The unique cultural and religious makeup of Muslim immigrants has generated academic interest in their impact on the American cultural landscape, in particular Muslim women's religious and gender practice (e.g., Haddad and Lummis; Marshall and Read; Ali, et al.; Read and Bartkowski; Bartkowski and Read). Muslim women living in the United States experience an overload of conflicting cultural norms. Not only are they expected to meet the demands of the traditional cultural norms of their native countries, but they are also pressured to conform to American core values and norms. The main task of this study is to examine Muslim immigrant women's behaviors and beliefs as they are shaped by the gender, ethnic, and religious norms that they practice on a daily basis.

In this context, the meaning of *hijab* has been under extensive scrutiny in academic as well as popular media outlets. In the post-9/11 America, the *hijab* is perceived as a symbol of threat against American liberalism, since it shares the same cultural roots that also inspire terrorist acts (Sheth 455). In particular, *hijab* is criticized by Western feminists as a practice that subordinates women in a patriarchal society. As suggested by Sheth, "The problematic characterization of the veil lies in the assumption that women should not want to veil unless they are being coerced, under false consciousness, or reacting to other oppressive circumstances" (459). This assumption of oppressiveness in *hijab* reinforces stereotypes of Muslim women who wear *hijab* as submissive and backward.

In recent years, this assumption has been challenged by many scholars who argue that *hijab* can only be understood in the contexts of multiculturalism and the growing political influence of Muslim communities in the mainstream public affairs of their societies (Ali 516). In this sense, *hijab* enables Muslim women to become active agents, shaping their unique cultural identities as Americans. Additionally, *hijab* has become "a cultural resource" through which Islam is legitimized as a different but not unequal religious practice (William and Vash 284; Ajrouch 323). The core American values of freedom, equality, and independence have provided safeguards for Muslim Americans and their freedom of religious expression. As a result, "Muslim American women have come to see the veil as a symbol of their American identity, specifically their American Islamic identity, and as a public declaration of the trust they have in the American system that guarantees freedom of religion and speech. Thus, somewhat ironically, the veil is seen as emblematic of the American democratic system rather than in opposition to it" (Read 234). Therefore, contrary to the assumption of oppressive gender norms in Islam, many scholars have suggested that Muslim women in the U.S. work within America's given structure to practice their agency and establish an American Islamic identity (e.g., Ali; Ajrouch; Pipes and Duran).

A fundamental challenge for Muslim immigrants in Western societies such as the United States involves a reconciliation of an Islamic religious/cultural identity with the appeal of the host culture in the West. This is a particular concern for Muslim immigrant women - to find their place in a host culture, their new home, when their inherited identity is strongly influenced by Islam. The Western notion of feminism in its totality may not work for Muslim women or for Muslim societies. The American scholar Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, who has studied and traveled in Middle Eastern societies for the past fifty years, published the book *In Search of Islamic Feminism* in 1998. Based on her observations and interviews in Islamic societies in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia, she concluded that Western feminism to many young Muslim women, particularly in the Middle East, "was synonymous with

America, with fast food, and that feminism has crossed global boundaries these days; it has become transnational, like fast food, like music, films, blue jeans, and the ideas of democracy. It is reaching far corners of planet Earth, through videos, T.V., radio, faxes, e-mail, the Web. But like music, films, and fast food, feminism and democracy are not fully digested by non-Western cultures. People in other countries with other traditions, and cultures react differently to the ideas of democracy and feminism and often shape them based on their own needs" (Fernea 414). Women in the Middle East have been evaluating their own strengths, calculating their resources, and organizing their movements according to their own needs.

Fernea argues that feminism can take many forms in Islamic societies, but not necessarily in the varieties that we expect in the West (forms such as changing family laws, social welfare, public health and education). In countries like Turkey and Egypt, Muslim women begin with the assumption that the possibility of gender equality already exists in the Quran itself, but the problem is mainly a matter of interpretation and malpractice. Consequently, they emphasize a re-examination of religious texts. There are women in other countries who do not advocate a re-examination of the religious texts, but who believe equality for women is possible within the existing arrangements since Islam does provide specific guidelines for men and women to be equal. For Muslim immigrant women, the reconciliation of their religious traditions and beliefs with American ideals and values of freedom may not pose as much of a challenge as expected by outsiders.

Immigrant Muslim women have appropriated their place and identity in American society. In a society as diverse as the United Sates, with its extensive history of immigration and rich mix of traditions and cultures, new waves of immigrants become very cognizant of the challenges and the opportunities that are available to them as new members of a multicultural society. Muslim women are especially empowered by a strong awareness of their cultural and religious background, and are therefore able to find their own place and identity within the larger American culture. Many of them benefit from the educational and occupational opportunities available to them in the U.S., thereby achieving high social status in American society. Yet they also maintain their traditional cultural values as Muslim Americans.

This study investigates the day-to-day living experiences of Muslim immigrants and examines gender specific norms, including the practice of *hijab*, based on data collected from 33 first-generation Muslim women living in the U.S. We first discuss the unique challenges that these Muslim women face in their everyday lives. The study then examines the ways in which Muslim women make sense of their gendered selves in relation to Islam, with a particular focus on the meaning of *hijab* wearing.

Method and Data

Thirty-three first-generation Muslim women who immigrated to the U.S. were included in this study. The researchers used a non-probability, snowball sampling method by first recruiting acquaintances who are Muslim women. We then asked these women for referrals based on their social networks. The participants signed consent forms that were issued by the researchers. A self-administered questionnaire with 55 questions was mailed to these participants. The questionnaire consists of qualitative, open-ended questions, as well as close-ended questions (see a complete list of questions in Appendix A). Some examples of the qualitative questions are "When you first arrived in the United States, what were the major challenges you faced as a Muslim woman living here?" "Please evaluate the U.S. media's portrayal of Muslim women. What is accurate and inaccurate? Please give examples." "Is it possible to be feminist and Muslim? Please explain." "What sort of challenges do you face in balancing career and family?" "What does wearing a head-scarf mean or symbolize for you?" The question-

naire is written in English and all participants can read English. Some of the responses, however, were written in Arabic and then translated into English by Dr. Al-Qubbaj. The data collection process began in 2005 and was completed in 2006.

Thirty-three of the returned questionnaires were completed by first-generation Muslim women emigrating from countries where Islam is the dominant religion. The majority of these respondents were from Pakistan; others were from Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, Algeria, Qatar, and Syria (see Table 1 for demographic characteristics of the sample). They lived in the states of New York, New Jersey, Texas, New Mexico and Utah at the time when the study was conducted. All women have also identified themselves as faithful Muslims. The average age of this sample was 37 years old. These women moved to the U.S. at an average age of 22, ranging from 4 to 32 years old. The average years living in the U.S. was 15, ranging from 1 to 35 years. To facilitate our analysis we have divided women into two groups: women moving to the U.S. prior to age 20 and women immigrating at age 20 or older. The age 20 was chosen since it serves as a reasonable sociological dividing line when considering the experience of socialization into American cultural norms. Presumably, those who immigrated to the U.S. at younger ages are less likely to be influenced by cultural and gender norms that are rooted in their native countries.

The majority of the women in this sample were married and half of them identified themselves as homemakers. Additionally, over half of the women in this group held at least a bachelor's degree. This characteristic is consistent with the educational attainment of Middle Eastern immigrants in general (Camarota 316). Muslim American women are among the most educated religious groups in the United States (Gallup 56). Although this sample is considered quite diverse in terms of these basic demographic traits, there are limitations to our sample. This is a self-selected sample with a relatively small number of respondents. We also have an overrepresentation of Palestinian women in our sample, who are likely to possess a particular view and experience as Muslims living in the U.S. Because of these limitations, we make no attempt to generalize our findings to the larger population of Muslim women. Instead, we focus on the general patterns and themes which emerged from the responses of this particular group of women. We suggest that a future study with a large, representative sample needs to be conducted to further test the findings presented in this research.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variables	Attributes	%	n/N
Country of origin	Palestine	60.6	20/33
	Egypt	9.1	3/33
	Jordan	9.1	3/33
	Sudan	9.1	3/33
	Algeria	6.1	2/33
	Qatar	3.0	1/33
	Syria	3.0	1/33
Marital status	Single	18.8	6/32
	Married	78.1	25/32
	Divorced	3.1	1/32
Occupation	Homemaker	50.0	13/26
	Student	23.1	6/26
	Storeowner	11.5	3/26
	Teacher	7.7	2/26
	Physician	3.8	1/26
	Hairstylist	3.8	1/26
Education	Ph.D.	3.3	1/30
	Masters	10.0	3/30
	Bachelors	43.3	13/30
	Associates	13.3	4/30
	High school	30.0	9/30

Note: Missing values are excluded from calculation. This explains why some of the total numbers are smaller than 33. Some of the total percentages may not add up to 100 because of the rounding.

Background: Immigrant Experiences

Like many new immigrants, Muslim women have encountered challenges in their everyday lives. Some of the challenges, such as the language barrier between English and their mother tongue, a lack of transportation, and the absence of family and relatives have led to

feelings of isolation and disconnectedness among respondents. These women felt an urgent need to reestablish an interpersonal network and social life in their host country. Nonetheless, the most pronounced challenges for this group of women were related to cultural and religious practices unique to Muslim women. Many women indicated that they have become more devout Muslims and more faithful to Islam after moving to the U.S. This is especially true for women who immigrated to the U.S. at an older age (20 and older). These women practiced Islam regularly through reading books, fasting, and praying. They were also clearly more likely than younger aged immigrants (younger than 20) to adhere to religious observance, pray at least five times per day, and eat only *hallal* (about 59% said they only consumed *hallal*).

Additionally, many women indicated that the lack of public space, such as mosques, Islamic schools, and/or Islamic community centers in which immigrants can socialize with one another has further hindered the development of a sense of community for the immigrant group. They also expressed concerns about the lack of respect for and understanding of the privacy of Islamic religious practice, such as prayer time, in public spaces. Women in this sample also objected to the invasion of the proper boundary between men and women that is defined in their native cultures, which to them signified a lack of understanding of Islamic culture. Lastly, they found the revealing clothing and sex messages that permeate the media and their everyday environments objectionable.

Despite these challenges, the majority of the Muslim women in this study described the general public's reaction toward Muslims in America as "normal", "understanding", "respectful," and "helpful." Only a few reported having had negative experiences where people "cautiously distanced themselves from" or "acted ignorantly toward" them as Muslims. However, after 9/11, many women indicated that they encountered a different set of challenges and responses in their everyday surroundings. Consistent with findings in other studies (e.g., Ali, et al.), this study found that the majority of the women (85%) have experienced negative reactions against them. They explained that people might have associated Islam with violence and believed Islam advocated terrorism. A handful of respondents offered personal examples of such negative experiences. In most cases, these negative treatments occurred in stores, at work, and in the neighborhood. However, four incidents involved children being ridiculed at school. A mother described her case: "Some children say to my son, 'Go home, Osama Bin Laden.' My son replies back, 'You are Timothy McVeigh.' This is wrong." Another mother wrote that "a student hit my son and told him that this is American school. It was a hard experience." These incidents are significant; they involved labeling and stereotyping Muslims as terrorists in American society, and it is precisely this form of cultural conflict which worries Muslim mothers the most. On a positive note, in both cases principals and teachers had approached and resolved these conflicts in an appropriate manner, as emphasized by the two mothers. This strengthened their beliefs in the American value of justice and their confidence in the educational institution.

It seems that as much as Muslim women desire to "fit in", at times they found themselves outsiders in the mainstream American community; they felt torn between two sets of cultural norms. On the one hand, they admired the positive traits in American culture, such as "great opportunities for work and education," "advanced science and technology," and "respect for human rights." On the other hand, comments such as "feeling lonely among non-Muslims," "a sense of strangeness," and "Islam was misunderstood," were repeatedly mentioned by these women. They found themselves different from the American public in their manners, feelings, and beliefs, and expressed appreciation when people showed the desire to learn about Islam and their ways of living.

Major Findings
In this section, we discuss three major themes that emerged from our analysis of gender and religious identity and practices among Muslim women: the perception of "good" Muslim women, the acceptance of traditional gender norms, and the critique of feminism and wearing *hijab*.

1. The Perception of "Good" Muslim Women
We asked our respondents to describe the image of Muslim women portrayed in American media and to evaluate the accuracy of this image. Their responses offer a way to understand the values and norms surrounding gender practices from an insider's standpoint. An overwhelming consensus emerged from our analysis, indicating that Western news media's coverage of Muslim women was largely biased. About 81% of women in our sample believed that the U.S. media stereotype Muslim women as "inferior to men," "being abused," "uneducated," "subservient" and "backward." These women questioned the political motives of Western media that characterize incorrectly the image of Muslim women and felt compelled to clarify the misrepresentation of Muslim women in U.S. media. As two respondents commented:

> I do not believe that Muslim women are 'oppressed' and need to be 'freed'. I believe media portrayal of Muslim women is colored by political and cultural issues. ***
> [American Media] think that women live with no rights, freedom, or decent life in Muslim countries… this is deceptive, misleading and dangerous.

These two women, like other Muslim women, worry about the inaccurate characterization of Muslim women in Western media. There are missing pictures of the highly educated Muslim women who are doctors, engineers, and political activists in both the U.S. and their homeland.

In our analysis, we found a clear sense of a cultural trauma emerging where Muslim women felt that their religion and culture were being demonized by Western media (Mobasher 102). Some women labeled the American media as "Zionist media," in the sense that the demonization of Muslims in general helped to justify the aggression toward the Middle East by President George W. Bush's administration. Overall, these women expressed immense distrust in the U.S. media and were critical of its negative impact on the image of Muslim women.

When asked to compare Muslim and American women, all except one believed that the difference was pronounced. In this context, the "moral qualities" of a good Muslim were drawn on to judge American women's behavior. Most women strongly defended Islamic practices in terms of modesty in clothing. They criticized forcefully American women's attitudes and behaviors toward their bodies. The words "nudity" or "semi-nudity" were repeatedly used to demean the revealing clothing worn by American women in public. They reasoned that displaying one's body in public is an indication of sexual temptations and the lack of control of one's body. Additionally, American women were criticized for "failing to treat their bodies respectfully;" excessive drinking, smoking, having premarital sex and multiple sexual partners were cited as examples to support their criticism.

Almost all respondents used the term "respect" in their response in regard to gender roles for women and men in their native cultures. They believed in an unequivocal boundary between men and women; the fundamental moral quality of a "good" Muslim rests on being "respectful" to the boundary that defines gender roles in the society:

> The overall respect that men in my country of origin have towards women is really a noble, responsible respect. They (men) consider all women to be as their sisters, daughters and mothers. A woman is treat-

ed according to her intellectual level, not according to her physical look as it is in the United States… where men look at women as an object for their sexual leisure.

This idealistic understanding of Muslim gender norms is underscored not only through women refraining from showing off their bodies and displaying their sexuality in public space, but also by men respecting women's space (and women's awareness of her surroundings with the presence of men). This includes, according to the respondents, a man's awareness of his conduct toward a woman, such as avoiding physical contact with a woman and refraining from visiting a woman when she is alone without the presence of her brother, father or husband. In a way, a good Muslim woman is judged by her "proper" conduct, based on cultural/religious prescriptions and proscriptions. It is no surprise that mothers in this sample have adopted protective measures to shield their daughters from what they considered to be corruptive cultural forces. Some have gone as far as forbidding their daughters from swimming in public swimming pools, having sleepovers, dating, hanging out with boys, and dressing in revealing clothes.

2. Embracing Traditional Gender Norms

Another significant finding in this study is that women, regardless of their age at the time of immigration and other demographic characteristics, expressed an unyielding support for traditional gender norms. In particular, the traditional gender division of labor is used to explain and justify the Islamic view on women's gender roles. This gendered arrangement, as emphasized by these women, clearly defines men's and women's roles and thus protects both men's and women's rights.

> Islam, Christianity, and Judaism protected women's rights. … God gave femininity, motherhood, and shyness to women and women are blessed by protecting and nursing children. Motherhood is blessing from God. All her rights are protected. She can drive a car and work. Men have other jobs to do. Both are connected to complete each other. Life is sharing, sacrifice, love and trust.

All Muslim women in this sample believed that husbands need to support their families financially, although both husbands and wives should have equal input in routine financial decisions. Homemakers in this sample also justified their choices based on the traditional gender division of labor. What is intriguing in their responses is that these women also believed overwhelmingly that child-rearing should be shared equally between husbands and wives. Additionally, like American women in general, working women in our sample struggled to balance work and family responsibilities and demanded their husbands' greater involvement in domestic chores.

Based on Islamic religious principles, motherhood is central to a woman's identity. Motherhood is considered "very important" by all respondents on a five-point scale (from not important at all to very important). About a third of women rejected the idea of remaining single for life (never married), arguing that it is the right and duty of a Muslim woman to fulfill motherhood. Another half of women did respect being single as a personal choice, but stated that they themselves would not make such a choice.

In regard to mate-selection and marriage, women in this sample were supportive of family involvement in marriage, including arranged marriage. This is not a rejection of individual free will and personal decision-making in mate selection, but rather an argument that such decisions must involve and win the approval and acceptance of family members. About 59% of women believed that marriage is best when arranged by family, which also won a strong endorsement from women who immigrated at a younger age. In fact, we found that women who

immigrated at younger ages appeared to be particularly firm in adherence to traditional gender ideals and norms, including views on marriage, motherhood, and the gendered division of labor. We suspect that gender norms derived from religious expectations are heavily emphasized, taught, and internalized among this group of immigrants. This can be explained by the fact that parents find it imperative to socialize their daughters based on the Islamic moral principles, hoping to shield them from what are considered objectionable cultural influences from the mainstream American society.

3. Critique of Feminism and Wearing *Hijab*

The traditional view of gender norms is further evident in respondents' perceptions of and attitudes toward feminism. We define feminism as the recognition that "society gives men more privileges than women and esteems men's activities as more important than women's when these things should be equal." Muslim women in this sample were aware of feminist critiques of traditional gender roles and lack of women's rights in Islamic cultures. They reacted strongly in defense of Islamic views on women. Some argued that Islam supports the fundamental principles upheld by feminist ideology, and indicated that Islam has sufficiently addressed the issue of gender equality: "Islam is clear. The wrong deeds come from followers, not the Islam. Women are highly respected in Islam and are given full rights and responsibilities. I am proud of that."

However, the vast majority of women in this sample contended that it is impossible to be a feminist and a Muslim at the same time. In fact, only one woman identified herself as a feminist. Many insisted that feminism weakens the gender boundary and "Women should not become men." They rejected the label of feminist and viewed feminism as a damaging ideology which promotes conflict between men and women: "[Feminism as] an ideology disunites and is un-Islamic; just like nationalism disunites based on national origin, so does feminism."

The findings in our research contradict some of the findings in other studies which show support for feminism among Muslim women (e.g., Ali, et al.). Conversely, they confirm the findings of other studies with regard to Muslim women's rejection of feminist ideas (e.g., Burn & Busso). We suspect that this is due to the composition of our sample, which is comprised of women who showed strong attachment to traditional cultural norms and viewed feminist critique as a destructive force from the West.

Wearing *hijab* was a point of special interest to those respondents who critiqued and disapproved of feminism. Although liberal feminists have criticized the oppressive nature of wearing *hijab*, the women in our sample disputed this charge. These women stressed that wearing *hijab* indicates a commitment to the virtues central to Islam, such as "dignity, pride, respect," as well as "modesty and purity." They also suggested that *hijab* provides women a chance to be judged based on their intelligence, not their physical traits. "[*Hijab*] symbolizes my identity as a Muslim woman and it enforces the privilege that Islam gave to a woman to be considered equally to a man as a human being, not as a physical shape that identifies my femininity." Muslim women in this sample have also presented a practical view toward religious observance of *hijab* wearing. As argued by Williams and Vashi, wearing *hijab* enabled young Muslim women to negotiate their dual identities as Muslims and Americans (272). The core value of freedom of religious expression in American tradition empowers immigrants to embrace Islam in the public domain and encourages the feeling of entitlement to such expression. Our study supports this argument; wearing *hijab* helps women maintain their identities as Muslim. For our respondents, wearing *hijab* shielded them from the infringement of negative American cultural influences, and signified the rejection of materialistic and sexualized self-presentation. Women wearing *hijab*, among

other things, were viewed as presenting a positive role model for the younger Muslim women in their communities. Mothers especially stressed the importance of *hijab* as a means of practicing Islam and instilling Islamic faith in their children.

If wearing *hijab* is an expression of religious freedom, it also serves as a statement of individuality and creativity. This idea of freedom of self expression is in sync with the core American values of independence and uniqueness. Women exercised their agency when making choices about whether or not to wear *hijab*, on what occasions, and how to coordinate outfits with *hijab*.

> Women wear *hijab* when they want to. I did not wear *hijab* in my country, but I have strong faith in my religion.... My friend wears long dress and covers her hair. She asked somebody to help her find jeans at JC Penney. ... People were surprised when I told them that women also wear the latest fashion, put on make ups and perfume underneath their long dresses and *hijabs*.

Women in this sample also adopted an individualistic, free, and practical manner with *hijab*. This practicality is reflected in their decisions about wearing *hijab* in public (about 22% always, 38% sometimes, and 41% never wore hijab in public). Additionally, despite firm support for traditional gender norms, immigrants coming at younger ages were less likely to wear *hijab* in public (50% never wore *hijab* in public, as opposed to 35% of immigrants coming to the U.S. at an older age). This can be seen as a confirmation of the hypothesis of cultural adaptation to mainstream American cultural practices, as they have defined their place in the larger American culture and society.

Conclusion

We acknowledge that our sample was relatively small and not representative of the larger Muslim immigrant population in the United States, and this caused some limitations in generalizing our findings. It is an important consideration that Muslim immigrants in the U.S. come from various cultures and regions in the world. Islam has been adopted by various people and adapted to various indigenous cultures in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Consequently, there are various interpretations and expressions of religious norms among Muslim immigrants. There are contentious debates and disagreements between and within Islamic communities and groups in many Muslim countries regarding the relationship between religion, culture and society, as well as the role of religion in politics and government. Therefore, making inferences and generalizations based on a sample, small or large, would be erroneous and misleading.

In this study, we attempt to answer the fundamental question of reconciliation of a cultural identity for Muslim immigrants in the United States. It is a particular concern for Muslim immigrant women, whose appropriate place and identity in the host culture is strongly influenced by their religion, Islam. We found that women in this sample have resorted to traditional cultural and gender-specific norms and practices to negotiate their identity, as an alternative to succumbing to the dominant American culture. One indicator of this is the adherence to Islam's traditional values and norms despite the overload of sexual images and messages in American media. Another means of negotiation adopted by these women involved wearing *hijab* in public spaces to reaffirm their Islamic identities. Additionally, these women persistently rejected Western feminism and its critique of moral values and proper conduct as defined in Islam. Moghissi suggested that there is a polarized view of Islam and the West in post-9/11 discourse on Muslim gender roles. This polarization is vividly captured in our study. Many question ".... how to explain some of the old traditions and practices that are hostile to women in Islamic societies without adding to

the racist imagery about Islam and Muslim women that have been widespread in the West [and] How to challenge the stereotypes about Islam and Muslim women without resorting to apologetic and self-glorifying accounts of Islam and Muslims" (Moghissi, "Women, War and Fundamentalism in the Middle East," par 1). This will continue to be a challenge to the community of Muslim immigrants in the United States.

The growth of the Muslim immigrant population in the West necessitates more social scientific studies and further understanding of the cultural adaptation of Muslim immigrants to their host cultures' norms and values. Future studies need to explore variables such as the role of race, education, and economic and social mobility in Muslim immigrants' adaption to American culture and society. These studies need to continue to address the fundamental challenge for Muslim American women: how to negotiate a space of their own in a predominantly Christian country which encourages the ideals and aspirations of secular and pluralistic society.

appendix • list of questions in the Questionnaire

1. When you first arrived in the United States, what were the major challenges you faced as a Muslim woman living here?
2. Please describe how people responded to you when they learned you were Muslim. Please give examples to illustrate.
   Were there any common tendencies or patterns? Please name or describe these tendencies.
3. Have responses to you changed since September 11, 2001? Yes ______ No ______
   If yes, could you describe how?
4. Please describe your current experience as a Muslim woman in the United States. What aspects of life here do you find difficult or challenging? What aspects are easy or pleasant?
5. Please evaluate the U.S. media's portrayal of Muslim women. What is accurate and inaccurate? Please give examples.
6. What are some of the stereotypes U.S. citizens have about Muslim women?
7. Have you ever experienced discrimination because you are a Muslim woman? Please give examples to illustrate.
8. What kinds of misunderstandings are most common between you and non-Muslims? Please give examples to illustrate.
9. If you could give helpful advice to U.S. citizens about interacting with immigrant Muslim women, what would you recommend?
10. Is there a woman (historical or current) who embodies your ideal of womanhood, or whom you greatly admire or who serves as a role model for you? If so, what is her name and what characteristics does she have?
11. Are there differences in what is acceptable behavior for women in public in you country of origin versus here in the United States? If yes, please give example.
12. Are there differences in the nature of women's relationships with women in your country of origin versus here in the United States? If yes, please give examples.
13. Are there differences in the nature of women's relationships with men in your country of origin versus here in the United States? If yes, please give examples.
14. Is it possible to be feminist and Muslim? (Feminist means that you recognize that society gives men more privileges than women and esteems men's activities as more important than women's, and you believe that these things should be equal.) Please explain.
15. Would you describe yourself as a feminist? Why or why not?

16. Is not marrying (remaining single) an acceptable option for you? Why or why not?
17. How important is being (or becoming) a mother to you?
    a. Very important
    b. Somewhat important
    c. Neutral
    d. Not very important
    e. Not important at all
18. What do you think is the ideal age for a woman to get married? _______ For a man? _______
19. Who tends to initiate discussions about marriage?
    a. The groom to be
    b. The bride to be
    c. Parents of groom
    d. Parents of bride
    e. Other family members
    f. An intermediary, or person outside the family
20. What is your ideal for deciding whom to marry?
    a. Arranged by someone outside the family
    b. Family arranged
    c. Self-arranged with family's approval
    d. Self-arranged
    e. Other (please explain):
21. What is your preference regarding your last name?
    a. Retain your family of origin's name
    b. Use your husband's family name
    c. Use one or the other, depending on the situation
    d. Combine family names (use both)
    e. Other (please explain):

Ideals for Marriage: How important are the following qualities (questions #22 to #25) in a husband in order to have a happy marriage. Use the following scale to rate the qualities:

a. Very important
b. Moderately important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important at all

22. He loves me
23. He supports me financially
24. He is faithful to me (does not engage in extramarital sex)
25. He respects my autonomy (independence, right to make decisions for myself)

26. Who tends to have the greatest influence on child-rearing practices (how children are disciplined and taught)?
    a. You
    b. You, with input from husband
    c. Equally shared
    d. Your husband with input from you
    e. Your husband

27. Who tends to make financial decisions about routine household expenditures (food, clothes for kids, etc.)?
    a. You
    b. You, with input from husband
    c. Equally shared
    d. Your husband with input from you
    e. Your husband
28. Who tends to make financial decisions about major expenditures (purchasing house, car, etc.?)
    a. You
    b. You, with input from husband
    c. Equally shared
    d. Your husband with input from you
    e. Your husband
29. What sort of challenges do you face in balancing career and family?
30. If a divorce were to happen, who would be most likely to be most influential in that decision?
    a. You
    b. You, with input from husband
    c. Equally shared
    d. Your husband with input from you
    e. Your husband
31. Do you were a headscarf in public? Yes ______ No ______ Sometimes ______
32. What does wearing a headscarf mean or symbolize for you (whether or not you wear one)?
33. How important is being Muslim to you, here and now?
    a. Very important
    b. Moderately important
    c. Of little importance
    d. Not important at all
34. How important was being Muslim to you in your country of origin, before coming to the States?
    a. Very important
    b. Moderately important
    c. Of little importance
    d. Not important at all
35. Has the significance of being Muslim changed for you since coming to the United States? If so, please describe how.
36. How often do you read books related to Islam?
    a. Never
    b. Once or twice per year
    c. Once or twice per season (3 months)
    d. Once or twice per month
    e. Once or twice per week
    f. Once or twice per day
37. How often do you fast on average?
    a. Not at all
    b. Just during Ramadan
    c. During Ramadan and one or two other times during the year
    d. During Ramadan and several other times during the year

38. How often do you pray on average?
    a. Not at all
    b. Once per month or less
    c. Once per week
    d. Once per day
    e. Two to four times per day
    f. Five times per day
    g. More than five times per day
39. How often do you consume alcohol on average?
    a. Never
    b. Once or twice per year
    c. Once or twice per season (3 months)
    d. Once or twice per month
    e. Once or twice per week
    f. Once or twice per day
40. What kind of meat do you eat?
    a. Any kind, from the regular grocery store
    b. Hallal, when available
    c. Only Hallal
41. How often do you eat pork?
    a. Never
    b. Once or twice per year
    c. Once or twice per season (3 months)
    d. Once or twice per month
    e. Once or twice per week
42. Do you plan to make a hadj, or Pilgrimage to Mecca at some point during your life? Yes ______ No ______ Please describe your feelings about this.
43. Age: ______
44. Marital status a. Single b. Married c. Divorced d. Other (specify):
45. How old were you when you arrived in the United States?
46. How long have you lived in the United States?
47. What is your country of origin?
48. What is your occupation?
49. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
50. How many children you do have?
51. If married, what is your husband's occupation?
52. If married, what is the highest level of education of your husband completed?
53. Please estimate the change (if any) in your standard of living since coming to the United States.
    a. Improved a lot
    b. Improved somewhat
    c. The same
    d. Declined somewhat
    e. Declined a lot
54. What do you think is most needed in order for lasting peace to be established in the Middle East?
55. Please feel free to make any comments about this survey or the issues addressed or omitted herein.

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