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Between Islam and the American Dream

An Immigrant Muslim Community in Post-9/11 America

Yuting Wang

ROUTLEDGE

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Based on a three-year ethnographic study of a steadily growing suburban Muslim immigrant congregation in Midwest America, this book examines the micro-processes through which a group of Muslim immigrants from diverse backgrounds negotiate multiple identities while seeking to become part of American society in the years following 9/11. The author looks into frictions, conflicts, and schisms within the community to debunk myths and provide a close-up look at the experiences of ordinary immigrant Muslims in the United States. Instead of treating Muslim immigrants as fundamentally different from others, this book views Muslims as multidimensional individuals whose identities are defined by a number of basic social attributes, including gender, race, social class, and religiosity. Each person portrayed in this ethnography is a complex individual, whose hierarchy of identities is shaped by particular events and the larger social environment. By focusing on a single congregation, this study controls variables related to the particularity of place and presents a "thick" description of interactions within small groups. This book argues that the frictions, conflicts, and schisms are necessary as well as inevitable in cultivating a "composite culture" within the American Muslim community marked by diversity, leading it onto the path of Americanization.

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For Riah and Zoey

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He who forsakes his home in the cause of Allah, finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious: Should he die as a refugee from home for Allah and His Messenger, his reward becomes due and sure with Allah: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, most Merciful.

—Qur'an 4:100

[The American Dream is] that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. . . . It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstance of birth or position.

—James Truslow Adams[1]

Introduction

Thirty-two days prior to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, I arrived in the United States to pursue postgraduate degrees in Sociology. Born and raised in the People's Republic of China, I received an atheist education throughout my school years. I knew little about religion, let alone the monotheistic traditions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—that have always been foreign to the majority of Chinese. As I turned on the TV to watch the events unfold on that fateful day, I was struck by the power of religion and how it could be utilized to inflict extreme violence on the innocent and at the same time bring comfort to thousands of traumatized hearts. As I watched the Twin Towers collapse on the screen and the whole nation fall into the deepest sorrow, I, as a complete outsider, was touched by the immanence of God for the first time. Both my ignorance and curiosity about religion encouraged me to pick up books on religion, especially those written by sociologists. I was particularly drawn to Islam, an ancient religion followed by a billion people worldwide, yet accused of being "evil and wicked" and held responsible for the vicious attacks on American liberty.[2] Even though the founding fathers of sociology tended to view religion as an primordial relic and my atheist upbringing told me that religion was but "the opium of the people," or at best, childish superstitions, what I encountered during the months after 9/11 allowed me to observe firsthand the vigor of religion in modern society.

On September 11, 2001, all of my classes were canceled. Many churches in town held services to mourn the victims of the terrorist attacks. The boisterous university town was overwhelmed with grief and anger. Within days, the reports of fermenting hostilities toward the followers of Islam—a religion that was allegedly practiced by those who plotted and executed the attacks—sent a shock wave across campus. The number of Muslim students was small at the time, mostly international students living within well-maintained university housings. Regardless, several students from the Middle East and South Asia retreated to their apartments to avoid any unwanted attention. One of them ended up staying in his apartment for more than a month with the help of friends who arranged for basic supplies for him. The fear these Muslim students conveyed through their seemingly

odd behaviors was so encompassing that I decided to learn more about their religion and their community.

My personal curiosity about Muslims in the United States, influenced by my scholarly interest in the sociology of religion and immigration, eventually led me to embark on a rigorous study of the experiences of Muslim immigrants in post-9/11 American society. This book emerges from a three-year ethnography of a steadily growing Muslim immigrant congregation in a mid-sized city in the American Midwest, which I have named Riverside.[3] It examines the micro-processes through which a group of Muslim immigrants from diverse backgrounds negotiate their multiple identities while seeking to become part of American society. Specifically, this book looks into the frictions, conflicts, and schisms within this immigrant Muslim community that stem from racial/ethnic diversities, competing interpretations of Islam, varied socioeconomic status, contending views of gender roles, ambivalent attitudes toward American society, as well as generation gaps. This book argues that in order to become fully American, Muslim communities must attract and sustain diverse memberships in their mosques. Their capability to deal with diversity is gained within their mosques, which welcome people of diverse backgrounds in terms of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, Islamic sects, theological schools, and immigration generations.

This book is distinct in that it focuses on the dynamics within a Muslim community tied to a single mosque. It debunks many myths about Muslims and provides a close-up look at the experiences of ordinary immigrant Muslims in suburban America in the years following 9/11. Rather than presupposing Muslim immigrants as an exception and fundamentally different from other immigrants, this work views them as, first and foremost, ordinary immigrants who are struggling to become part of American society. Each one of the research subjects is a multidimensional individual whose identity is shaped by the larger social context and defined by a number of basic sociological factors, including gender, race, and social class.

In the wake of 9/11, innocent Muslim Americans suffered from different forms of discrimination, from verbal abuse to hate crimes (Peek 2010). The relentless backlash against Muslims made it impossible and inappropriate to disregard the uniqueness of Muslims when compared to other immigrants who have gained a head start in the "Americanization" process thanks to their mainstream religious affiliations. The daily struggle of Muslim immigrants against prejudice and discrimination, the unfolding "War on Terror" that has threatened the civil rights of many ordinary Muslim Americans, the heated debate on "the clash of civilization" that intensifies the tension between Islam and the West, the perplexing relationship between U.S. government and the oil tycoons on the Arabian peninsula, and the deadly conflicts in the name of religion in the Middle East and elsewhere cannot be ignored in scholarly inquires of Muslim immigrants in the United States. Islam has always played a central role as Muslims transform

from sojourners to citizens (Haddad 2002) and from immigrants to transnationals (McCloud 2006).

Islam and Muslims have a surprisingly long and intriguing history in America. The earliest Muslim presence in the New World was associated with the Atlantic Slave Trade starting in the sixteenth century. When European colonists built their slave trade operation bases in the Senegambia supply zone, the area had already been under Islamic influence and had a large number of Muslim residents (Austin 1997:33; Diouf 1998:4–6). It is estimated that at least 10 percent of the African slaves in antebellum America came from Muslim backgrounds (Austin 1984). However, Islam did not put down roots in North America under slavery. The nature of the slave trade, the disproportionate percentages of males and females among the slaves, the constant selling of slaves, and the nearly impossible condition for Muslim slaves to pass down their religion to their children prevented Islam from growing and spreading in the New World (Diouf 1998:179–84).

At the end of nineteenth century, decades after the disappearance of imported Muslim slaves, Arab Muslims from various parts of the falling Ottoman Empire started appearing on U.S. shores, this time, not as captured slaves but as voluntary immigrants who came to seek a better and freer life. These Arab Muslim immigrants were sojourners who came to the new world searching for economic betterment and intended to return as soon as they made enough money (Haddad 2002). Many of them were uneducated men. Most found employment as unskilled laborers in factories and mines; others found work as peddlers. Some later became small shop keepers and even successful merchants. Some sent for their families, while others—instead of bringing brides from home—married locally to Christian women. These immigrants mostly settled in major urban areas such as New York, Chicago, Boston, Detroit, and Toledo (Haddad and Lummis 1987; Abraham and Shryock 2000).

Among the early Muslim immigrants, there were also a small number of Bosnians, Turks, and South Asians. Although it is not clear how many Bosnian Muslims were in Chicago, in 1906 they were the first to establish a Muslim organization there (Schimdt 2004:21). A few peasants from the present-day Pakistani Punjab area arrived around 1900; however, South Asian immigrants failed to establish the large ethnic communities formed by the Arabs and Bosnians. Since Asian immigration was stopped by the National Origins Quota Act of 1924, the further decline in the number of incoming females made it impossible for the peasants to marry within their own ethnic groups. Many ended up marrying primarily Mexican American women (Leonard 1992). Large numbers of Indian and Pakistani immigrants—among them a large number of Muslims—would begin arriving only after the restrictive immigration quotas were removed in 1965 (Lenoard 2003:13).

The Immigration and Naturalization Services Act of 1965 abolished the country-of-origin quotas established by the Immigration Act of 1924.

The 1965 legislation dramatically changed the face of American society by allowing immigrants from all over the world to enter the United States. New immigrants from many parts of Asia and Latin America reshaped the United States from a nation primarily comprised of white Europeans and African Americans into a more multicultural nation. Since then, the relative proportion of white immigrants has steadily declined, while immigration from non-European countries has grown robustly. Hispanics have surpassed African Americans to become the largest racial minority in many states. In addition to changes in demographic composition, the revision of immigration policy also drastically altered the American religious landscape. The Protestant-Catholic-Jewish religious triad described by sociologist Will Herberg (1960) soon turned into a vibrant religious market where Judeo-Christian religions competed with various other religions, many of which were brought to the United States by immigrants.

Soon after the passage of the Immigration Act in 1965, a large number of Muslims from the Middle East and South Asian countries landed in American cities. Immigration statistics and census data show a sharp rise in the number of immigrants from India and Pakistan in the late 1960s, from Bangladesh in 1970 to 1971, and from Afghanistan after 1979 (Leonard 1997:171–73). The waves of Arab immigrants extend to today (Haddad and Lummis 1987). The freedom of religion secured by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the promising economic and educational opportunities guaranteed by a strong American economy encourage the continued influx of Muslims, who are escaping political turmoil, religious persecutions, and ethnic conflict.

Although the majority of Muslims in the United States are first-generation immigrants who arrived in the country during the last three decades (Pew Research Center 2007:15), a portrait of American Muslims would not be complete without considering the presence of Islam among African Americans. African American Muslims have had a history distinct from immigrant Muslims, evolving from the enslaved African Muslims, to the Moorish Science Temple and the National of Islam, with many returning to Orthodox Sunni Islam. The legacy of slavery, the daily struggles against racial discrimination, and the quest for social justice have greatly shaped African American Muslim identities. Black Muslims are often seen in the same light as black Christians, for religion in both cases has been used as a weapon for liberation (McCloud 1995; Dannin 1998; Jackson 2005; Curtis 2006).

Because the law prohibits the Census Bureau from asking explicit questions about religious affiliation in its regular surveys, the precise demographic composition of the Muslim population in the United States is difficult to obtain. Estimations vary widely, lying somewhere between 1.1 million and 8 million, or roughly 0.6 to 2.4 percent of the U.S. population.[4] Regardless, there is no doubt that Muslims are one of the fastest growing religious minorities in the United States and have become an important component of the American religious landscape (Eck 2001; Ammerman 2005). Islamic centers and

mosques are mushrooming across the country, increasing from a handful in the early twentieth century to more than two thousand in 2011 (Bagby et al. 2000; Leonard 2003; Bagby 2012). Contrary to the common stereotypes, Muslims in the United States are far from homogenous and are distinguishable along multiple fault lines. Bonded by a shared faith, the Muslim community in the United States gathers together both indigenous African American Muslims and immigrant Muslims from more than sixty countries and regions (Pew Research Center 2007), spanning from Saudi Arabia to Egypt, Somalia, Uganda, Turkey, Bosnia, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Malaysia, and China. The community is further diversified when taking into consideration individuals' migration experiences, socio-economic status, educational backgrounds, religious beliefs and practices, political ideologies, and age cohorts. They are Sunnis, Shi'as, Ahmadis, or Isma'ilis;[5] they are factory workers, highly-skilled professionals, or politicians; they are refugees, asylum seekers, or voluntary immigrants. They are found in every walk of American life.

In Islam, migration is seen through a religious lens. Since its beginning, Muslims were challenged by issues related to migration. In order to escape persecution, Prophet Muhammad and his followers were forced to migrate to Medina, leaving their old lives behind. This migration marks the beginning of the Islamic era, also known as the era of *hijra*, or the era of migration. Islamic theologians, who carefully study the sacred laws or the Shari'a, divide the world into two distinctive realms—*Dar al-Islam* (abode of peace) and *Dar al-Harb* (abode of war). The Qur'an addresses many issues related to migration within and between the two spheres and provides guidelines for Muslims who live outside the "abode of peace" (Abu-Sahlieh 1996). Whether Muslims are allowed to migrate to a certain geographic areas and how they should live outside the "abode of peace" generates major debates among theologians. These debates have profound impacts on Muslims living in the modern era, as technology makes travel and communication more efficient, and the changing global political structure makes the definitions of "abode of peace" and "abode of war" increasingly vague. Islamic scholars delineate three religious paradigms—resistance, embrace, and selective cooperation—to explain the divergent approach to American society developed by Muslim Americans (Mattson 2003). These divergent approaches reflect the mixed attitudes among Muslims toward American society and their different interpretations of the sacred law. There is no simple answer to the question of whether the United States belongs to *Dar al-Islam* or *Dar al-Harb*. Leading Islamic jurists place most western countries within another realm called *Dar al-Amn* (abode of safety or security) where Muslims are allowed to practice their religion freely (Moore 2010:9).

The experiences of Muslims in American society cannot be fully understood without a thorough study of immigration in the United States. Despite the fact that most Americans are the descendants of immigrants, the hostility toward immigrants remains strong. More recent immigrants continue to endure various forms of individual and institutional discriminations.

They have been blamed for a number of social problems, ranging from the unemployment rate to the misuse of the English language. Nevertheless, the contributions of immigrants are indisputable. The supporters of immigration argue that generations of immigrants have played significant roles in defining the ethos of American society and transforming it from a Protestant country to a pluralistic nation (Eck 2001).

In fact, migration is central to American experiences. For example, the high level of religiosity observed in American society has intimate relationships with immigration, as the latter is linked to the increase of religious participation (Herberg 1960; Lenski 1963; Lazerwitz and Rowitz 1964). In the 1950s, sociologist Will Herberg observed that immigrants—after enduring a traumatic migration process—tended to become more religious in order to preserve their cultural heritage. He argued that,

> the religious community has emerged under compelling circumstances to serve as a context of self-identification and social location in contemporary American life . . . Increasingly the great mass of Americans understands themselves and their place in society in terms of religious community with which they are identified. (1960:36)

Although Protestant dominance was still strong, new immigrants were not required to change their religions. To become American, new immigrants must learn a new language, cultivate loyalty and attachment to their new country, and adapt to the social and political culture of American society, but not convert to Protestantism. Herberg wrote,

> Sooner or later the immigrant will give up virtually everything he had brought with him from the "old country"—his language, his nationality, his manner of life—and will adopt the ways of this new home. Within broad limits, however, his becoming an American did not involve his abandoning the old religion in favor of some native American substitute. Quite the contrary, not only was he expected to retain his old religion, as he was not expected to retain his old language and nationality, but such was the shape of America that it was largely in and through his religion that he, or rather his children and grandchildren, found an identifiable place in American life (1960:27–28).

However, the religious freedom portrayed by William Herberg largely existed within the boundaries of Judeo-Catholic-Protestant framework. The limitations of Herberg's thesis became more evident as American society underwent rapid changes as the result of the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, the rising feminist and homosexual movements, and most notably the arrival of post-1965 immigrants. Although the "culture wars" triggered by competing value systems within the American mainstream (Hunter 1991) shifted the emphasis on religious affiliations to the

divisions between the religious conservatives and liberals (Wuthnow 1988), followers of non-Judeo-Christian traditions continued to fall victim to various forms of prejudice, discrimination, and even hate crimes.

Within such context, ethnic religious institutions flourished as the new immigrants turned to religion to preserve their ethnic identities and maintain group solidarity (Herberg 1960; Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Min and Kim 2002). Ethnic congregations increase social interactions among co-ethnic members, provide a sense of belonging, offer immigrants a spiritual haven in a strange world, and reinforce ethno-religious cultures (Choy 1979; Kim 1981; Hurh and Kim 1990; Min 1992; Warner and Wittner 1998; Yang 1999; Ebaugh and Chaftez 2000).

Many of the new immigrant religious institutions have adopted the structure of mainstream Protestant denominations (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000). Congregationalism—the organizational structure and the religious culture that evolve around it—addresses two important functions of immigrant religious institutions developed in the United States: a place of worship and a community center (Herberg 1960; Wuthnow 1988; Ammerman 1997). Community members gather together in their churches, temples, synagogues, or mosques not only to worship but also to share life as a community. The congregations often hire full-time clergies, implement administration boards controlled by the lay people, run Sunday schools, maintain a complete voluntary membership system, and some have even adopted the Protestant worship style (Yang and Ebaugh 2001). The conceptualization of "de facto congregationalism" (Warner 1994) influences subsequent studies on new immigrant congregations. Scholars argue that "congregations are part of the voluntaristic spirit that makes American democracy vital" (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000, citing Ammerman 1997). Becoming a congregation that emphasizes voluntary membership, lay leadership, social services, organizational network, and congregational worship is critical to new immigrants in the process of adaptation, acculturation, and assimilation (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000). This congregational structure is especially important for ethnic and religious minorities. Within their ethno-religious congregations, new immigrants reproduce their ethnic culture (Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000). These ethno-religious congregations also prepare American-born children to become part of American society by promoting civic engagement and participation (Ecklund 2006). While the early European pilgrims helped to create a religious nation, new immigrants help to sustain the religious resilience, making the United States "the most religiously diverse nation on earth" (Eck 2001:4).

This religious vitality, sustained by religious diversity during the last half century has attracted much scholarly attention (Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Min and Kim 2002) and pushed forward a paradigm shift in the field of sociology of religion that extends Herberg's theory on assimilation by taking into consideration new characteristics of the post-1965 immigrants (Warner 1993). These advancements in academic studies

of religion have helped to foster a positive environment for immigrants to become American. Moving beyond the "triple melting pot" metaphor and Anglo-Saxon core culture, American society is entering a time of pluralism and multiculturalism, echoing the spirit of *e pluribus unum* (Eck 2001).

The situation for Muslim immigrants, however, is less optimistic. Despite that voluntary Muslim immigrants have existed within American society for more than a century, given the ambivalent and sometimes bitter relations between the Islamic world and the West, many Americans wonder whether Muslims will eventually become part of the religious and ethnic patchwork of the American tapestry like other immigrants, gradually drift away and return to where they came from, or develop radical characteristics like their European counterparts. Many Muslims, on the other hand, debating the boundaries of "abode of peace" and "abode of war," wonder if they will be able to live according to Islamic decrees in a non-Islamic country that expects everyone to assimilate. They are often torn between the American ideal that seems so compatible with Islamic values (Abdul Rauf 2004), and the American reality that is immensely alienating.

Prior to 9/11, immigrant Muslims—like other new immigrants—focused on issues of assimilation or "Americanization." For example, Muslims were heavily influenced by the established Protestant religious structure in developing the social, educational, and political functions of their congregations. Mosques have taken on the "congregational" characteristics of American religion like other immigrant religious institutions, such as the expanded social services of the mosque, the multiple roles of the Imam, the reformed worshipping format, and the altered gender relations (Haddad and Lumis 1987; Walbridge 1997; Abusharaf 1998; Abraham 2000; Badr 2000).

The importance of religion during the decades prior to 9/11 was overshadowed by other priorities of typical immigrants, such as ensuring job security and achieving higher socioeconomic status. Ethnic mosques and Islamic centers devoted themselves to providing psychological comfort, ethnic fellowship, social services, and spiritual haven for new immigrants (Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Yang and Ebaugh 2001). The story of Muslim immigrants at the end of the twentieth century was mostly a story of success since most post-1965 Muslim immigrants were highly educated professionals trained in medicine, engineering, architecture, business administration, banking, or information technology. With their high average household income and educational level, South Asian Muslims together with South Asian Hindus and Sikhs became part of the Asian "model minority" (Kibria 2005:206–27).

Prior to September 11, 2001—although religious differences remained—it seemed that Muslims had made important progress on the path to Americanization, even more so than some other new immigrant communities. However, the events of 9/11 were detrimental to this Americanization process. In the wake of the series of terrorist attacks both inside and outside the United States and the "War on Terror" waged by the Bush administration, immigrant

Muslims were suddenly put under a spotlight. Soon after 9/11, millions of American Muslims became suspects and were seen as enemies of the nation. Personal phones were wiretapped in Muslim homes. Muslim travelers were frequently subjected to blatant racial profiling at airport checkpoints. Mosque property and Muslim households suffered from all forms of hate crimes. Due to the lack of basic knowledge and familiarity about Islam and Muslims, many Americans tend to equate Muslims to the terrorists who inflicted enormous damage on Americans. In its annual report on anti-Muslim incidents released in September 2006, CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations) reported 1,972 incidents of anti-Muslim violence, discrimination, and harassment in 2005, a rise of 26 percent over the 1,522 cases reported in 2004 using the same methodology (Human Rights First 2007:17).

Regardless of the continued efforts of American Muslims to integrate, the seemingly irreconcilable differences between Islam and Judeo-Christianity and the prevailing anti-West sentiment among Muslims have reached a new height in the last several decades. Historian Bernard Lewis of Princeton University first used the term "the clash of civilizations" in his article, "The Roots of Muslim Rage" (Lewis 1990). This theory was further elaborated upon and extended in the late Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington's provocative book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* published in 1996. "The clash of civilization" thesis not only triggered fierce academic debates, but it also has far-reaching political ramifications that have affected the lives of millions of Muslims in the West. After 9/11, the huge backlash against Muslims provoked yet another round of passionate debates questioning whether American Muslims are "American first" or "Muslim first" (Pew Research Center 2007, 2011).

To facilitate the integration of Muslims into American society, a theological construct of "American Islam" had emerged prior to the 9/11 attacks to ease the transition of Muslim immigrants into their new home. In the 1990s, some Muslim leaders argued that "Muslims believe in the same values for which this country [the United States] was founded . . . They feel closer to the founding fathers than what America had become" (Athar 1994:7). In the eyes of many American Muslim thinkers, the United States embodies many ideals of Islam, such as freedom, human rights, justice, equality, and tolerance, which are undercut by the un-Islamic cultures in many Muslim countries. They believe that the American Muslim community is destined to play a leadership role in the global Muslim *ummah*[6] (Leonard 2003:22), very much like the leadership role the United States seeks to play in the world (Leonard 2003:131).

After 9/11, the mainstream American Muslim community sought to speed up the Americanization process. With unprecedented attention being paid to Islam and Muslims, American Muslims were compelled to defend their religion and to build alliances with their fellow Americans in hope of bridging the gaps and healing the wounds. A number of Islamic scholars and leaders of the American Muslim community continued to construct a theological framework—American Islam—that stresses the common ancestry

between Islam and Judeo-Christianity and the shared values between Islam and American society with the goal of removing key barriers on the "Americanization" path (Abdul Rauf 2004). Drawing on rich evidence in the history of Islam during its encounters with diverse cultures, Islamic scholars believe that Islam is fully capable of adapting to the local culture and in some cases could eventually transform the local culture (Abd-Allah 2006).

The continued effort of building "American Islam" is the result of Muslim Americans fighting for acceptance in post-9/11 American society (Leonard 2003:26). However, the very concept of incorporating local culture into Islam is contested. Conservatives see the idea of "American Islam" as too liberal and divisive and reject it as they take a stance against the West and seek to practice what they believe is the pure form of Islam. Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, a charismatic leader of the American Muslim community who has been instrumental in promoting American Islam, was called "Bush's pet Muslim" by his critics, who found his opinions too Western and not Islamic enough (Leonard 2003:25).

The conservatives' worry is not unwarranted as the framework of "American Islam" approves of Muslims' embracing the American Dream, which is often misunderstood by many as the dream of achieving material success that finances a hedonistic way of life—the root of evil in American society. However, the American Dream is much more complex than simple material success. In American history, Jews and Catholics have gone through a great deal of hardship on their way to Americanization. They eventually molded themselves into the American landscape by embracing the encompassing American Dream in the New World (Cullen 2001, 2003). Will Muslims follow the same path?

In the eyes of James Truslow Adams ([1931] 2001), the American Dream is the single most important theme that runs through the entirety of American history. He invoked this term to describe the American ideal that everyone has equal opportunity for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Freedom, equality, individual rights, and material success are all embodied in this dream. The American Dream continued to hold Americans together throughout the twentieth century and rapidly spread to the rest of the world. By no means a superficial concept, the American Dream moved out of academia and soon enjoyed popularity in the mass media, and becoming the equivalency of success, achievement, and democracy among other themes (Cullen 2003:2–3).

But, what does the American Dream really mean? While some scholars focus more on the tangible parts of the American Dream, others search for its deeper and rather ambiguous content. On the one hand, it is "unabashedly material," for, "[t]he ideas of the American Dream speak of the collective dream embodied in the Bill of Rights," which are not the central concerns of the immigrants (Clark 2003:2). They are more concerned about home ownership, upward mobility, good education, well-paying jobs, fame, and fortune. The Hollywood-style success represents the material dimension of the dream that has attracted millions of immigrants to make their fortunes and to achieve fame in this land of opportunity. On the other hand, the American Dream is a spiritual power that "has sustained, even saved, lives

that otherwise might not be deemed worth living" (Cullen 2003:7). The American Dream is about freedom of religion, respect for human rights, and equality. The clash between the two dimensions of the American Dream, to some extent, is a reflection of the clash between the secular and the sacred. To this end, religious people are inescapably trapped in between the two dimensions. The "mythic power" (Cullen 2003:7) of the American Dream is both attractive and dangerous. The co-existence of competing values in a diverse American society creates order as well as chaos.

Although there have been attempts to understand Islam in light of new immigrant religions and to treat it with a similar degree of tolerance as that accorded to Hinduism and Buddhism (Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000), Islam is destined to be singled out given the repercussion of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. It is frequently investigated through the lens of oriental mysticism and is linked to key words such as "violence," "oppression," "backward," and "underdeveloped." Muslims are often mistakenly perceived as a homogenous group and characterized as people with Middle Eastern looks. Therefore, in order to become American and remain Muslim, it is essential for American Muslims to find a common ground between Islam and the American way of life. This is exactly what the concept of "American Islam" grants. It enables Muslims to focus on the essentials of the American Dream and let go the trivial details that may contradict the Islamic decree.

Indeed, Muslims in the United States, especially those who are immigrants, are much better integrated than their counterparts in Europe. They tend to fare better financially compared to average Americans. They are more likely than the general public to feel satisfied with the way things are going in the United States, to adopt American customs and ways of life, and to endorse American cultural values such as working hard. They remain faithful to their religion but are not dogmatic (Pew Research Center 2011). All of these suggest that the majority of American Muslims have adapted well and are truly "American."

Embraced by the majority of Muslims in the United States, the American Dream demonstrates its unifying power to cut across many boundaries within the American Muslim community. Their ability to contend with diversity and pluralism—especially with regard to varied religious beliefs and practices and socioeconomic stratification within their community—will have a profound effect on the future of the American Muslim community as well as American society at large. As they resolve conflicts and deal with schisms, they rehearse invaluable skills for civic participation. Such skills are especially important for the American-born generations. This book is, thus, a timely contribution to our knowledge of how ordinary Muslims build and sustain their religious congregations.

Drawing on studies of immigrant religion, this book elucidates that for Muslim immigrants in the United States, becoming "American" is a balancing act between maintaining Islamic tradition and adapting to mainstream American life as sustained by the American Dream. In the process

of "Americanization," mosques take on a number of new social functions in addition to their traditional religious roles and are instrumental in helping immigrants assimilate, while still maintaining their religion as earlier immigrant generations had done. Frictions, conflicts, and schisms, which are typical stages of development in the process of assimilation and adaptation, characterize divergent views of the relationship between Islam and the American Dream. The social contexts shaped by the events of 9/11 facilitate rather than impede the "Americanization" of Muslim immigrants. In essence, this volume argues that to become authentic American, Muslims must attract and sustain diverse memberships in their congregations and learn to deal with diversity within their own communities so as to better integrate into the larger American society that is marked by diversity.

This book documents the intergroup relations within Riverside Mosque—a racially and ethnically diverse immigrant mosque in a mid-sized city in the Midwest United States. It examines how a diverse group of Muslim immigrants negotiate their multiple identities based on diverse race/ethnicities, divergent visions of Islam, assorted socioeconomic status, competing perspectives on gender roles, and mixed attitudes toward American society. Although religion has become the single most important identity marker for Muslim immigrants in post-9/11 American society, other sociological factors remain salient and may dominate an individual's identity matrix when circumstances arise. The tensions within Muslim communities between the top and the bottom, between the newly arrived and the settled, between the young and the old, and between women and men, make it important to recognize the complexity of the very process of "Americanization."

Between August 2004 and December 2007, I conducted extensive fieldwork in Riverside Mosque, participated in community activities, and interviewed dozens of community members.[7] I examined the different approaches to an American way of life embraced by community members from a wide range of backgrounds. I sought to understand how these Muslim immigrants interpreted the multi-dimensional American Dream in the Islamic context. In dealing with differences and disagreements, these Muslims searched for a middle ground on the continuum between Islam and the American way of life.

My research has been greatly facilitated by my ethnicity, religion, and gender. On the one hand, I was an insider for I now shared their religious beliefs, which became a valuable spiritual and social asset when I started my journey with the community; on the other hand, I was an outsider, for I was the only female who did not have a co-ethnic compatriot in the community and I had a very different face from other community members. My multiple identities provided me with a great deal of convenience in entering the community, and with gaining access to valuable information, as well as providing an easy exit when I needed to retreat to my writings.

To some extent, my gender denies full access to some aspects of the community life. The spaces for men and women in mosques are often divided and, as a woman, I had less opportunity to speak to men freely, even in public. However, I was able to cross the gender line from time to time in

Riverside Mosque—a "female friendly" mosque as I will describe in the following chapters. The gender segregation in Riverside Mosque was loosely maintained. The Imam held a more liberal view toward gender issues and so did many of his congregants. Speaking to a man in Riverside Mosque was not as stigmatized as one would expect. Moreover, I also had various opportunities to interview young men outside the mosque at different occasions. This data, although far from complete, greatly balance this study.

Studying Muslims from a woman's perspective is not a brand new business, but it is of great value. Recently, we have started to see more publications—both books and articles—focused on Muslim women (Haddad et al. 2006). This development reinforces my conviction that women's perspectives are very important in combating stereotypes against minorities. Muslim women in the United States enjoy a special position. As do other immigrant women, Muslim women have also gained more power in the immigration process. They are no longer blind believers but active participants in learning about their religion in the American context. Looking at the Muslim community through a woman's eyes leads to new discoveries and enriches the literature. During my fieldwork, the strong sense of sisterhood among Muslim women provided me with a friendly environment to safeguard my research. Women seldom questioned my motives and put a lot of trust in my intentions. They were also eager to express their opinions, wanting to have their voices heard. Many older women kindly invited me to their houses during religious holidays and family events and treated me as their niece or daughter. They warmly supported my research and helped me to look at things from new perspectives.

As a Chinese who is not readily recognizable as a "Muslim," religion is the only factor that connected me to other community members. I am similar yet different from my research subjects. Unlike many Muslims, I rarely have any personal experience with discrimination because my physical traits do not automatically link me to Islam. This sets many of my research subjects apart from me. Most of them have unpleasant stories to tell. Those experiences shape their opinions and identities. When interacting with people from different ethnic groups in the community, my "outsider" position keeps me in a comfort zone so that I can avoid getting too deeply involved in one group more than the others. Similarly, when people speak to a Chinese woman who does not culturally belong to any other ethnic groups in the community, they are more likely to freely express ideas that might be considered offensive by others. My marginal position in the community was an asset enabling me to dig deeper into the dynamic group relations.

Throughout the three years that I studied the community, I did not avoid being a participant. An observer who does not participate in the community activities and keeps herself two feet away from her research subjects causes more unease among people. People tend to act differently when being watched. The presence of a pure observer could influence the way they would normally act in a natural setting. My presence in the community did not interfere with the natural state of the community mostly because of my gender (female), age (in my twenties at the time of the research), occupation

(a graduate student), and immigration status (non-immigration visa holder). These characteristics allowed me to stay fairly close to the community, obtain trust, and build good relations with many community members.

From 2004 to 2007, I witnessed memorable events and observed dramatic conflict, which cannot be easily captured by an interviewer who randomly drops into a community and expects to get reliable answers from people who have yet to build trust in him/her. More importantly, by comparing my field notes through participant observations with semi-structured interviews I carried out with community members, I realized that the usual pattern of responses people would give in front of an insider often deviated from those they would provide with outsiders. Therefore, I decided to leave as much space as possible for my research subjects to talk and act in a natural setting. This research design places a preference for dialogue over monologue. I believe that sociologists are allowed to have our voice in our research; that is how we form our arguments and build theories. The first-hand data I collected during the field work are complemented and enriched by qualitative data collected through unstructured interviews with community members (see the Appendix) and content analysis of various documents including the mosque constitution and bylaws, community newsletters published between 2004 and 2007, meeting minutes, and available texts of sermons given at Friday congregational prayers and on religious holidays.

This book, therefore, not only adds to the existing literature on American Muslims, but also contributes to broader discussions about the process of "Americanization" among religious and ethnic minorities. In the following chapters, this book contends that there is not one path to Americanization. Each person portrayed in this ethnography is a multifaceted individual, whose hierarchy of identities is shaped by particular events and the larger social environment. By focusing on a single congregation, this study controls the variables related to the particularity of place and presents a "thick" description of interactions among small groups.

Chapter 1 introduces the ethnography site. It recounts the history of the Muslim community in the city of Riverside and the mosques and Islamic centers established since the 1960s. It points out that the success of Riverside Mosque is due to its capability in attracting and retaining members from diverse backgrounds.

Chapter 2 examines the competing views of Islam within the Riverside Muslim community. Divergent opinions among religious leaders and lay members escalated at various critical points and eventually led to schism. Responses to conflicts and schisms reflect the historical rifts within Muslim *ummah*. Ironically, in the aftermath of 9/11, the solidified boundaries between the Muslim "us" and non-Muslim "them" have simultaneously created group cohesion and widened many long-existing rifts. This chapter argues that the ability of Riverside Mosque to endure numerous conflicts and schisms was largely due to the willingness of its members to tolerate differences in the interpretations of Islamic teachings.

Chapter 3 considers the impact of socioeconomic status on group relations. As community members embrace the American Dream, material success becomes a strong indicator of religiosity as members of higher social status tend to play a more prominent role in maintaining the financially unstable mosque and therefore dominate community development projects. The age-old "free rider" problem illuminates the impact of social class on the integration of Muslims into the American way of life. By focusing on the role social class—a significant, but often overlooked factor—plays in reshaping Riverside Mosque, this chapter offers a discussion of the different versions of the American Dream embraced by Riverside Muslim immigrants. This chapter asserts that a multifaceted American Dream helps to sustain a congregation that is comprised of people from different social classes.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 look into two important subgroups within the Riverside Muslim community—women and youth. Chapter 4 examines the growing importance of religious identity for the women. Although Muslim sisterhood has been a strong force in creating an American Muslim women's alliance, there are also deeply rooted divisions within it. The competing views among women in Riverside Mosque have an important effect on the changing gender relations within the community. This chapter suggests that whether the community members are able to deal with the involvement of women in the administration and the decision-making processes, has a far-reaching impact on the future of the mosque.

Chapter 5 relates the stories of four young Muslims living in the city of Riverside. By comparing the foreign-born with the native-born Muslims, it elucidates the problems and challenges facing young Muslims who come of age in post-9/11 America. Generation gaps and the struggle between their parents' attachment to the old world and the young Muslims' growing social connections in the new world complicate their attitudes toward Islam and the American Dream. This chapter shows that the ability of the American-born/grown young Muslims to embrace diversity is especially important in sustaining a congregation challenged by the inherent differences across different generations.

The concluding chapter revisits the theoretical framework of new immigrant religions, engages a brief consideration of Islamic perspectives on migration, analyzes the far-reaching consequences of the conflict within Riverside Mosque, and discusses the important roles of multiracial/multiethnic mosques in promoting Muslims' integration into the American mainstream. Given the history of Islam in the United States, the diversity within the American Muslim community, and the increasing visibility and contested status of Islam in post-9/11 American society, it is thus critical for Muslims to learn to deal with diversity and build mosques that can tolerate differences and contain disagreements.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,
The Beneficent, the Merciful.
Owner of the Day of Judgment.
Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help.
Show us the straight path,
The path of those whom Thou hast favoured;
Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray.

—Qur'an 1

1 Riverside Mosque

It was just past one o'clock on an ordinary hot and sunny Friday afternoon at the end of August in 2003 when I first walked into Riverside Mosque, a square, two-story yellow brick building topped with a green dome, adjacent to a Christian Reformed Church and an elementary school affiliated with the church, in a quiet neighborhood near one of the busiest roads in the city of Riverside. With neither a pair of the distinctive minarets[1] that adorn the majority of mosques around the world, nor a sign board declaring the affiliation of this congregation, Riverside Mosque was no more striking than most other places of worship across the town. In fact, even many of the Muslims who were new to this area would easily pass it as one of the many churches in town. At the time I did not know if this religiously generic façade was a deliberate strategy to keep the community from unwanted and negative attention or if perhaps the architect's personal plan was to blend the mosque into the local landscape. Nevertheless, although the building might not be very eye-catching, it was probably striking for those passing by the building at this hour on a Friday afternoon to see people dressed differently than ordinary Americans rushing into the building.

I was new to the city of Riverside and had just made some Muslim friends through a college orientation program. Muhammad, a graduate student who was studying at one of the universities in the city, offered to take several newcomers to attend *Jummah* in Riverside Mosque, the largest mosque in the area.[2] When we drove into the parking lot, it was already crowded with dozens of cars and vans. Men and women dressed in various styles of clothes hurried into the building. Their clothing was so diverse that it seemed like a multi-cultural fashion exhibition. The conservative dress of the women set them apart from Americans in general. Although it was a hot summer day, none of the women wore short-sleeve shirts, short pants, or short skirts. Some women were dressed in *jilbab* or *abaya*,[3] others wore *salwar kameez*,[4] some were dressed in colorful African robes; while some others wore Western-style jeans/pants/ankle-length skirts and blouses. Regardless of what the women were dressed in, each had covered her hair with *hijab*,[5] which again had a variety of styles and colors. Some women strictly covered their hair, ears, and necks; while others just loosely wrapped their heads with thin silky scarves. Suits were not the popular clothing among men at this hour. Instead, some of

the men wore traditional *salwar kameez*, usually white, and small white *kufi* caps;[6] some wore colorful African robes; while many others, especially young men and boys, were dressed in casual clothes, even baggy jeans or shorts and T-shirts. Quite a few men in medical staff's blue or green uniforms had apparently just come from work and had to return soon after the prayers.

The small paved parking lot was full. We joined some cars parked on the unpaved ground. Muhammad told us that Riverside Mosque was a largely Sunni Islam immigrant mosque accommodating Muslims of different races and ethnicities, such as South Asian, Arab, Bosnian, Iranian, Turkish, Central Asian, African, African American, Southeast Asian, and White living in the surrounding areas. Established in 1994 when the Muslim population in town was small, the mosque had outgrown its accommodation capacity. Words had been going around that the Mosque Executive Board would soon begin a mosque expansion project. In the near future a community hall and playground for children would appear on the unpaved part of the parking lot where we had left our car.

The mid-summer heat was scorching. We got out of the car, walked quickly toward the air-conditioned building, and entered through the door on the ground level. Compared to many of the mosques I had visited before, Riverside Mosque was somewhat "strange"—men and women shared the same entrance. "*As-salaam Aleikum* (Peace be upon you)," several men with distinctive South Asian and Arab facial characteristics and two black men at the door taking off their shoes sensed the coming of people, quickly raised their heads and greeted us with smiles as we entered. "*Waleikum as-salaam* (Peace be upon you too)," we replied and smiled. They seemed quite used to women's presence in the mosque and were not bothered by us entering the door.

I felt as if I had just entered an ordinary home. There was no such awed feeling as I had when I first entered a Basilica two miles away from the mosque. It was not so much because of the humble interior decoration compared to the grand Basilica adorned with splashes of gold, but probably because the hall was not decorated with anything that carried sacred or religious meanings. Only a simple poster of the Dome of the Rock Mosque in Jerusalem and a handful of educational posters on Islam scattered on the walls revealed the identity of this house and those who gathered inside.

Several long, folding plastic dining tables stretched out in the rectangular dining area to the right. Behind the serving counter across from the door was a mid-sized kitchen clustered with stoves, sinks, oak cabinets, a refrigerator, and a center island, where a middle-aged South Asian woman was busy transferring food to Styrofoam boxes from several big metal pots and disposable aluminum pans. She greeted us, and we returned greetings. "This is Aunty Reena, the nicest person in the community," Muhammad introduced her. Reena smiled at this comment and welcomed us with warm hugs. Her smile was sincere and pleasant. Reena told us that if we had not eaten, we should each take a box before leaving. She said, "This is usually for five dollars each, but I'll give it to you for free if we have enough." Muhammad told us that the food was donated by local Muslim families

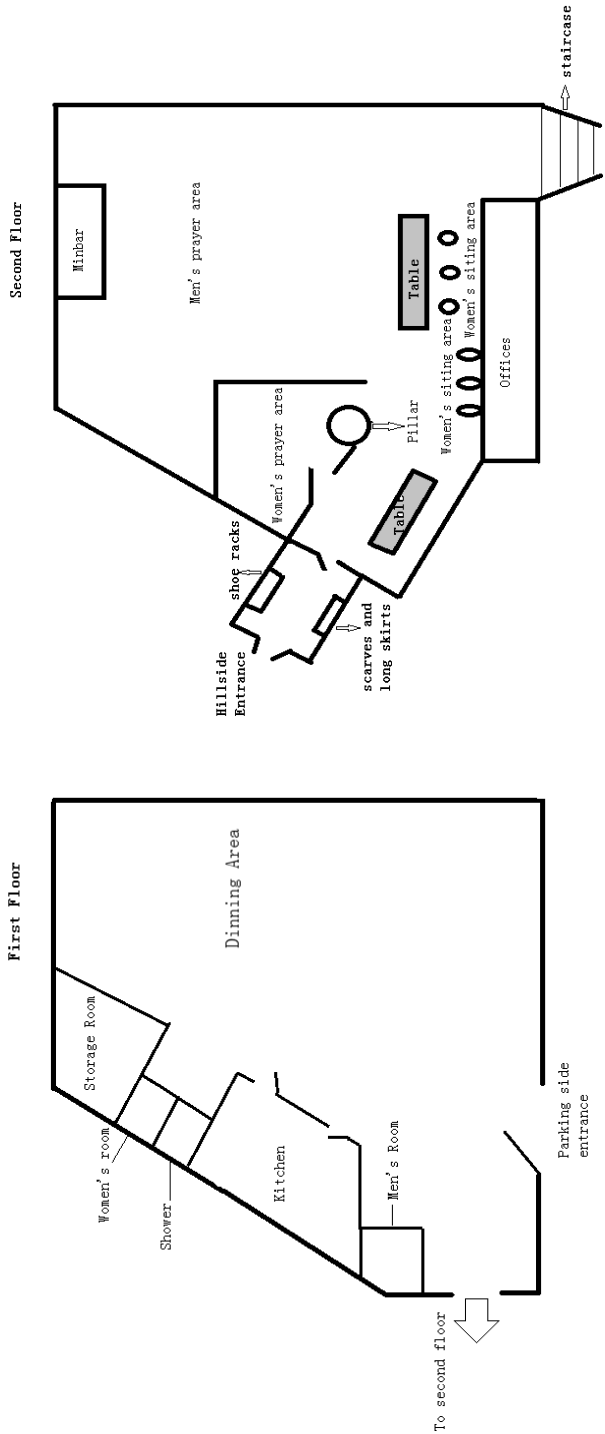

Figure 1.1 Riverside Mosque floor plan.

to raise funds for mosque maintenance and other expenses. We happily accepted her offer and said "*salaam* (peace)" to her as the equivalent of "see you later."

We took off our shoes and searched for spots to place them, as the floor at the entrance was heavily cluttered by unorganized shoes of all kinds and sizes. I was not surprised by this untidiness because I had seen this scene in other mosques as well. As we climbed the stairs, a few more women entered through the same door we had just come through, exchanging greetings with each other. At the top of two flights of stairs was the prayer hall. A donation box and several piles of booklets and printouts in various sizes were spread out on two tables against the wall to the right. At the far end of the hall, an Imam in a white robe and white *kufi*, standing in front of the *mihrab* (prayer niche) next to the *minbar* (pulpit or stage), was delivering *khutba* or sermon in English with a distinctive Urdu/Hindi accent. He was speaking about a *hadith* (prophet's words and behaviors) and explaining how Muslims should learn from this *hadith* and apply it to their everyday lives in this world.

The boiling heat had vanished completely. The prayer hall seemed spacious under the dome and was lit brightly by the sunshine cast through the windows. Screens on the far left end delineated a separate prayer area for women. I saw roughly fifty men as I glanced toward the men's prayer area. Some people were standing offering prayers, two elderly men were sitting in chairs, while everyone else was simply sitting on the carpet, concentrating and listening. Three women were sitting by a rectangular table behind the men against the wall. There was no screen keeping them from seeing the Imam—another interesting discovery about this mosque. As I passed by, we smiled at each other and exchanged greetings. All three of them were fair-skinned, but I could not tell their ethnicities without speaking to them. One woman was probably in her sixties, while the other two were probably in their forties or early fifties.

Instead of joining them, I walked toward the screen. I knew I would see more women on the other side of the screen like I would in a typical mosque in this country. Indeed, the dark pink mobile panels standing on the left hand corner of the prayer hall marked out a small area—about one-fifth of the prayer hall—for women to listen to the *khutba* and perform ritual prayers. Behind the screen, around ten women and several teenage girls were either sitting on the carpet or offering prayers. Several toddlers and young children—both boys and girls—were playing around their mothers. Gender segregation in Muslim societies is not anything new. But gender division in mosques did not become a big issue until they were transplanted to Western soil. Since women are not required by the religion to pray in mosque, it has become a norm for women to pray at home, given women's traditional roles that are tied to the households. Many women in Muslim countries have never set foot in a mosque. However, unprecedentedly, more and more immigrant Muslim women in the United States are now attending mosques on a regular basis. In addition, Western converts to Islam often actively participate in mosque

activities and affairs. For female converts, attending mosque is an important way to maintain their newly found faith and it naturally becomes part of their weekly routine. The gendered spatial arrangements within mosques in the West have not only been a major target of Western media, politicians, and scholars, but are also contested among Muslims themselves, especially women. People from different backgrounds come to different understandings of gender relations in Islam. However, I was still surprised by the existence of the two sitting areas for women in Riverside Mosque.

As I walked toward women's prayer area, I also noticed that the mosque's designer had made a smart use of geographical characteristics to facilitate gender divisions. Since half of the Mosque was built on the hill and half on the ground, the architect had placed a door on the hill side facing the passing traffic, while placing the other door on the ground level facing the parking lot. The women's prayer area was close to the hill-side door, while the men's section was close to the stairs that lead to the ground level entrance/exit. The two doors made it convenient to practice gender division. This design allows women to enter and exit the mosque with minimum interactions with men. However, the door on the ground level also leads to the kitchen—traditionally women's territory—dining area, and restrooms. Therefore, entering the mosque from the ground level was not abnormal for women, as I discovered when I entered and received friendly greetings from the men. It seemed to me that in this mosque, women had the option of whether or not to adhere strictly to the "screen rule." It also seemed that this arrangement came out of some kind of compromise, given that gender division is the norm in Muslim societies.

I picked a corner at the back and sat down on the carpet against the wall so that I did not have to walk in front of women who were offering prayers. I could tell the adults and teenagers were mostly Arabs, South Asians, Blacks, and Whites. These women were quietly listening to the sermon most of the time. But once in a while, a couple of them would turn around and whisper something into each other's ear. Although people were expected not to talk to each other during the time of *khutba*, women sitting behind the screen were apparently less compliant. Young children were playing around their mothers. Some were busy with their toys muttering baby words, while others were not so obedient. Several boys were chasing each other and making funny noises. Their mothers had to take them out of the prayer area a few times to stop them from disturbing others. When hearing the *adan* (call for prayer), the women sitting in the two different areas all stood up and converged into rows behind the screens, shoulder to shoulder to perform *salat* (Muslim prayer), which ended the Friday *Jummah* prayer. Once they had completed their prayers, the people stood up and greeted each other with hugs and kisses on both cheeks. Some left in a hurry, but many stayed to chat and catch up with people they rarely met outside the mosque.

This was my first encounter with Muslims in Riverside who gathered for the weekly religious ritual that day, but studying this group of people tied to

the two-story building—many of whom I later became friends with—was not on my mind at that time. The more time I spent with the people of Riverside Mosque, the more I wanted to analyze their stories through the eyes of a sociologist who is intrigued by the role religion plays in immigrants' adaptation to American society. My journey with the Riverside Muslim community started that sunny Friday afternoon and eventually developed into this three-year ethnographic study. The glimpse that I caught of the mosque and its people during my first visit would later become important themes in my research. The racial and ethnic diversity of members and the loosely maintained gender segregation have an important impact on the intergroup relations within the mosque, which will be elucidated in the following chapters. Before embarking on any further analysis, I now turn to a brief introduction of the city of Riverside and the history of its Muslim residents, Islamic centers, and mosques.

THE CITY OF RIVERSIDE AND ITS MUSLIM RESIDENTS

Riverside, a mid-sized city in the heart of the United States, is the home of more than two hundred Muslim families, many of whom are involved in this study. The total residential population of the city of Riverside and its immediate vicinities reached around 200,000 at the time of my study. About half of that population, just under 110,000 people, resided in the city of Riverside. Among them, 65 percent were White; 25 percent were African American; 1 percent were Asian and Pacific Islander; and 8 percent were Native American, mixed, and other races. Hispanics/Latinos of any race were 8.5percent of the total population (See Figure 1.2).[7] The median household income of Riverside in 2000 was less than $33,000, and per capita income was about $17,000.[8] The state itself stood somewhere in the middle among the fifty U.S. states in terms of its median

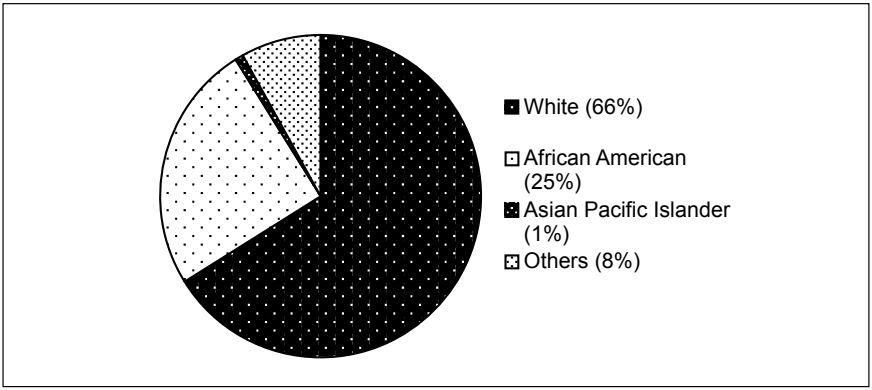

Figure 1.2 Basic demographic characteristics of Riverside.

income between the years 2003 and 2005.[9] Most low-income Riversiders, disproportionately African American and Latino, resided in the west side of the city; whereas the majority of middle and upper-middle class residents, usually White and Asian, tended to purchase their homes in the quiet outskirts north of the city or around the up and coming business center south of the city. The Latino population has been increasing steadily in recent years, forming some predominately Latino neighborhoods dotted across the city premise.

Built in the nineteenth century, Riverside flourished as it became home to several large industrial manufacturers and higher educational institutions. Its geographic proximity to Detroit and Chicago, the two automotive manufacturing centers at that time, granted it the opportunity to prosper from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. However, like many other industrial cities of its time, Riverside endured the consequences of the decline in the manufacturing industry nationwide. The dams on the river that runs through Riverside and the abandoned factories south of downtown are the only reminders of the city's glorious past during the Industrial Age. Riverside's economy is now sustained largely by education and health care. Its universities, hospitals, clinics, and laboratory facilities are attractive to highly-skilled immigrants.

Religion is an important element in people's life in Riverside. The residents have established numerous places for worship and formed various religious organizations. In addition to more than fifty churches of a variety of Christian denominations and national origins, there are also three Synagogues and five Islamic centers and mosques. Among the higher education institutions and schools in Riverside and surrounding areas, quite a few were founded by religious institutions. Given the influence of religious organizations, Riverside is also one of the major destinations of refugees and asylum seekers from war-torn regions in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere. A steady influx of refugees escaping ethnic conflict or political persecution from predominately Muslim countries contributes to the growing Muslim community in the city and the expansion of Muslim social networks, which in turn attracts even more Muslim immigrants.

THE OLDEST ISLAMIC CENTER

Four Islamic centers had been established in Riverside prior to my research[10]—Downtown Islamic Center, Westside Islamic Center, Madinah *Masjid*,[11] and Riverside Mosque. The primary ethnography site of my research was Riverside Mosque. Downtown Islamic Center, the oldest Islamic center in Riverside, was established in the 1960s by a small group of African American Muslims. They were followers of Imam Wallace D. Muhammad who broke away from the Nation of Islam and led his supporters back to orthodoxy Sunni Islam. Throughout the last half century, Downtown Islamic Center has served the local African American Muslim

community and was the sole Muslim voice speaking to the non-Muslim neighbors in the city until Riverside Mosque was built.

However, schisms occurred within Downtown Islamic Center due to contending opinions and understandings of theological issues. Subsequent conflicts among the leaders led to the appearance of two more Islamic centers, both of which primarily serve African American Muslims in the area. The three African American Islamic centers are all located in predominately African American neighborhoods in the southwest side of the city. Downtown Islamic Center has a physical building—a house purchased from its prior owner, while the other two are based in rented places for worship services and occasional social gatherings. Westside Islamic Center rents the basement of a community center, and Madinah *Masjid* rents a single room in a church. Despite Downtown Islamic Center's loss of membership due to schisms and various other factors, it remained the largest Islamic center until the establishment of Riverside Mosque in 1994 and is still the largest African American Muslim congregation in the area.

Imam Kareem, the leader of Downtown Islamic Center, is a respected man in his seventies. During one of our conversations on the playground of Riverside Mosque on a Sunday afternoon in September 2004, Imam Kareem insisted on calling his house of worship an "Islamic center" instead of a "mosque," conveying his deepest concern about the influence of Arab-centric Islam in the United States. He pointed to the two-story yellow brick building of Riverside Mosque and spoke with an emotional tone, "This was built with the Saudi money. I don't like that. They are making all the mosques look the same." Imam Kareem is worried about the influence of some Arab countries in American Muslim communities and believes that financial donations from overseas are usually charged with certain missions such as radicalizing American Muslims. He believes that Islam is a universal religion and has been able to adapt to American culture and the English language. He dislikes the gender segregation that is strictly performed in immigrant mosques and certain religious practices that have been "contaminated" by ethnic cultures.

Throughout the years, Imam Kareem and his community members have been struggling to maintain their Islamic Center, a dilapidated house located in the west side of downtown Riverside that has been gradually converted into a place of worship throughout the years. Although the community is only able to maintain the house at the minimal level due to the unstable financial situations of many of its members, Imam Kareem is quite proud of the absence of gender segregation in his congregation. In Downtown Islamic Center, Imam Kareem often speaks about racial discrimination and social problems African Americans experience on a daily basis, ranging from institutionalized discrimination against African Americans in the job market and the inadequate health care and social welfare system, to religious conversions among African Americans in prison.

I later discovered that although his allegation that Riverside Mosque was built with Saudi money was actually based on false information, Imam Kareem's resentment toward foreign influence reflects the tension between the indigenous and immigrant Muslim communities. Unlike immigrant Muslims who tend to maintain their transnational ties, most African American Muslims sincerely hope for a Muslim community that is truly integrated into American society and a religion that will ultimately eradicate racial discrimination. After 9/11, Imam Kareem became one of the speakers representing the local Muslim population. He was regularly invited to deliver lectures and answer questions about Islam in the religious program on a local television channel.

THE OLDEST MUSLIM FAMILY

Although African American Muslims were the first to establish an Islamic center in Riverside, the Muslim immigrants from the falling Ottoman Empire who arrived at the American shores at the end of nineteenth century were the earliest Muslim residents in the city. Coming from present-day Syria, the Ali family was the first Muslim family settled in Riverside.[12] I met the third-generation American-born Abe Ali at a regular Friday *Jummah* in the fall of 2004. Abe wore a long flowing robe and covered her hair with a braided white turban under a black quadrilateral scarf. She and her family had just moved back to Riverside about two years ago after spending more than a decade working and raising children on the East Coast. Abe obtained both her bachelor's degree and master's degree in chemistry from a prestigious private university in the 1980s. She married her Syrian-born husband soon after graduation and had been married for over ten years. They raised four children—three boys and one girl, who were deeply proud of their Syrian American heritage. Abe later introduced me to her paternal aunt, *Hajja* Eva.[13] *Hajja* Eva, who was in her sixties, belongs to the second-generation of the Ali family. I visited her in her house located in a quiet neighborhood about five miles southeast of Riverside Mosque. *Hajja* Eva told me the story of her family in the dining room, which was cluttered with baby toys belonging to her grandchildren.

Hajja Eva's father first came to the United States at the age of fifteen along with his four brothers from a small village in today's Syria in the early 1900s. Her father and uncles worked as street vendors in Ohio where there was a sizable Muslim community. Once they made some money, the Ali brothers returned home to get married. The brothers planned to start family businesses together in Syria with the money they made in the United States. But one of them longed for a different life in the New World. After getting married to a young Syrian woman, instead of joining the family business, Eva's father returned to Ohio with his wife and opened a small grocery store. Eva's mother was eighteen years old when she got married

and did not speak any English when she came to the United States. She raised five children and maintained the house with little help from her husband, who worked hard to provide for the family of seven. Throughout the years, she learned English from her neighbors and children.

In the 1920s, Eva's father got an opportunity to work in a large manufacturing company based in Riverside. He closed his small grocery store and moved his family to St. Paul, a small town adjacent to Riverside. He bought a modest house in a quiet neighborhood and the Ali family has been living there ever since. As the years passed by and the Ali children grew up and got married, the family purchased most of the houses on the block. Eva pointed me to the house right across the street that her father purchased when they first moved to St. Paul. Now, this house belongs to one of Eva's brothers. In some sense, the block had become a small Syrian village.

Education is very important to the Ali family. Although Eva's father could not afford to send his children to college, all of them finished high school before starting to work. Most of the Ali children worked in the same factory where their father worked until 2000 when it was shut down due to financial difficulties. Although the closing of the factory left most of the Ali family without a job for a while, Eva proudly told me that the third and fourth generations have been doing better and better, like her niece, Abe.

When Eva's family first arrived in St. Paul, there were a number of Arab families in town. Although they were all Christians, Eva's family still had very good relations with them. Despite their differences in terms of religious beliefs, they were very close to each other because of their shared language and Arab culture. Eva told me that culture and tradition have been very important to her family. While growing up, the Ali children were never allowed to speak English at home. Eva's mother kept this rule strictly. Eva recalled that the children were not allowed to eat if they spoke English at home. As a result, all the children were able to speak Arabic fluently. Once Eva and her sister reached the age of marriage, their parents took them back to Syria to look for their future husbands. Eva and her sister both got married during a trip at the end of 1950s and came back to the United States with their Syrian-born husbands. Their brothers also married women from Syria. This tradition has been kept alive in the family, at least until Abe's generation. Eva thought that it would be hard to marry somebody from another culture. Because many Syrian American families had lost their traditions, there was no other option for children in the Ali family but to marry Muslims who were properly raised in Syria.

As part of the tradition, religion has been well preserved in the family. Eva's mother taught her children everything about Islam, from how to pray to how to recite the Qur'an. The family used to drive many hours to Detroit to purchase *halal* meat and other produces.[14] The entire family diligently observed fasting for a whole month every year during *Ramadan*. However, as the only Muslim family in town at that time, it was difficult to practice their religion without a community of believers living close by. When Eva

grew up, there was no mosque in the area except a Shi'a mosque about fifty miles away. The family went there a few times. However, they eventually stopped going there because of the long distance and the irreconcilable differences between Sunni and Shi'a traditions.

Eva told me that her mother did not wear a real *hijab* like other Arab Muslim women for most of her life. She showed me an old photograph of her mother in her thirties wearing a beautiful crocheted bonnet. Trying to blend in, Eva and her sister did not cover their hair either. However, as they grew older, they became more and more religious. In the 1980s, Eva and her husband made *hajj* to Mecca three times.[15] Her sister made *hajj* too around the same time and started wearing *hijab* on a daily basis after she returned home from Mecca. Although Eva did not cover her hair, she became deeply involved in the growing Muslim community in Riverside in the 1980s. She raised about thirteen thousand dollars for the mosque construction and became one of the founders of Riverside Mosque. During the last decade, she served as treasurer of the mosque and helped in the Sunday school. Although she was no longer involved in mosque administration in recent years, she became quite active in inter-faith activities with local Christian women and volunteered in the local children's museum. Eva told me that the third and fourth generations in the Ali family had also found their ways to embrace their religious roots while living within a non-Muslim society. She was very proud that Abe started wearing *hijab* after getting married and Abe's daughter, a sixth-grader, had also willingly put on *hijab* when she turned ten.

A GROWING COMMUNITY AND THE BIRTH OF RIVERSIDE MOSQUE

As Abe grew up, there were still no Muslim community gatherings in the Riverside area. Although Downtown Islamic Center had been established by then, the immigrant families had no knowledge of the existence of African American Muslims, let alone taking part in their activities. There were neither Friday congregational prayers, nor community *Eid al-Fitr* celebrations or Sunday schools.[16] Occasionally, Abe's father would drive the children to the Shi'a mosque where he used to go as a child. The Ali family remained one of the few immigrant Muslim families in the area until the 1970s. During the last three decades, however, the Muslim population in Riverside has grown significantly. With the influx of South Asian professionals mostly working in local health and medical facilities, Muslim international students pursuing further education at the colleges and universities in Riverside, and the arrival of Bosnian refugees in the 1990s, the community had started to take shape. The number of Muslim families in Riverside has grown by ten-fold, from about twenty in the early 1980s to more than two hundred by 2004.[17]

Throughout the 1980s, Muslim families in the area often used the community center in a residential complex for Friday *Jummah* services, Sunday school classes, and religious festival celebrations. Social gatherings were hosted by local Muslim families in their homes. There was neither a full-time Imam nor a formal Sunday school program. Men took turns to deliver *khutba* (sermon) during Friday *Jummah* prayers, while women took the responsibilities of educating their American-born children. Occasionally, the community would invite Imams from more established communities in other cities to lead the *Jummah* prayers and preside at holy festival celebrations. Most of the time, however, Muslim families in Riverside voluntarily gathered together and practiced their religion without a mosque or a regular Imam. From the very beginning, this Muslim community was marked by diversity. While these Muslims initially gathered together more out of need than choice, they have developed an ethos favoring diversity through interacting with people of different skin colors and varied religious practices.

The Riverside Muslim community grew gradually. By the end of 1980s, the key members of the community spearheaded a plan to search for a location to build "a real community center." The leader of the team was Dr. Mohammed, a Pakistani medical scientist working in a local medical laboratory. The community was still in its childhood at that time and the team knew that it would not be an easy task to raise enough funds to build a new Mosque. As a result, they set out to find a place that could be easily converted into a place of worship and a community center simultaneously, such as a vacant school building, community center, or large house. After a long and frustrating search, the team made the difficult and bold move to achieve their dream of establishing a real Islamic center for their children and many generations to come. The "search plan" was replaced by a construction blueprint for a new mosque, designed by an Iranian architect living in Riverside. The community pooled their money and pleaded for donations from mosques and Islamic organizations around the country. It was a difficult time. Dr. Mohammed, although very busy with his research, took many trips to mosques in the greater Chicago and Detroit areas asking for donations.

Their hard work and perseverance finally paid off. With the generous donations from Muslim families in Riverside and help from other Muslim communities around the country, the community successfully purchased a one-acre lot on Adam Street close to the business center of the city. Within a year, the construction was completed. The new two-story yellow brick building became a place of worship and a community center for the growing Muslim population in Riverside and its vicinity. A prayer hall, an office, and a meeting room occupied the upper level, while the lower level was designed to be a community center equipped with a kitchen, dining hall, bathrooms, and additional office and storage spaces (see Figure 1.1 for the floor plan). In order to blend in, the architect did not erect the minarets, which would make this place excessively conspicuous.

Katie—a White convert—and her Palestinian husband were among the first few people who visited the mosque when it was still under construction. The space inside the building was amazingly large to Katie. She told me that, when she stood at the center of the prayer hall, she felt so proud that her community had built this mosque from scratch. Katie's family and many other Muslim families in the area celebrated the completion of their mosque by celebrating the *Eid al-Fitr* of 1994 as a community for the first time. The completion of Riverside Mosque symbolizes the strong religious devotion of Muslims in Riverside and the strength of Muslim brotherhood and sisterhood in the United States. Although the mosque was not designed in such a way as some people in the community had desired to separate women and men strictly abiding by the traditions in their home countries, everyone was rejoiced to have a mosque of their own—a monument symbolizing the strength of Riverside's Muslim community.

The completion of Riverside Mosque marked the formation of the Riverside Islamic Society that later became affiliated with the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). An elected committee comprised of nine registered community members, known as *Majlis al-Shūra* or the Mosque Executive Board, manages the community and mosque affairs. In 1997, the committee hired a full-time Imam, Imam Siddiqui, to serve as its religious leader. In the process of incorporating with ISNA, the Board of Directors drafted and approved a mosque constitution and bylaws, and adopted a membership system to ensure the sustainable growth of the community. Each member, usually a household, is expected to pay a small membership fee annually. Although the Imam is a standing member of the Executive Board, the president of the mosque management committee has always been an elected lay member of the community. The Sunday school principal and teachers are volunteers who spend three hours every Sunday morning to teach children the Qur'an, *hadith*, Islamic history, as well as colloquial Arabic. The Imam and other learned people from the community developed a religious education curriculum suitable for children growing up in American society. While ensuring that religion is properly passed down to the next generation, the parents also hope their children's primary social networks will remain within the Muslim community. The formation of Riverside Islamic Society as a non-profit religious organization symbolizes the transformation of two hundred scattered Muslim families in the Riverside area into a single unified religious community.

THE MOSAIC

The Riverside Muslim community grew rapidly during the decade after the mosque was built. The major sources of growth included the high birth rate and the increasing number of families that moved to Riverside due to employment and business opportunities. In addition, some Muslims families living

as far as fifty miles away also became regular members; they were attracted by the spacious mosque and its religious educational programs. The number of South Asian members grew steadily and more Arab families settled down during the 1990s. About one dozen families from Uganda, Sudan, Somalia, Algeria, and South Africa arrived at the end of 1990s. In addition, there was a growing number of White converts, often women who married Muslim men. Most noticeably, a sizable Bosnian Muslim community formed following the devastating Bosnian War, which broke out in the early 1990s forcing thousands of Bosnian Muslims to seek refuge in the United States (Coughlan and Owens-Manley 2006). Furthermore, the number of temporary immigrants in Riverside also increased as a result of the growing number of international students enrolled at local universities, further diversifying the ethnic composition of the mosque. Within a decade, Riverside Mosque grew into the center of religious and community life serving more than two hundred Muslim families from more than thirty countries living within a fifty-mile radius. Its membership is not only comprised of Muslims from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds but also those of varied social, occupational, and educational backgrounds. Moreover, although Riverside Mosque is a predominately Sunni immigrant mosque, it also welcomes Shi'a Muslims and indigenous African American Muslims.

South Asians, Arabs, Bosnians, Africans (including a few African Americans), and White converts represent the five major racial/ethnic groups in Riverside Mosque. Based on attendances at regular Friday *Jummah*, prayer services on religious holidays, and community gatherings, South Asians and Arabs—each making up about 35 percent of the community population—are the two biggest ethnic groups in the community. Bosnians make up about 20 percent of the community's population, followed by Africans (about 7 percent), White converts (about 2 percent), and others (1 percent).

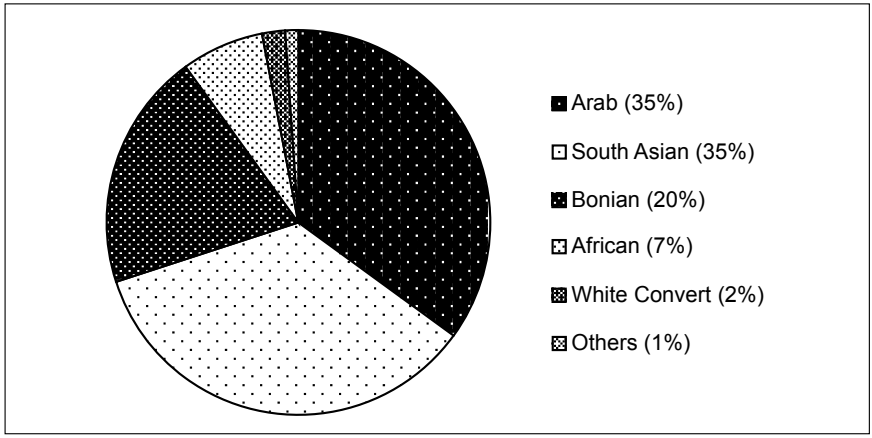

Figure 1.3 Estimated racial/ethnic composition of Riverside Mosque.

South Asians tend to be well-established physicians, engineers, and other highly-skilled professionals. They usually have post-secondary or graduate degrees and are fluent in the English language. In terms of religious practices, the majority of South Asians who attend Riverside Mosque are Sunni Muslims and follow the theological school of *Hanafi*, which is considered the oldest and most liberal school of law in Sunni Islamic tradition. A few South Asian Shi'a families also attend the mosque, mostly because of the mosque's proximity to their residences. South Asians have been Muslims for more than a thousand years. Prayers and fasts have been the most important elements in their religious lives. Although many South Asians can read the Arabic scripture in the Holy Qur'an, most of them are not capable of understanding the meaning of the verses. Therefore, South Asian parents are particularly keen on providing their children with a well-rounded religious education. During the time of my study, a number of South Asian children achieved the status of *hafiz*—Muslims who completely memorize the Qur'an—with the help of Imam Siddiqui. Since South Asians, on average, are financially better off than other racial/ethnic groups in the community, they are able to contribute more to community activities such as hosting social gatherings and holiday celebrations, and in the area of mosque maintenance. Consequently, South Asians have gained considerable influence in the community and played key roles in governing the mosque and community affairs.

There are almost an equal number of Arab and South Asian families in Riverside. However, the Arabs seem less active in participating in community activities compared to the South Asians. On average, Arab families in Riverside are more likely to be involved in small-scale family businesses and are more likely to describe themselves as "working middle class." Although they are financially comfortable, they tend to be less affluent than South Asians. Moreover, they are less likely to engage with the larger Riverside community. Although many South Asian and Arab women are stay-at-home mothers, South Asian women tend to be more actively involved in community activities and many are regular volunteers in various charitable organizations. In contrast, other than taking care of children, many Arab women also help out their family businesses, which leaves them with little time and energy to participate in activities outside the household. Nevertheless, solely being an Arab and being fluent in Arabic offers incomparable religious capital for Arabs to exert considerable influence in the community affairs, especially when religion is involved. Arabs are proud of their shared ethnic heritage with Prophet Mohammed, speaking the same language in which the Holy Qur'an was written, and sharing the national or ethnic bond with people who are the guardians of the Holy City of Mecca. Many Arabs with whom I spoke to admit that they feel very fortunate to be able to read and understand the Qur'an, and they feel that they are obligated to help others who may not understand the words of God. They feel that they can understand and interpret the verses better than others and are thus more qualified and capable to play a pivotal role in the mosque. This

sense of superiority may exist in the subconscious; it nevertheless leads to conflicts in the community at various occasions.

The influence of Bosnians in the community has been quite limited, especially in the decision-making process. The communist rule prohibited many Bosnians from receiving rigorous religious education. To many Bosnians, Islam was nothing more than part of their ethnic culture until they were forcefully dislocated during the genocidal war in which many of their families and friends were killed because of their religious affiliation. As refugees of war, many of them came to the United States without necessary preparations in education and language. The socioeconomic status of many Bosnian families dropped drastically compared to that prior to their migration. The deteriorating financial situation requires every member of the family to bring home paychecks. Almost all Bosnians women work outside the household in order to help the family make ends meet. Except for some young adults who spent most of their lives in the United States and children who were born after their parents migrated to the United States, many Bosnians speak little or no English, which seriously impairs their ability to achieve financial stability or to become active participants in the mosque. Although less involved in community activities, Bosnians have maintained high attendance rates at religious services such as Friday *Jummah* prayers, *Ramadan Taraweeh* prayers, and *Eid* celebrations.[18] South Asians and Arabs both see Bosnians as brothers and sisters who are an indispensable part of the Riverside Muslim community. Integrating Bosnians into the community has been one of the priorities of the Mosque Executive Board. As a result, Bosnians became increasingly visible in the mosque during my research and a Bosnian man was selected to serve on the Board of Directors.

Compared to other members of the community, the recent immigrants from African countries are new to Riverside. Although some of them have lived in this area for about ten years, they generally remain peripheral when comes to mosque administration and community affairs. Two factors contribute to this lack of participation among African immigrants. First, many families are refugees of civil wars and were mostly brought to Riverside by various NGOs (non-governmental organizations). Many of them lack the necessary skills and educational credentials to find employment immediately. Like the Bosnians, financial instability hinders their ability to partake in community activities. Second, although the Riverside Muslim community is quite diverse, the mosque is still dominated by two major ethnic groups—South Asians and Arabs. Some of the African Muslims expressed a sense of alienation and marginalization in our conversations, which may explain their reluctance to participate in community activities. Moreover, since African immigrants are small in number—unlike the Bosnians—the Mosque Executive Board has failed to make any tangible effort to integrate them into the community.

Leaders of Riverside Mosque also tried to integrate African American Muslims into the community. However, African American Muslims have

not been very enthusiastic given their different priorities and concerns, as well as different religious practices, such as their resistance to gender segregation. Although some African American Muslims come to pray in Riverside Mosque occasionally, the three African American Islamic Centers in the southwest side of the town are still their primary places for worship and social gatherings.

Most White converts in the community are females. During my research the number of White converts fluctuated due to moving and other reasons. I met ten White women who had converted to Islam. Some of them converted to Islam before marriage; while some converted after marrying Muslim men. Some of them were agnostic before finding faith in Islam; while some were raised in Catholic families. Although they share similar experiences of religious conversion, their religious practices vary widely. Two of the women, referred to as *niqabis*, are completely covered from head to toe with a full set of *niqab*.[19] Two other women remain in their Western style clothing and only cover their hair inside the mosque or during prayers. The rest either wear floor length *abaya* or *jilbab*, or South Asian *salwa kameez*. They cover their hair but not their faces and hands. One woman who married an Arab Muslim man retained her Christian faith. In spite of that, she was an active participant in inter-faith dialogues and community activities. Since these converts are native English speakers, they have become an important asset to the community. Some of them played key roles in organizing inter-faith programs after 9/11. Others are frequently invited to give talks about Islam to non-Muslim audiences in the area.

To some extent, Muslims in Riverside and their Islamic centers and mosques are a microcosm of the diverse Muslim population in the United States. Muslim minorities in the United States come from a wide range of countries; are of diverse races and ethnicities; attach to different cultural heritages; are affected by divergent migration experiences; belong to varied socio-economic status; and adhere to conflicting religious beliefs, practices, and political ideologies. They are now sharing the American public space. Their existence in their own country is being challenged and even threatened. Their religious beliefs, practices, and everyday experiences are also undergoing significant changes as the backlash that emerged in the aftermath of 9/11 continues to permeate the lives of ordinary Muslims. The following chapters will investigate how Muslims of diverse backgrounds in Riverside interact with each other within their mosque, how they negotiate their relationships with non-Muslims, and how they struggle to understand their religious and social lives in the mosque as well as the larger society against the backdrop of post-9/11 political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. In the process of negotiating the meanings of "Americanness" and "Muslimness," multiple identities collide with each other while boundaries are redrawn and alliances shift along different lines.

O Mankind! We have created you from male and female, and have made you Nations and tribes, that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware.

—Qur'an 49:13

2 A Mosque Divided

After finishing *khutba* and before starting *salat-ul-Jummah*,[1] Imam Siddiqui announced that a community dinner was going to be held in the evening between *asr* and *maghrib* prayers.[2] Everyone was welcome to join the dinner, meet friends, and be part of the "big family." "Food has been prepared by some families in the community. They have put a lot of work into it. So, please tell each other about the party. Please come. And, if you'd like, you can bring a side dish to share." Imam Siddiqui said. As soon as Imam made the announcement, Eman, my new friend and the second daughter of an Arab physician, turned to me and asked, "Are you coming?" "Yes, I will." I answered and quickly added, "*Insh'Allah*."[3] "Oh, you are gonna love the food. My mom made *Baba ghanouje* and Spinach pie,"[4] said Eman hoping to get a firmer answer from me. She added, "They taste so good, and they are NOT spicy." She made a face to me while making the last comment. Of course, I understood what she meant, Indo-Paki dishes are usually way too hot for Arabs to handle. Eman once told me that she just could not understand why Indians and Pakistanis even add chili powder to their fruit salad.

I was early and Eman had not arrived. On the kitchen counter stood a bowl of fruit *chaat*, a typical South Asian spicy fruit salad.[5] It is a mixture of all sorts of cubed fruits such as apple, pear, grape, orange, banana, and pomegranate seeds, seasoned with a little bit of salt, mango juice, yogurt, and finally the indispensable *chaat masala*.[6] The taste of the fruit *chaat* is something beyond description. It is not any type of ordinary fruit salad. It is easy to distinguish the different types of fruit, and yet, it is hard to detect their individual flavor. The light coating formed by the mango juice and yogurt mixture, together with the *chaat masala*, overrides the taste of the fruit in the bowl and creates an aroma and great color that will definitely stimulate the appetite.

Saba, a young Indian lady, was busy setting up tables in the dining area. We said "*Salaam*" and hugged each other. "Wow, I just love the fruit *chaat*," I pointed at the fruit bowl sitting on the kitchen counter. Saba smiled, "Oh, that's great! But, you know, many Arabs don't like it. Bosnians don't like it either. They think it's crazy to put so many spices in fruit." She shrugged

and went to the kitchen to get more cups while I helped move the chairs. Saba came back and continued, "I only added a pinch of *chaat masala* this time, so people won't complain that much. I'll just put extra [*chaat masala*] in my own bowl. Honestly, I don't really like Arab food; it's too plain."

I often recalled this episode vividly throughout my study. The seemingly insignificant preferences for food reflect many important differences that exist in Riverside Mosque and its diverse Muslim community. Although often viewed as a mundane aspect of human life, a number of studies show that food plays a central role in preserving ethnic cultures, creating social cohesion within a community, and reinforcing ethnic and religious identities (Orsi 1985; Goldsmith 1989; Flores 1994; Dodson and Gilkes 1995; León 1998). Preference for certain food may be an individual matter; however, to some extent, this preference refracts the differences across ethnic cultures. Riverside Mosque is comprised of immigrants of multiple ethnic backgrounds. A majority of the community members, both first-generation immigrants and their American-born children, still maintain close ties to the village, the city, and the country from which they or their parents emigrated. Ethnic cultures have been kept alive in the community.

At first look, many differences within Riverside Mosque appear to be based on racial and ethnic particularities. Much of the conflict seems to originate from racial/ethnic differences usually related to customs, traditions, and languages. The taste buds of different ethnic groups can be used as a metaphor to look into the divergent beliefs and practices that exist in the community. Indeed, the competing views of Islamic dressing code, the timing of *Ramadan* and *Eid*, Sunday school programs, community activities, and mosque management tend to be primarily divided along racial and ethnic lines. Sarah, a White convert and one of my interlocutors in the study, was worried about the unity of her community. She told me that her community is divided, and this division is largely based on race and ethnicity. For her, racial/ethnic differences set up the stage for conflict. She said,

> The Muslim community in Riverside has been apparently divided into blocks of ethnic groups. People all have a strong sense of subgroup identity, though I don't know how pervasive this kind of mentality is. But, obviously, Arabs, as native speakers of Arabic and the keepers of the Holy place, always have a feeling of superiority over other racial/ethnic groups. Indo-Paki women are usually more sophisticated than Arab women and usually think that Arab women are under the thumbs of their husbands.

In this racially and ethnically mixed mosque, even many differences based on religiosity are overgeneralized and quickly linked to ethnic cultures. For example, criticisms toward women who are immodestly dressed are often made with regard to ethnic cultures instead of individual religiosity.

Wahida, a female immigrant from Palestine, described the "cultural shock" she experienced in Riverside Mosque when she first arrived at the end of 1990s. She said,

> I saw South Asian girls wearing tight jeans and short sweaters at the *Jummah*. I was shocked. When they bow down, their skins were shown. It was so ugly, *astaghfirullah*.[7] I told my girls not to follow those [South Asian] girls. We should wear long clothes, especially when making *salat*. Those [South Asian] girls also wear nail polish. You can't wear nail polish because you can't make *wudoo*.[8] Their parents don't say anything to them . . . Arabs are much better in disciplining their daughters.

Ateeq, a South Asian man in his early thirties who worked for a local IT company, also thought that ethnic cultures play a determinant role in shaping people's views of gender relations. He said,

> Bosnians are pretty westernized and very much influenced by European cultures. At the [community] dinners hosted by Bosnian families, there would be no screen or something like that. Family would sit together. Men and women are not segregated. At the [community] dinners hosted by Arabs, women and men are strictly segregated and families don't sit together. South Asians are almost the same.

Ihsan, a South Asian student at a university in Riverside, shared Ateeq's opinion. He told me that he was shocked after the *Eid* prayer service when he saw some young Bosnian men and women hug each other and kiss each other on the cheeks. Although he later found out that they were actually cousins, he said that it was still not appropriate to show such affection toward the opposite sex in public, especially in the house of Allah. He came to a sweeping conclusion that "Bosnians are too liberal." Similar comments were made by South Asians about Arabs, then by Arabs about South Asians, then by South Asians about African Americans, and so on and so forth.

Mixing ethnic cultures with religion is not uncommon, since religious practices and ethnic cultures are often closely intertwined. Geertz (1973) defines religion as a cultural system, which includes a system of symbols, moods, motivations, clothing, etc. More specifically, "all religious expressions are embedded in particular cultural forms, so individuals experience God through culturally specific media" (Christiano et al. 2002:174). The recognition that religion and culture is intimately related echoes Émile Durkheim's (2001[1912]) argument that many roots of culture are found in religion. Numerous studies on ethnic religious institutions in the United States provide ample evidence of the strong connections between religion and culture. Immigrants not only reproduce ethnic cultures in their religious institutions, but also redefine their religious selves in the process

of adapting to the mainstream American culture and becoming American (Vecoli 1964, 1969; Dolan 1972; Abramson 1973; Choy 1979; Kim 1981; Williams 1988; Hurh and Kim 1990; Min 1992; Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Chen 2008). A single ethnic group typically dominates mosques and Islamic centers established during the last century in the United States, and Islam is often practiced in the context of a specific ethnic culture. The trend of returning to the theological roots in new immigrant religions has led to an increase of racially and ethnically diverse membership in immigrant religious institutions (Yang and Ebaugh 2001). Nevertheless, immigrants' religious experiences—including that of Muslim immigrants—are still deeply influenced by ethnic cultures and the larger social, cultural, and political conditions in which ethnic and religious immigrant minorities are situated.

However, a closer look at the intricate interrelations in Riverside Mosque propelled me to examine the competing religious views that cut across the racial and ethnic boundaries. Without ignoring conflict originating from racial and ethnic particularism, many events that occurred in the community during my fieldwork demonstrate that conflicts at another level informed by divergent religious views have a more profound impact on the community. The minority status of a group often fosters a strong sense of group solidarity (Hechter 1987; Hogg 1993). As members of a minority religion in the United States at a time of crisis, Muslims are supposed to form a unified community based on a shared religion rather than being consumed by internal cultural differences. However, it is exactly because of the importance of religion, that members tend to view different interpretations of the religious scripture in absolute terms and use such criteria to judge what is right and what is wrong. Such conflict in the name of religion creates an ambivalent view among many community members of American society.

Since the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the domestic conditions for Muslims and Islam have undergone significant changes. Geneive Abdo, a journalist covering Muslim affairs in the Middle East, commented on the situation for Muslim Americans in her book *Mecca and Main Street*. She noted,

> For more than a century Muslims had lived in America in peace, blending into the ethnically diverse landscape. But suddenly, they were no longer in the shadows as an all but invisible minority. From now on, their every word would be noted, their every action seized upon by a nation gripped with fear and inflamed by political manipulation. The event that launched America's "War on Terrorism"—a war that many Muslims at home and abroad understand as directed at Islam itself. (2006:3)

Muslims are probably experiencing one of the most difficult times since their migration or their conversion to Islam in the United States in the wake

of 9/11. Various measures taken in the name of the "War on Terror" curtail their freedom and sabotage their civil rights. Specific ethnic differences within the American Muslim community become less relevant. Instead, scholars argue that Muslims and Islam have become racialized and suffer from the same kind of bigotry shown toward blacks or "colored" people in American society (Omi and Winant 1986; Naber, 2000, 2006; Joshi 2006). Whether one is White or Black, Arab or South Asian, American-born or F.O.B.,[9] male or female, young or old, his/her Muslim identity is now put under a harsh spotlight. Almost half of the Americans believe that Islam is more likely than other religions to promote violence.[10] Two years after the events of 9/11, the American invasion of Iraq under the Bush administration ignited another round of fierce debate on the compatibility between Islam and democracy (El Fadl et al. 2004; Nasr 2005). The negative views of Islam among mainstream Americans jeopardize the civic life of Muslims in the United States. If Islam is inherently violent and incompatible with democracy, and if Islam is the root cause of terrorist attacks and deadly conflicts in many parts of the world, then will there be home-grown terrorists within the American Muslim community? If it is not true how will American Muslims respond to these stereotypes and prejudices?

Within such context, an effort to bridge the gap between Islam and the West and to dispel misconceptions about Muslims and Islam is growing. An increasing number of scholars around the world have joined this effort to combat bigotry and rebuild trust (Ramadan 2004; Roy 2004). Leading American Muslim scholars have also made important progress in constructing a theological framework—namely "American Islam"—to bridge Islam and essential American values (Abdul Rauf 2004; Cateura and Safi 2005; Abd-Allah 2006). Their intentions and approaches vary. Nevertheless, their efforts have made a religion that was "hijacked" by the 9/11 terrorists more appealing to the American-grown Muslims.[11] They argue that Muslims must put the Qur'anic verses into context in order to fully grasp the essence of God's message. Since Islam has been able to accommodate so many different cultures throughout its history, Islam should also be able to live in harmony with American culture and the sacred law of Allah (Abd-Allah 2006). These scholars urge American Muslims to utilize *ijtihad*—or independent reasoning, a highly valued tradition in Islam—to bring back the most glorious time in the history of Islam and to create a "New Cordoba," "a time when Jews, Christians, Muslims, and all other faith traditions lived together in peace, enjoying a renewed vision of what the good society can look like" (Abdul Rauf 2004:9).

Nevertheless, many of the Muslim thinkers who are pushing for greater integration of Islam into mainstream America are labeled as "liberal" or "progressive." The power of the "conservative" Muslims remains strong. As a matter of fact, parallel to the trend of returning to the theological roots in immigrant religions and the global rise of religious fundamentalism (Almond et al. 2003), the thinking of American Muslims is also deeply influenced by the *Wahhabi* movement, which rejects all the cultural

elements Islam acquired after Prophet Muhammad's time.[12] The scholarship behind the rhetoric of "American Islam" is criticized for it is heavily shaped by the middle class way of thinking:

> Often reflecting a middle class assimilationist bias, the literature on Islam and America does not always distinguish speculative concepts and interpretations . . . Consequently, a growing disparity between accounts of Islam in America by leading scholars and the experiences of ordinary Muslims has emerged. . . . The disparity between middle class interpretations of Islam and the experiences of Muslims from more modest backgrounds is clearly apparent in the widely portrayed notion of "American Islam." (Rashid 1999:8–9)

For some, the emphasis on "American" within the "American Islam" paradigm weakens the universal nature of Islam:

> As for the notion of "American Islam," the Muslims of America frequently assert that Islam is a world religion rather than an Arab or Middle Eastern religion. Therefore if this is true, then it is inappropriate to label Islam "African American," or "American." Like all human practices, Muslim practices are shaped by local culture, social conditions, and historical traditions and as such as bound to lead to variations in Muslim practices worldwide. Yet despite these variations, Islam the religious ideal remains unchanged. (Rashid 1999:8–9)

Known for his "Middle Eastern mystique," a Damascus-based charismatic religious leader named Sheikh Muhammad gathers a growing number of young American Muslims (Abdo 2006:29). Sheikh Muhammad believes that "the main reason Muslims should live in America, or the West in general, is to convey the message of Islam, not to adopt a Western lifestyle. Most customs and habits of American society should be rejected, for they undermine Islamic principles" (Abdo 2006:29).

Existing large-scale surveys on Muslims in the United States confirm the divergent views Muslims hold toward American life and Islam. In the first comprehensive survey on mosques in the United States, Bagby and his team (2001) found that most Muslim leaders embrace positive views about the technological advancement in the United States and believe Muslims should actively participate in American society.[13] However, the opinions on "whether American society is an example of freedom and democracy," "whether America is an immoral, corrupt society," and "whether American society is hostile to Islam" are more divergent (see Figure 2.1). The survey also shows that besides the unquestionable authoritative status of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet, a large number of American Muslims also place considerable weight on the teachings of religious leaders and human reasoning (Bagby et al. 2001; see also Figure 2.2).[14]

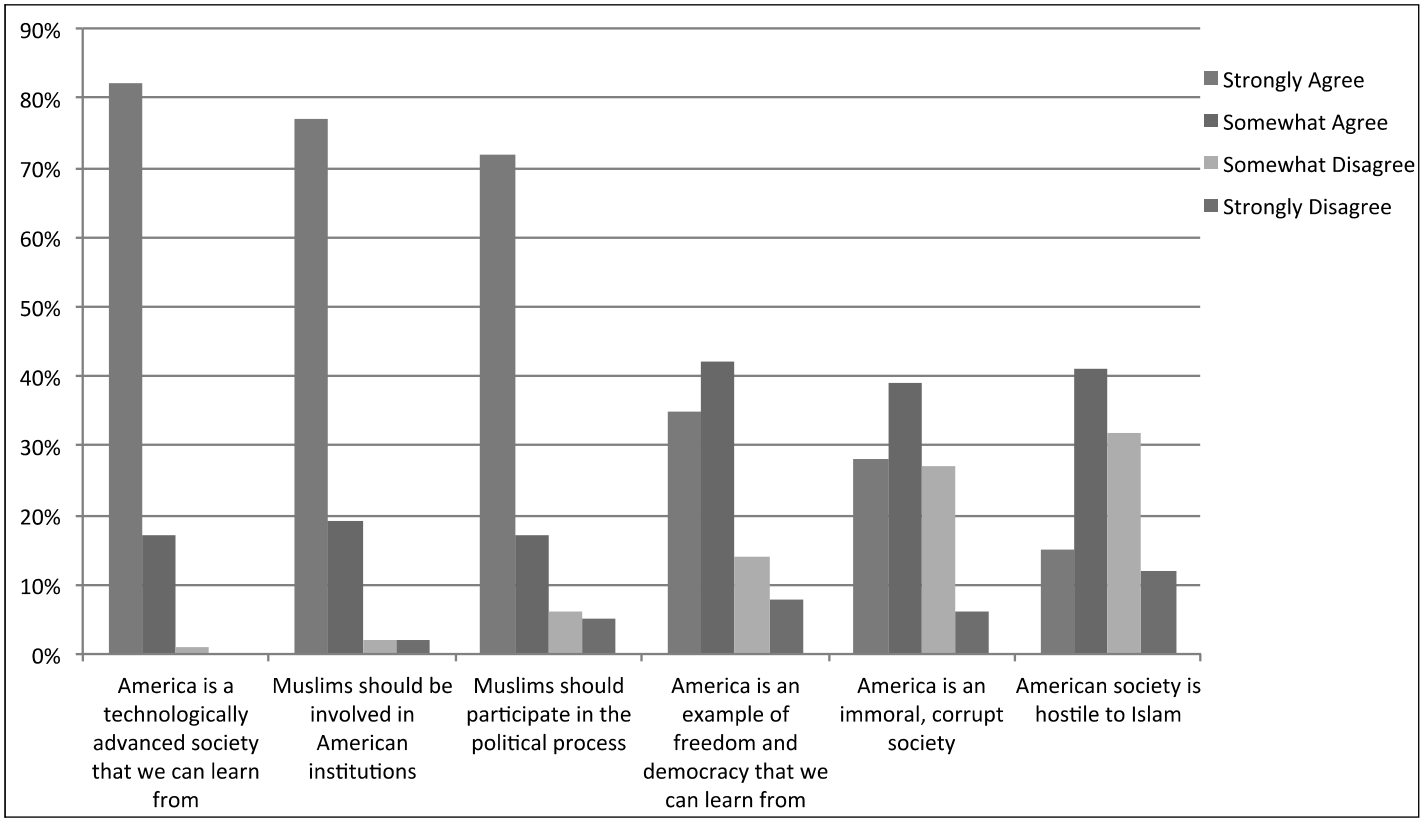

Figure 2.1 Attitudes on American society and its relationship with Islam.

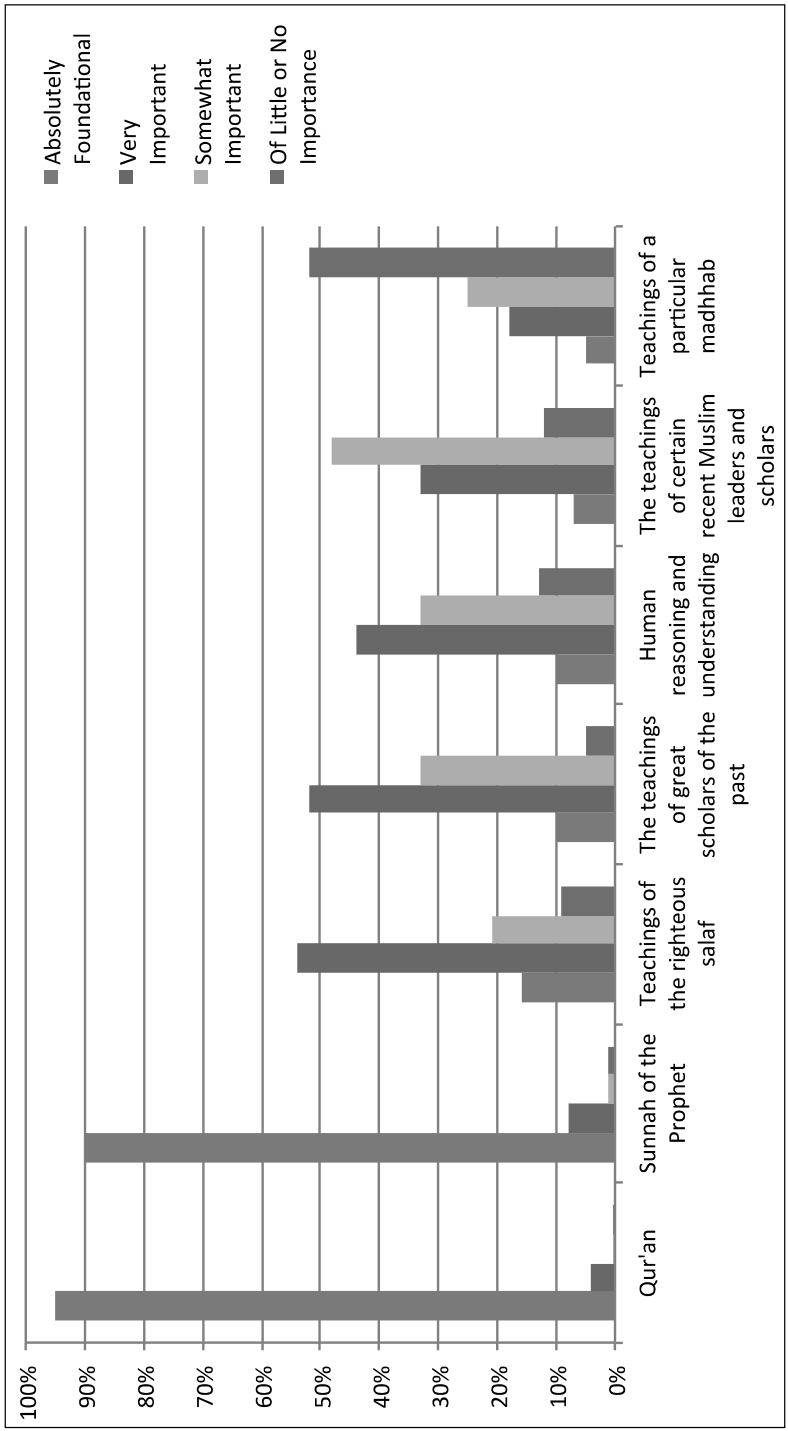

Figure 2.2 How important are the following sources of authority in the worship and teaching of your mosque?

In May 2007, the Pew Research Center released a more rigorous nationwide survey on average Muslims in the United States. In this survey, researchers investigated the demographics, values, and social-economic conditions of Muslims in post-9/11 American society. This survey shows similar disparities among American Muslims in terms of their religious beliefs and attitudes toward American society. This report shows that 86 percent of American Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the actual word of God and tend to hold a more strict literal view of the religious scripture than American Christians. Approximately 60 percent believe that there is only one way to interpret the Qur'an, while about 33 percent think there is more than one way. Compared to Muslims in European societies, Muslims in the United States are more likely to adopt mainstream values. However, it is important to note that the data also suggest that American Muslims tend to develop sympathy for extremism and a sense of discontent toward government policy on its Muslim population. Young Muslims tend to be "more religiously observant and more accepting of Islamic extremism than are older Muslim Americans" (Pew Research Center 2007:6). The Pew Research Center's 2011 survey shows that these patterns have generally remained unchanged.

Developed by a number of Muslim thinkers in both academia and non-academic fields (e.g. Hasan 2002; Khan 2002; Wormser 2002; Abdul Rauf 2004; Cateura and Safi 2005; Patel 2007), the "American Muslim" identity and the concept of Islam as an "American religion" face a major challenge posed by these divergent views among the American Muslim community, especially in terms of religious views and practices. Muslims in Riverside Mosque exhibit a great deal of diversity in how they understand religious teachings and interpret the Qur'anic verses pertaining to their everyday lives.

Muslims in Riverside Mosque can be roughly divided into three camps. At one end, some Muslims hold liberal or progressive views of American life and take a more adaptive approach to interpreting Islam. They embrace the idea of "American Islam" and actively adopt the "American Muslim" identity. They pursue a tangible American Dream that encourages them to become successful through diligent and honest work and to enjoy the happiness in this life. They find that Islamic values and the American Dream do not contradict each other. Most importantly, they believe that Islam is an American religion that values human rights, justice, and freedom. At the other end, some believe the only reason they reside in this country is to spread Islam. They think America is morally corrupt and degrading. They tend to think that the American Dream is equivalent to pure materialism and unlimited individual freedom, which are often associated with immorality. In the middle, many more Muslims struggle to balance their pursuit of this-worldly happiness and wealth and their preparation for life after death. They dislike many things about America; however, they are also fond of many things in America. In some cases, they are even happier than other Americans.[15] In this racially and ethnically diverse mosque, such

disparities can be detrimental to the unity of the community. Riverside Mosque is divided along this line. Competing perspectives on how to live as a righteous Muslim in America create frictions among both ordinary members and religious leaders.

CONTROVERSY OVER MODESTY: AN UNBRIDGEABLE GAP

Abe, the second-generation Syrian-American woman introduced in Chapter 1 of this volume, is deeply bothered by women who come to the mosque with a small piece of scarf that barely covers their hair or a *dupatta* hanging loosely over their heads.[16] She is bothered by the strands of hair that have carelessly escaped a head scarf. To her, this is *haram*, or unIslamic. A modest and righteous Muslim woman must cover her body properly, including her hair.

Abe was the first woman in her extended Syrian-American family to put on *hijab*, something she did soon after she found out the importance of *hijab* and the liberating message of wearing *hijab* in a society where women have been judged based on their appearance rather than intelligence. Educated in a prestigious private university, Abe is one of the few career-oriented, non-traditional Syrian women. Her donning *hijab* came as a surprise to many of her relatives and friends. But her family is very proud of her for making an effort to return to her religious roots. Abe believes that *hijab* carries the most liberating message to women.

"*Hijab* is a sign of honor and equality with men. It protects women. Missing out on *hijab* is missing out on the best thing Islam gives to you," Abe told me. Abe is always very careful about her headscarf and she has tried different *hijab* styles to make sure all her hair is securely under cover.

"There are many ways to cover your hair, but many women just didn't care to make it right. When you cover your hair, you must do it right. Otherwise, don't bother." Abe's attitude is clear-cut. However, although she is critical of the behaviors that go against the authentic Islamic teaching, she restrains her discontent within the boundaries of the mosque. She said,

> I wouldn't care if people cover their hair properly outside the mosque. But once you come to the mosque, you have to behave like a Muslim. It's Allah's house. My daughter always puts on her *hijab* when we come to the mosque even when she was a little girl and did not need to cover. She told me that she wanted to cover when she's in Allah's house. Now she is older and she wears *hijab* in school. And, she is the only girl who wears *hijab* [in her school] though there are other Muslim girls [in her school]. She is proud of being a Muslim.

Abe tries her best to protect her mosque from being polluted by "unIslamic practices." She approaches women who fail to cover their hair properly in

the mosque and asks them to obey God, which has made her a *Wahhabi* in some people's eyes.

Sonia, a second-generation Indian American girl in her twenties, contacted me through her mother after hearing about my research. She majored in Islamic Studies as an undergraduate student and was working on her Human Rights Law degree when we met. She invited me to have brunch on a Sunday when she was visiting her parents and siblings in Riverside. Sonia has a deep interest in South Asian politics and its Islamic traditions. She is also an active participant in the Muslim Student Association at her university and works diligently for a grassroots human rights organization in Chicago. We became friends at our first meeting. Sonia never wears *hijab* outside the mosque. Even when she is inside the mosque, she does not fully cover her hair, except when it is time to pray. As a second-generation Indian American, Sonia grew up as one of a handful Muslims in her school; two being her brothers. Her mother stopped wearing *hijab* after she moved to Riverside from India. Sonia told me that her mother was afraid of attracting too much attention. Wearing *hijab* in a Midwestern town in the 1970s instantly put one in the center of attention. Sonia did not cover either because it has never been an issue of discussion in her house. Her father is a very religious man, but he did not impose any of his opinions on his daughters. For Sonia, *hijab* is not an integral part of her life, nor does she think she has to put on *hijab* to be a good Muslim. However, she does wear long-sleeve shirt and long pants when she is outside. For her, this is the meaning of modesty. Being a Muslim raised in America, Sonia chooses to be a Muslim in the American way—getting a good education, volunteering in community services, and helping refugees escape bloody civil wars and political persecutions to start a new life in the land of freedom.

After *salat-ul-Jummah*, ***Sarah*** was getting ready to leave. She took off the white prayer skirt she had put on over her pants and her blue square headscarf before walking out of the door. A convert to Islam for almost two decades, Sarah still does not cover her hair on a daily basis. She is frustrated by people who always take *hijab* as the only measure of one's commitment to Islam. During our interview, I asked her why she wears *hijab* in the mosque. She said,

> Some people think I'm not religious because I don't wear *hijab*. But I don't think so. I don't think much about *hijab*. Modesty is the essential requirement for women, while *hijab* is not. The Qur'an doesn't say it. I wear modest clothes, which many people don't. I probably know more about the religion than many others who cover their hair. I cover my hair in the mosque because I don't want to upset other people who care about this a lot. But I don't like the way that they make such a fuss about one or two hairs escaping their *hijabs*.

Being an American born to Catholic parents, Sarah feels more comfortable without *hijab* because it is not a cultural element in American society. She also believes that not wearing *hijab* does not interfere with her devotion to be a pious Muslim or her role as an active public speaker for Islam in Riverside. She thinks that some women only cover their hair because their husbands want them to cover, and it has become more of a cultural practice.

Bridget has beautiful turquoise eyes and sweet smile. I first met Bridget after *Jummah* on a Friday afternoon in 2005. She was a junior majoring in journalism in a local university. She had just converted to Islam a few months ago and was married to an Egyptian international student in her university. At that time, Bridget only covered her hair with a scarf and wore an ankle length tunic. When I called her for an interview more than a year later, she was the mother of an adorable baby boy. Completely covered in black floor-length *abaya* and a black headscarf, she looks nothing like the White American girl from North Carolina who used to wear a mini skirt and a ponytail. Although she is one of the six children of two White parents, she actually looks "Middle Eastern" just like her husband. Bridget converted to Islam while working as an intern covering religious communities for a local newspaper. She met her husband later, an Egyptian native who was studying in the same university, and married him within a week after they met each other. Her husband had divorced once, but this was not an issue. They did not have a wedding and only asked Imam Abdullah to officiate their marriage.[17] She told me that Islam encourages simplicity. Neither she nor her husband wanted to have a lavish wedding like other Egyptians. They want to live a modest life. I was struck by her change during the two years since she converted. While we were chatting over dessert and coffee in Panera Bread, I finally asked her,[18]

"Did you get your *abayas* from Egypt?"

"Oh, no, I usually buy them online. There are many websites where you can buy *abaya*s and *hijiab*s. This one [that I'm wearing today] is from Egypt though. When I told my in-laws that I am wearing an *abaya*, my father-in-law brought one for me this time when he came to visit us." She was very happy that her in-laws treat her very well.

"Is it comfortable?" I asked, not just referring to the quality of the fabric, but how she feels being so different from other people in the restaurant and everywhere else. Bridget understood what I was asking,

"I just feel comfortable in it. When I found out it is Islamic, I just wanted to wear it. Nobody [in my husband's family] in Egypt wears it. My mother-in-law doesn't cover her hair."

"Do you always wear it? Did your friends say anything to you?" I pushed a bit more.

"I didn't always wear it. But now I wear it all the time when I'm outside the house. My friends are now all Muslims. I stopped hanging out

with people who have problems with what I wear and what I believe," she answered with a soft yet firm tone.

Bridget feels that Americans are too materialistic and morally corrupt. She married a Muslim because she thinks promiscuity is all too common among non-Muslims in this country. Her youngest sister also converted to Islam a few months ago.

"Once I told my sister that I would never worry about my husband going to clubs and hooking up with other women because he is a Muslim and he fears Allah, my sister instantly converted, *subhan'Allah*."[19] Bridget is very proud of her sister.

When asked whether she and her husband would like to remain in the United States permanently, she told me that she wanted to move out of the country to live a modest life. Going to Egypt may be an option, but Egyptian society is also becoming more Westernized. She and her husband just want to live modestly in a purely Islamic way that has nothing to do with culture.

Bridget's marriage, however, did not last long. After five years and two children, Bridget and her husband sought divorce. Islam was unequivocally important in their marriage. Yet, a shared religion alone does not guarantee a successful marriage.

Aysha travels to Riverside Mosque every now and then to listen to *khutba* and attend community activities. She and her husband live in a small picturesque resort town thirty miles northwest of Riverside. She came to the United States from India in the 1990s and settled down in the town with her husband, one of the few South Asian physicians working at a local hospital. There was no mosque until recently when a group of African American Muslims gathered together and established a small Islamic center in a rented house. Aysha goes to the Islamic center when she cannot make it to Riverside, especially during winter blizzards, but she prefers to come to Riverside Mosque because she gets to meet many South Asians who remind her of home in India. However, although she enjoys the ethnic fellowship very much, she feels that women in this mosque are too liberal. They do not cover properly. Aysha did not cover herself until she got married a few years ago. By "covering," Aysha clearly meant covering the hair, as she often wore short-sleeved *kameez* or knee-length shirt.

The first conversation I had with Aysha was at a community fundraiser function in the fall of 2004. She was selling *salwa kameez* sets, *saris*, and *hijabs* to raise funds for the mosque. We chatted about the United States, the resort town, the mosque, and fashion. Aysha told me that one of her sisters is an Islamic scholar who writes about Islam and gives women advice on how to live in the West.

"I didn't care a lot about religion when I was in India. After I came to the states, because of my sister, I started attending seminars and workshops by Imams and Islamic scholars. The more I listen to them, the more I think it

is just right to wear *hijab*," Aysha said. Once she made up her mind, she put on *hijab* and never wants to take it off.

"A good *Muslimah* must be modest.[20] *Hijab* is a sign of modesty," she said. Like other South Asian women, Aysha still loves jewelry and wears beautiful *salwa kameez*, and, as previously mentioned, sometimes even short-sleeved *kameez*. But, she always wears *hijab*. *Hijab* makes her different from others.

Reena, is one of those women "who just didn't care to make it right" in Abe's words. She never covers her hair outside home, not even in the mosque, and only covers when she makes *salat*. Reena arrived in New York City in the 1970s as an international student and worked for a large department store for several years before getting married. Reena's husband Bilal was in his mid-thirties at that time and had just completed his residency and landed a job as an orthopedic surgeon in Riverside. Reena was almost thirty—an unusually late age for women to get married in South Asian culture—when Allah miraculously brought Bilal to her life (in Reena's words). Reena and Bilal have been married for more than twenty-five years and have two boys and two girls.

Throughout the years, Bilal became a reputable surgeon and a core member on the Mosque Executive Board. Reena quit her job after they moved to Riverside and became a full-time mother. She has always been an active member in the community. Before the mosque was built, Reena and several women in the community organized Sunday school classes in their houses and taught their children basic Arabic letters. After her children grew up, Reena became even more involved in the mosque and the local community. She spends many hours every week helping maintain the mosque, organizing social gatherings, volunteering at the homeless center and food pantry, and participating in inter-faith activities. She is very "laid-back" when comes to educating her children. Neither of her daughters wears *hijab*. She also holds liberal views on *hijab*, "It's great if people want to wear it [*hijab*]. Many women in the community do. But I think everybody should just be responsible for her own deeds. If one doesn't feel comfortable wearing it, then she doesn't have to wear it. Being modest doesn't require a *hijab*." Reena and her husband made *hajj* in 2006. She still held the same view after she returned from Mecca.

These six women represent three major types of Muslims in Riverside Mosque—American-born second or third generations, American converts, and first-generation immigrants. Abe and Bridget both practice *hijab* strictly. But one is a born Muslim, while the other is a convert. More importantly, they have different views on American society. Unlike Bridget who wants to move out of the country to live a modest life, Abe is a proud American. Although they both identify themselves as American Muslims, Abe and Sarah hold opposite views about *hijab*. Both well-educated and born and

raised in America, Abe and Sonia do not necessarily agree with each other on the meaning of modesty. Aysha's emphasis on *hijab* as only a headscarf differs from Abe and Bridget's more strict criteria of modesty. A few women in the community—who I did not profile here—completely cover from head to toe, including face and hands, in the presence of unrelated males. Their understanding of modesty again differs from Abe and Bridget's definition.

A person's religiosity is also measured in many ways throughout her understanding of the meanings of *hijab*. For Sonia, bringing Somali refugees to the United States and helping them settle down here through her work in a human rights organization demonstrates religious devotion. For Reena and Sarah, participating in community services and volunteer activities are their ways to spread the message of Islam as a humanitarian religion. For Abe, Bridget, and Aysha, wearing *hijab* is an indispensable part of their faith, while the dressing styles are more negotiable.

The controversy over modesty sheds light on the divergent attitudes toward Islam and American society within Riverside Muslim community. As one of the important symbols in Islam, *hijab* has become an important research subject in sociological inquiry, feminist research, and women studies (Dwyer 1999; Franks 2000; Read and Bartkowski 2000; Bullock 2002; Abu-Lughod 2002; Bartkowski and Read 2003; Read 2003). Leaders of the Muslim community offer markedly different interpretations of *hijab* and the Qur'anic verses pertaining to this practice (Read and Bartkowski 2000). Some argue it is a religious requirement, while others believe it is a cultural practice. Whether *hijab* is a cultural practice or a religious symbol is undoubtedly associated with different visions of Islam as being expressed in practices in the context of post-9/11 American society, which accentuates the Islamic identity of Muslims. My focus here is how Muslim women of varied backgrounds relate the practice of *hijab* to their American experience.

I had lengthy conversations with women during my research about their views on *hijab* and modesty in order to understand how they view their religion in the new social, cultural, political, and religious context. As a female researcher, I have had the privilege to speak to both covered and uncovered women. Their experiences and attitudes seem too diverse to draw a clear pattern. When I read through my field notes again, another theme struck me as I related their views of *hijab* to the most prominent characteristic of American religion. In contrast to the state-controlled religious institutions in other countries, religious organizations in the United States are based on voluntary membership and lay leadership. Rather than an ascribed identity, studies show that religion is generally a personal choice and an achieved identity in American society (Bellah et al.1985). This characteristic of the American religious structure has a huge impact on American Muslims. The respect for individual rights allows for the existence of diversity, which is manifested in different forms—the different views of the practices of *hijab* are one of them. The six women I profiled here reflect the great deal of

diversity that exists in Riverside Mosque. The kind of freedom that they enjoy in voicing different opinions toward the issue of modesty clearly illustrates that it is impossible, if not unhealthy, to construct a uniformed and arbitrary identity within American Muslim communities. The attitude toward freedom and pluralism embedded in American religions, however, finds its roots in the American value system, which subsequently sustains the American Dream. Only in America can they follow their hearts and minds and practice their religion in their own ways.

The varied views on *hijab* and modesty among women have created some uneasy feelings at community activities and religious services. However, the controversy did not affect the unity of the community until it was brought up in front of the religious leaders in the community. The disagreement over *hijab* eventually escalated into a fierce debate over a difficult topic of the relationship between religion and culture and then to the authenticity of the religious teachings of two leaders in Riverside Mosque.

TWO IMAMS, TWO VISIONS

Three years after Riverside Mosque was built, the Mosque Executive Board started searching for a full-time Imam to guide the community. The Board members posted a job ad and interviewed at least three candidates. In 1997 when Imam Siddiqui completed his Islamic education in India and came to the United States to search for employment, the position in Riverside Mosque was the first and only job he applied for. Although he was young and inexperienced at the time, the interviewers all liked him. As a first-generation immigrant, Imam Siddiqui shared many qualities that were appealing to the Board members. He was hardworking and eager to learn. He also had a strong religious background and was able to recite the entire Qur'an. More importantly, he was a traditional South Asian who had strong resistance to Western culture. Although he could not speak English fluently when he started the job, a decade later, he has grown into a well-versed Imam, a composed public speaker, and father of three children. He even plans to obtain a degree in counseling. He now calls Riverside home.

Imam Siddiqui spends most of his time during the day in the mosque. He leads all the prayer services, including five daily prayers, Friday *Jummah* prayers, *Ramadan* evening prayers, and *Eid* prayers. He offers private Arabic lessons to children and teaches classes on Qur'an recitation and Islamic studies in the Sunday school. He presides over funeral services, weddings, and celebrations on *Eids*. He gives blessings to newborns, welcomes new families that move to Riverside, provides consultations, and sells *halal* meat. His wife, who always wears a floor-length *abaya* and plain *hijab*, also tutors children and female community members on Arabic and Qur'an recitation.

Imam Abdullah is the other important religious leader in Riverside Mosque. Imam Abdullah is not an average Imam. His "unusual political, academic, and educational experiences,"[21] along with his superb Arabic skills and strong Islamic training make him a charismatic religious leader. During his time as the head Imam of a large mosque in South Africa, he achieved the reputation of being "liberal" after having a female Islamic scholar speak in front of his congregation during a Friday *Jummah* prayer. He received his master's degree and doctorate in religious studies from a South African university and a second master's degree from a prestigious university in the United States. After completing his second master's degree, Imam Abdullah took a temporary position at a university in Riverside teaching courses in Islamic studies. He is humble, friendly, open-minded, and even humorous. He loves to learn about different cultures, try different food, and meet people from different places. When he was in Riverside, he was frequently invited to deliver *khutba* during Friday *Jummah* prayers, offer consultation to community members, lead prayer services on *Eid*, lecture at local inter-faith activities, and speak to the media. Imam Abdullah was the principal of the mosque Sunday school for almost three years and offered courses on Islamic history and related topics.

Imam Abdullah came to the United States in 2001 with his wife and five children ranging from toddler to teenagers. His children grew up in Riverside, attending primary school, high school, and later college during the years he spent in the city. When he first came to Riverside, he searched for a mosque on the internet and found Imam Kareem and Downtown Islamic Center. Soon after he and his family arrived, he was warmly received by Imam Kareem and the African American Muslim community. He and his family really enjoyed the hospitality the African American brothers and sisters extended to them. Imam Abdullah's wife especially liked the sense of sisterhood and gender equality she enjoyed in Downtown Islamic Center. In their mosque back in South Africa, women and men are simply divided into two sections by a thin rope and nothing else. Imam Kareem also shares similar views on gender relations. In Downtown Islamic Center, women simply gather behind men during *khutba* and *salat*. However, a few months later, a freezing cold winter hit Riverside. When the heater broke down in Downtown Islamic Center, Imam Kareem had to send his people, including Imam Abdullah and his family, to Riverside Mosque, located a few miles north of the city in the middle-class neighborhoods. Imam Abdullah's wife, did not like Riverside Mosque very much. She missed the closely-knit community of her hometown:

> The first time when I entered the *masjid*, I felt cold. It's warm inside, however, I mean, people were cold. Nobody greeted me with warm hugs and talked to me . . . One of my friends from Uganda has the same feeling. I first saw her at a talk I gave at a local college. We exchanged phone numbers. I said that I would call her. But I lost the paper that

> had her phone number on. I couldn't get in touch with her. After a year or so, I saw her again, this time, in Riverside mosque. I recognized her immediately and thought that I should go greet her. She was sitting there all by herself. I went up to her and asked her if she still remembered me. She was so excited to see me again. She told me later that she was praying to God before I came up to her. She said, "I was asking God to send somebody to greet me. Nobody has talked to me yet."

In fact, this was the last thing that bothered Imam Abdullah and his wife. What bothered them the most was the gender segregation in the mosque and the *Salafis* or *Wahhabis* who "hate culture," according to Mrs. Abdullah.[22] In one of his sermons before Thanksgiving in 2006, Imam Abdullah quoted a verse in the Qur'an to explain the importance of adopting good practices from local cultures. He preached,

> In *Surat al'Araf*, Chapter 7, verse 199, Allah, the Sublime declares: "Accept (from people) what comes naturally (for them). Command what is customarily good. And turn away from the ignorant (without responding in kind)." The process of adopting sound customary practices from local cultures was facilitated by Islamic jurisprudence through the technical process known as *al-'urf* or *al-'adah*. . . . this did not mean a blind acceptance of all of the norms and practices of other cultures.

At various occasions, Imam Abdullah conveyed his worries about the popularity *Salafism* gained in recent years and associated it with the antagonistic relationship between Islam and the West. He cautioned his listeners against the narrow-minded extremists, saying "There is no culture-free religion. There is no culture-free Islam. Islam always embraces cultures in different ways." He lamented about the lack of tolerance toward ethnic cultures within the dominating Islamic teachings.

Compared to Imam Abdullah who keeps an almost clean-shaven goatee and dresses in either a Western-style suit or a South African robe, Imam Siddiqui has a longer beard and usually wears a long white robe. Imam Siddiqui is not an uptight person. He smiles most of the time and did not turn out to be a "grandpa" Imam. Yusuf, a young Indian graduate student, told me that he was a bit nervous when he first approached Imam Siddiqui fearing that the Imam would just be one of those "grandpa" Imams in India. However Yusuf soon found out that Imam Siddiqui is also a football fan like him. He said, "Imam Siddiqui is very approachable. You can ask him serious questions about Islam. You can also ask him his opinions about last week's game. I mean, he is a very nice person." When comparing the two Imams, Yusuf thinks Imam Abdullah communicates better because he has better English skills than Imam Siddiqui. Zena, another South Asian homemaker, thinks both Imam Abdullah and Imam Siddiqui are knowledgeable, friendly, and upright. However, they are also very different. She

shared with me a conversation she once had with a young man, who had some questions about Islam:

> Abdullah is knowledgeable, kind, and open-minded. Compared to Imam Siddiqui, he takes a different approach [to understand the religion]. They have different styles and approaches, but both are going toward the same end. Once, a young man had some problems. I told him that he could go to talk to Imam Abdullah. He is very knowledgeable. The young man said that Imam Abdullah would say something that he really likes to hear, but Imam Siddiqui would just say what the Qur'an says. The young man said that he would rather go to Imam Siddiqui. I think I have to agree with him. Imam Abdullah is very kind and he is never harsh on people, especially young people.

With regard to the issue of *hijab* and modesty, Imam Abdullah held a "liberal" view. Although Mrs. Abdullah wore *hijab*, their three teenage daughters did not. He only required them to wear *abaya* and cover their hair properly during prayers:

> The role of women in many Muslim communities is defined according to the culture of the society from where the immigrants come from. There are cultural biases in terms of what women should do and should not . . . My view on *hijab* is very controversial. Many people are not happy about how I interpret the meaning of *hijab*. Imam [Siddiqui] doesn't agree with me either.

Imam Abdullah's position on *hijab* was indeed controversial. Although he was still respected as a knowledgeable and eloquent religious leader, many people in the community did not agree with him and think *hijab* was required by the religion and not simply a cultural practice. Katie, a White convert in her late forties and wife of an Arab businessman, expressed her disagreement with Imam Abdullah's view on *hijab* in an email she sent to me:

> I had an interesting conversation with Brother Abdullah one time about the subject of *hijab*. He said that he doesn't feel it is necessary for a woman to cover her hair outside of prayer, because it could be argued that the Qur'an is not specific enough; only stating that believing women should draw their covering about their bosoms. He asked the question, "Does this mean a cloak type covering or a head-covering?" I said that this may be true if one chose to think of it this way, but as Muslims we don't rely only on the Qur'an, we are fortunate enough to also have the *hadith* for further clarification. So, in my opinion, even if one felt that the Qur'an was not specific enough, the *hadith* is very clear on the subject; therefore if I am going to make an error, I prefer to make it on the side of caution.

Imam Abdullah's "liberal" opinions rooted in his dual background as both an Imam and an academic trained in the West received both enthusiastic praise and fierce criticism. During the several years he was in Riverside, Imam Abdullah gained immense respect in the community. Many people drove more than forty miles to listen to his *khutba*. Sarah held very positive opinions about Imam Abdullah. She said,

> Imam Abdullah has been a great gift from God. He created a positive atmosphere in the community of not being blind believers. I enjoy my conversations with him. He is very open-minded and very knowledgeable in Islam. There will be a great void after he and his family leave us. It has been a great pleasure to have him with us.

Yusuf, a young Indian graduate student at a local university, also thought highly of Imam Abdullah. He said, "Imam Abdullah is a good ambassador to the community. He invites a lot of people from outside the community. I'm always looking forward to his *khutba*. He's very knowledgeable."

However, the criticism about Imam Abdullah rose from the conservatives when he had boys and girls study in the same room during his classes on Islamic history. Imam Abdullah faced even more criticism after he led separate *Eid* prayers for people who disagreed on the methods used to determine the sighting of *hilal*, or the new crescent, which signifies the ending of *Ramadan*. Some even criticized him for becoming a divisive force in the community.

ACCOMMODATION OR SEPARATION

"Beloved Brothers and Sisters, we have gathered here this morning for this *Eid al-Fitr* service to officially mark the conclusion of the blessed month of *Ramadan* and to celebrate our spiritual and moral achievement and accomplishments of the past *Ramadan*." Wearing a colorful South African style *kufi* and dressed in festive South African robe, Imam Abdullah started his sermon at the community prayer service on *Eid al-Fitr* in 2005, after fasting from dawn to dusk for a month. What made this event unusual was the crowd that gathered in front of him. It was only half of the community. The other half had already celebrated *Eid al-Fitr* the day before.

The debate over how to determine the appearance of *hilal* has been going on within immigrant Muslim communities for a long time. The Islamic calendar is a lunar one. The determination of the appearance of new moon is important because it signifies the beginning and the end of *Ramadan*, and the time for *hajj*—the annual Islamic pilgrimage. Both Islamic astronomy and modern astronomy are able to predict the occurrence of the *hilal*. The center of the disagreement is whether the new moon should be visible to the human eyes. Some believe that the new moon must be sighted by the human

eyes; others believe astronomical computations are preferable regardless of whether or not it can be sighted by the human eye (Ba-Yunus and Kone 2006:147). Agreement has been hard to come by. Not being able to convince each other, Muslims believing in different methods of determining the appearance of *hilal* celebrate *Eid* on two different days during the years when two different methods lead to two different dates. This division is not a problem in the Muslim countries where *Ramadan* is also a public holiday. However, in North America where Muslims are minorities and the Islamic festivals are not recognized public holidays, conflict occurs.

One of the community members told me that since *hajj* is conducted in Saudi Arabia, some people think everyone should follow the announcement made by the Saudi authority. However, Yusuf, the Indian graduate student, told me that he believes one can only break his/her fast when the moon is either seen by a reliable person or him/herself. The situation was even more complicated in Riverside Mosque because it is affiliated with ISNA (the Islamic Society of North America), which endorses a scientific way of spotting the new moon. Based on different methods, people come up with different calendars for celebration. Since both groups are truly convinced of their way on this matter, they both are determined to celebrate *Eid* on the "right" day.

Having two celebrations of *Eid al-Fitr* on two different days has become an almost standard practice in Riverside Mosque since Imam Abdullah arrived in 2001. Imam Abdullah told me that he does not like the way the community celebrates the *Eid* on two different days. He did not want to do it in the first place. He said,

> There is a disagreement among us regarding when to break the fast and celebrate the *Eid*. It's common everywhere else. If you live in a big city, you can choose to go to a *masjid* you like. However, since it's a small town, we have to share the space. I have my belief, and I break my fast accordingly. In 2001, the disagreement divided the community into two groups. We gained the permission from Imam Siddiqui [to celebrate our *Eid* on a different day]. If I were the only one who wanted to celebrate *Eid* on another day, I wouldn't do this [lead the prayer service on a different day]. I would go with the larger community. However, the schism was already there. You see, many people share my belief. They believe that they must break their fasts on the right day. So, I led the prayer and there's nothing wrong with it.

For three years since 2001, Riverside Mosque had accommodated people of different religious beliefs by allowing them to follow what they believe. However, the situation changed prior to *Eid al-Fitr* of 2005. In the preceding years, Imam Abudullah had become an important figure in the community. People consulted him for advice on religious issues instead of approaching Imam Siddiqui. Imam Abdullah's influence in the community grew larger

and stronger. At one time, he was even invited to become a member of the Mosque Executive Board to help manage the mosque. He turned down the invitation because he was already very busy with his teaching and research in the university. However, in the eyes of many community members, he almost enjoyed the same status as Imam Siddiqui and cultivated a stream of progressive thinking in the community. With his support, some progressive women pushed further to break down the gender segregation in the mosque. He frequently criticized *Salafism* and encouraged women to become more active participants in their community. There were suspicions that his influence in the community might have surpassed that of Imam Siddiqui. People were worried that the two conflicting centers of religious authority could deepen the conflict that was already dividing the community and eventually lead to schism.

In retrospect, Imam Abdullah told me that he knew that he must not intensify the existing conflicts within the community. In the sermon he delivered at the *Eid* prayer in 2005, he asked people not to fight with each other over issues related to different understandings of specific Qur'anic verses. He warned people that it was very harmful to think of their way as the only right way and develop any sort of arrogance. However, according to Imam Abdullah, Imam Siddiqui did not take this with ease. During the next two weeks, Imam Siddiqui criticized Imam Abdullah in a tactful way in two consecutive Friday *Jummah* sermons and even "made some harsh comments." Imam Abdullah stated, "I think Imam Siddiqui did so out of good intentions. But he is immature and is not tolerant. It [*Eid al-Adha* of 2005] came at a very bad time and damaged the already fragile relationship within the community."

Rumors started to circulate that some families were planning to build another mosque. Although the community was clearly divided into two groups with regard to the controversy over *hilal*, neither of them could afford to build another mosque and still had to worship under the same roof. The two separate *Eid* prayer services deeply hurt many community members who cared a lot about the unity of their community. They believed that solidarity, instead of conflict, was critical at a time when Muslims' presence in the United States was challenged.

Katie told me that she was very upset about having two prayer services, so she chose not to attend either of them. It was the first time she stayed home on *Eid* day since Riverside Mosque was built. She thought that there should only be one spiritual leader in the community. Having two different authorities is the cause of conflict. She explained,

> A friend of mine called an Imam in Chicago to ask his opinion about the situation [having two *Eid* prayer services in our mosque]. He said that because we are associated with the Islamic society of North America that our Imam is bound to follow the *Eid* as decided upon by that organization. He further said that if people in his congregation had

> decided to have *Eid* [on] another day that those same people would not be welcome to pray behind him in the future. I have to agree with him. Why did we hire the Imam, if we are not going to follow his leadership decisions and directions? If people felt that the *Eid* should have been on Thursday instead of Friday then they should have gone to a *masjid* where Thursday was the chosen day to pray instead of having another *Eid* at our *masjid*. I think Brother Abdullah is a very knowledgeable Imam, and the community has benefited greatly from having him here. However, on this issue [leading another *Eid* prayer service], I believe he was wrong.

She further talked about her opinions on the possible consequences of having two spiritual leaders in the community, one being conservative and the other being progressive:

> Brother Abdullah is a very progressive thinker and he seems to come at issues from a much different paradigm than the Imam [Siddiqui]. Sometimes I think that he says much of what he says to provoke thought and dispel blind acceptance. Although this can be good, one must walk a fine line when dealing with such a diverse population. . . . An Imam's influence can be so great as to change not only the dynamics of the community, but also personal practice. After all, an Imam is a scholar. We depend on him to guide us in the right way. I think sometimes that Brother Abdullah must be very careful, because his influence is powerful. An Imam must be cautious not to run [his] own agenda. In circumstances such as the *Eid*, it would be easy to understand why the perception of two Imams might be there. But Imam Siddiqui was hired as our Imam, and fulfills that role quite well. I see Brother Abdullah as a vital part of our community, but not its leader.

Although Ateeq, a South Asian man in his thirties, respected Imam Abdullah a lot, he also thought that Iman Abdullah should have not led the second *Eid* prayer service because it helped intensify the disagreements that already existed in the community. He said,

> I think one person cannot lead the *Eid* prayer service unless he truly believes it should be the day of *Eid*. If he believes in it, then he should convince other people to celebrate it on the same day. If he doesn't believe in it and only does it for the sake of pleasing some other people, then it is wrong. I remember that Imam Siddiqui was very angry at having two *Eid* prayer services. He said, "It's your *masjid*, you do whatever you want to do." That was not a good sign.

Despite the fact that she prayed with Imam Abdullah, Abe, the second-generation Syrian American woman, told me that she celebrated her *Eid*

and prayed with Imam Abdullah because she thought Imam Siddiqui gave people the option to do so. Otherwise, she would not have prayed with Imam Abdullah. "I must follow the community," she said, standing firm on the issue of unity.

Nevertheless, community members who share the same beliefs as Imam Abdullah believed that they did the right thing because they followed their beliefs. Many people who prayed with Imam Abdullah were convinced that, as the only decent mosque in the area, the community had to learn to share the space and accommodate different practices, just like it had always welcomed Shi'a Muslims. Huda, a middle-aged woman originally from Syria, thought that the disagreement about when to celebrate *Eid* is universal and can never be solved. She believed that it is a test by God. She told me that in New York City where she used to live, different mosques always celebrate *Eid* on different days whenever the *Eid* falls on different days based on different methods. Since it is a big city, one can always go to a mosque where one can celebrate on the day he/she believes to be *Eid*.

Imam Abdullah admitted that he might have created grounds for separatism in the community, but he actually aimed at uniting rather than dividing the community. He argued,

> I don't want to be seen as the other power center in the community. I respect the Imam [Siddiqui] and think of him highly. I send him papers and articles I come across every now and then. I want to support him. He has improved a lot since the time I just came to the community. I think he can do more. But I feel his ambivalent attitude toward me. I'm too liberal for him. I feel that he sees me as a threat sometimes. He's worried every now and then of my presence and influence in the community. He might be worried that I might become the leader of the "separatists." But, actually, if some people break away from the community, I will NOT go with them. I will stay with the Imam [Siddiqui]. My goal is to unite the community instead of dividing it.

Imam Abdullah recognizes that having two centers of power in one community is not healthy. He admitted,

> I've reached a position where I gained a lot of respect in the community. I think I should withdraw a little bit. It appears that there are two power blocks in the community. It's not healthy . . . If the Imam asks me [to give *Khutba*] this Friday, I'd look for some excuses. I won't be giving sermons for a while.

For ordinary community members and the leaders, the unity of the community is of utmost importance. Sarah, the White convert, was not happy about the situation of having two *Eid* prayer services either, but she believed that the debate showed the sincerity of practicing authentic Islam within the

community, which is a welcoming sign. She said it is understandable that people want to practice Islam "appropriately." However, she disliked both of their ways of dealing with this issue and said that she preferred to be practical. Because we now have the technology to measure time, "just put a date on the calendar!" She called this "American Pragmatism," believing that since Muslims are minorities in this country, they should adapt to the existing systems and protect the unity of the community. According to Reena, having a fixed date for *Eid* is convenient for community members to arrange their off days from work ahead of time. It is also more practical for organizers of *Eid* parties to rent the banquet hall and solve other related logistical issues. Reena preferred this "American way," saying, "It is really difficult for us trying to organize a good party for our children. You know, you have to set a date before you can rent a banquet hall. After all, we can't afford to pay rent for two days."

This "American way" became the standard way after the conflict in 2005 that nearly tore the community apart. In the following years, there was only one *Eid* prayer service on the day of *Eid*. The Mosque Executive Board decided to follow the announcement of moon-sighting issued by ISNA. The prayer service was led by Imam Siddiqui. Some people were still not happy about it; nevertheless, the community now gathers together as one group and celebrates *Eid* on the same day. Although he still works in Riverside and attends the mosque, Imam Abdullah has gradually withdrawn and reduced his visibility as the other center of religious authority in the Riverside Muslim community.

A NEW MOSQUE: SCHISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The community had successfully avoided schism in terms of the *hilal* issue. However, there were still conflicts. More than half a year after the controversial *Eid* celebrations of 2005, about a dozen students—including Saudis, Egyptians, Bosnians, and White converts who were involved in the Muslim Student Association of a local university—founded a mosque of their own in a rented house near the campus. According to Bridget, whose husband was then the president of the Muslim Student Association, this "mosque" was only to provide a more comfortable place for Muslim students to pray during the day when their busy schedules prevented them from making multiple trips to Riverside Mosque across the town. But others suspected that it was more than a place for daily prayers. A Muslim student from the university emailed me his opinion about the new mosque:

> I personally believe that the new mosque was opened as more than just a venue for Muslims on campus to have a place to pray during the day, as my experience with some of the leaders of XXX's MSA has indicated.[23] I think however, you may get a better idea as to the significance of

> the mosque from those who were involved in its establishment. I would suggest emailing XXX's MSA [to find out more about it], because the initiative was directed under this organization. The executive members are the folk[s] you would get the most information about. I would probe just a little, about their Islamic ideological leanings and also whether they have *Jumm'ah* at this location now.

Whether it was a new mosque that ran its own agenda soon became clear. Once this group of Muslims converted the rented house into a mosque, they stopped coming to Riverside Mosque. They gathered in their new mosque for Friday *Jummah* prayers, daily prayers, and various other religious and non-religious activities. Bridget had also stopped coming to Riverside Mosque. According to Imam Abdullah, the theology embraced by the leaders of Riverside Mosque was too liberal for those who broke away. He called this group of people "*Wahhabis*," who regard any addition brought into Islam after the time of Prophet Muhammad to be unauthentic, and they believe such additions must be wiped out. In his opinion, these *Wahhabis* took religion to the extreme. Bridget was one of the examples because she had adopted the "authentic" Islamic dressing style. Mariam, a friend of mine, who also wears *hijab*, explained to me what she thought about the *Wahhabis*:

> These *Wahhabis* are very sensitive about the word "culture" and treat everything non-Arab as unIslamic. They think men should wear beards and women should wear black *abayas* and headscarves; people should all pray in the same way; music is harmful and must be forbidden; ethnic holidays and festivals, such as thanksgiving, should be avoided, etc.

Imam Abdullah's gender equality ideology was too liberal for these *Wahhabis*. The South Asian influence on Imam Siddiqui was also at odds with the taste of the *Wahhabis*, who suspect any cultural expression of Islam to be "unIslamic."

Responses to the schism were mixed. On the one hand—even though conflicting views on many issues remained divisive within the community—many community members were upset when they heard about the new mosque. Even those who had criticized Imam Abdullah for being liberal or progressive did not see it as a preferred approach to solving the problems. For them, fighting enemies are better than estranged brothers. The diversity in the community is exactly the strength that holds its diverse members together. Sarah especially appreciated the diversity in Riverside Mosque. Her husband decided to take a job in Riverside after they visited Riverside Mosque in 1998:

> It's a thrill for us to attend this *masjid*. Before my husband accepted the job offer, we visited Riverside together. This *masjid* was part of the reason why my husband accepted the job without further ado. The *masjid*

> was a bonus. We all liked it. The building is big and there is a real community with many people from different backgrounds. . . . This community is more diverse than any other community I've ever seen. You see blacks, Arabs, South Asians, and even Bosnians. I think it is a big advantage. Most Muslims communities I have seen are not very diverse.

Many people in Riverside Mosque shared Sarah's opinion. They believed that the ability of this mosque to attract so many Muslims from all sorts of backgrounds showed the vitality of Islam as a universal religion, which gave them strength and confidence to live in this country. The scene of a diverse group of people praying shoulder to shoulder, eating at the same table, and debating with each other in a polite manner proved the compatibility of Islam with many of the important American moral principles that value individual freedom of speech and religion, respect for individual rights and integrity, and uphold social justice and equality. They felt proud of their community for being able to accommodate differences and bridge gaps. One of the most often invoked Qur'anic verses by my interviewees when speaking about diversity was the one I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, "O Mankind! We have created you from male and female, and have made you Nations and tribes, that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct." (Qur'an 49:13). Diversity—to the people in Riverside Mosque—is a blessing of God and is also a test by God. Those who can sustain the test are indeed the "chosen people of God." The schism that harms the ideal of a unified Muslim *ummah* is disturbing. Moreover, the dissidents who declare irreconcilable differences between Islam and the American way of life further threaten the sacred connotation many community members have attached to the concept of diversity.

On the other hand, a number of community members were more cautious in choosing their words to respond to my question of whether they think the new mosque was a threat to the unity of the community. They pointed out that having more than one mosque in an area was probably more normal than having only one mosque. "It is good to build as many mosques as possible, because mosque is Allah's house," said Mona, a Palestinian mother of two. She added, "The more mosques in the neighborhoods, the more Allah will be worshipped." Many people thought there were a number of other factors contributing to the establishment of a new mosque in the same area. However, my interlocutors tended to lump the people who opened the new mosque as Arabs, despite that there were also non-Arabs involved in the new mosque. They tended to empathize with the desire for ethnic fellowship and psychological comfort among immigrants and supported those who desired ethnic mosques.

Heba, a school teacher from Morocco, believed that it was just a matter of time before the size of each ethnic group in the community reached a certain point where they could each build their own mosque, like Muslims in the large cities, such as Chicago and New York City. She said,

> I think people expect too much unity in the community. We must face the problems. There are tensions and partitions. The ideal of building a Muslim *ummah* is great. However, there are many problems as well. The size of the community is an important factor in the future development of the community. Once each subgroup gets enough people and sufficient money, they [will] probably build their own ethnic mosque.

Aziz, a Pakistani professional, did not think there was anything wrong with having more than one mosque in town and splitting was likely to happen as the size of the community grew, because "people tend to feel more comfortable with people from their own background, [who] speak the same language and have the same culture. It is very natural." He thought people should accept the fact if schism did occur. He also thought that what was lacking in this community was the tolerance for differences and the appreciation for "multiculturalism." He commented,

> One can't expect everybody to be the same. There are unavoidable differences. We have to face and accept the differences and learn to live together. We don't need to change anybody. . . . I don't like the way some people impose their opinions on others. It is especially harmful for people to think that what they are doing is correct; while anybody else who is doing [something] different from them [is] doing it wrong. If people think a one-race mosque serves them better than a multiracial one, we shouldn't force them to believe that [a] multiracial mosque is the only right way to go about.

Although these comments generally support the new mosque, the interviewees avoided an important issue—the competing interpretations of Islam. Multiculturalism may be accepted, favored, and even promoted, but people were undecided whether certain religious ideas should receive the same kind of tolerance and acceptance.

The multiracial/multiethnic setting of Riverside Mosque makes it possible for close examination of the divergent approaches to the emerging "American Muslim" paradigm. According to studies on multiracial/multiethnic communities, certain cultural practices of minority members not shared by the majority in a mixed congregation are often deemed as unacceptable and labeled as anti-religious. People who practice such cultural traditions are often looked down upon or even treated with hostility in the congregation. One of the biggest problems facing members of multiracial/multiethnic religious congregations is known as "cultural racism," a negative attitude which

> [sees] the cultural practices of the new groups as inferior or not belonging in the church, such as discouraging the introduction of new foods, opposing changes proposed or made in worship to meet the needs of

> new people, or discounting the ability of the nondominant group members to lead or communicate new revelations about God. (DeYoung et al. 2003:171)

"Cultural racism" threatens the integrity of a religious community:

> Related to [cultural racism] is the exercise of power . . . The exercise of power is not typically overt or mean-spirited but rather it is done in the name of cultural or theological purity . . . [The] guidelines [for selecting leaders of a religious congregation] were intertwined with cultural understandings of spiritual maturity. (DeYoung et al. 2003:171)

The different ways to approach the complex and intricate relations between cultural diversity and the often singular understanding of religion taken by people involved in a racially/ethnically mixed religious congregation can lead to membership decline and schism.

The phenomenon of Muslims breaking up along religious lines at a time when their in-group solidarity is expected to be at the highest level relates to a rather American phenomenon and an important aspect of the American Dream—religion as a personal choice (Bellah et al. 1985). In a casual conversation, Ateeq told me that he never saw a Shi'a in a Sunni mosque when he was in Pakistan, although there were many Shi'as in his hometown. It was unimaginable to pray together with a Shi'a Muslim. It was even more unimaginable to have an Imam who thinks *hijab* is not required of Muslim women. "People could get killed if they ever dare to say such things or pray differently from others in the mosque [in Pakistan]," he said. But in America, people can decide what they want to believe and have the options to practice according to what they believe. "It's not that I agree with others on everything," Ateeq said, "it is the opportunity that I can share the mosque with so many different Muslims that amazes me. Sometimes, I think Islam is more Islamic only in America."

I almost agreed with Ateeq. It is exactly this kind of freedom in the United States that breeds and sustains such divergent views of Islam. On the one hand, it helps the community to grow; and on the other hand, it triggers conflicts and schisms. The competing visions of Islam and the consequent schism that occurred in Riverside Mosque reminds us of the complexity of the "American Muslim" identity that is deeply affected by both immigration experiences and the competing interpretations of Islam in the global society.

Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons; heaped-up hoards of gold and silver; horses branded (for blood and excellence); and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this world's life; but in nearness to Allah is the best of the goals (to return to).

—Qur'an 3:14

3 The Rich and the Poor

Katie is one of the earliest members of Riverside Mosque.[1] She visited the mosque when the construction had just been completed, even before the floor was carpeted and the building was furnished. Despite the humble interior of the mosque, Katie was amazed by how big it was. She was thrilled that the community had finally built a house of Allah of its own. The community was still small at that time, with only about a hundred Muslim families in the area.[2] However, only about one-third of those families attended the mosque regularly in the early 1990s. At that time, Katie never imagined how fast her community could grow in just a decade. Since then the community has grown rapidly due to high birth rates and the constant arrival of new Muslim families from other states and overseas. The then spacious two-story building is now overcrowded when the community gathers together for Friday *Jummah* prayers, *Eid* prayer services, *Eid* banquets, and various community events. In 2004, the mosque was still able to accommodate all the worshipers on *Eid* in the prayer hall on the second floor. However, three years later in 2007, the organizers had to set up video cameras to live broadcast *khutba* on the first floor, which was turned into a temporary prayer area for overflowing worshipers.

Katie, although she continued paying her dues, stopped coming to the mosque on a regular basis. She had to work more hours as her husband's business grew. The overcrowded mosque was another reason keeping her from attending prayer services and community gatherings. The mosque was too full for her to enjoy meals and socialize with her friends. During the month of *Ramadan* when the number of people who come to the mosque to break fasts and pray spiked, the community had to arrange three dinner parties on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, respectively—Arabs families would host potluck dinners on Friday evenings; South Asian families on Saturday evenings; and Bosnians on Sunday evenings. While it is true that one of the major ethnic groups tended to dominate each gathering, such arrangements along the ethnic lines should not be exaggerated in this case. People were free to attend any of those functions. Throughout the month of *Ramadan*, families rotate to host *Iftar* dinners

for the needy members of the community.[3] Host families also invite their friends to have dinners together after a long day of fasting. Such arrangements are mostly out of necessity due to spatial restraints. Many people I spoke to at those dinner parties said that they would love to come to the mosque every day during *Ramadan* if it was not so crowded. Nadia, a Pakistani woman working in a local bank, told me that although she only knew Indo-Pakistanis in the community, "We are truly blessed to have such a diverse community."

Beginning 2004, the *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha* banquets were held outside the mosque in multifunction halls rented from local churches or schools. Around two hundred people attended the 2004 *Eid al-Fitr* party. In 2007, about five hundred people celebrated *Eid al-Adha* together. To accommodate the fast growing community, the mosque expansion project was put on the agenda of the Mosque Executive Board. In 2005, the then president of Riverside Mosque, Dr. Rahman, issued a plea for donations. He wrote in the community newsletter, "This *Masjid* belongs to all of you and in essence any investment in this non-profit organization is an investment for your families." He also urged people to donate to the expansion project so that the community could invest more in educational programs for children, which are critical in raising "a generation of dynamic and practicing Muslims."[4] In early 2007, a conceptual plan of the new community center was released, which included facilities for community gatherings, recreation activities, Sunday school classrooms, and funeral services. According to the plan, the community gathering area inside the existing building would be converted into a new prayer area. When finished, the new multifunctional community hall, the new parking lot, and the additional prayer rooms would be able to accommodate more than a thousand people (see Figure 3.1).

The community was excited by the progress the Board had made in the expansion project and was thrilled by the beautiful blueprints of the new community center. However, it faced a huge financial challenge to turn the dream into reality. According to the financial report of the year 2005, the total income of the mosque was $105,336, including money received through donations, fundraising events, ticket sales for social events, membership dues, and Sunday school tuition. However, the expenditure during that year almost exhausted the income leaving only $4,311 in the mosque bank account (see Figure 3.2 and 3.3). With less than $5,000 in the bank, the mosque expansion project, which required more than half a million dollars, was nearly an impossible mission.

The best time to pass the donation boxes around is on Fridays during the congregational prayers, although it may not be the most effective way. In 2005, only about $10,000 in donations were collected during Friday *Jummah* prayer services. Most of the funds were raised in a more direct way. Mr. Hasan, a successful Pakistani businessman who had lived in the area for about thirty years, had been working diligently for the mosque

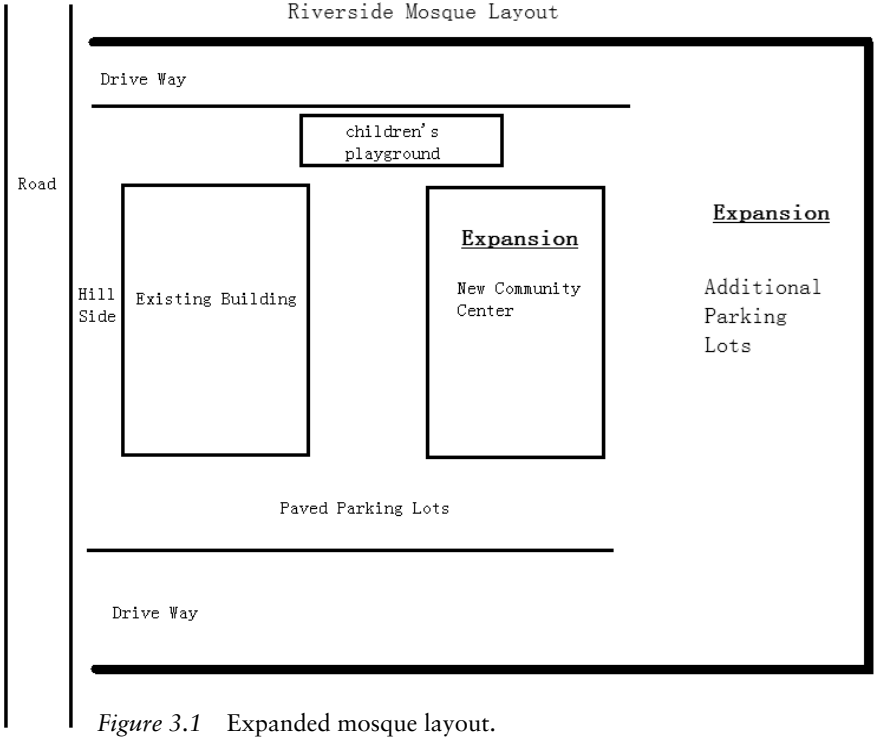

Figure 3.1 Expanded mosque layout.

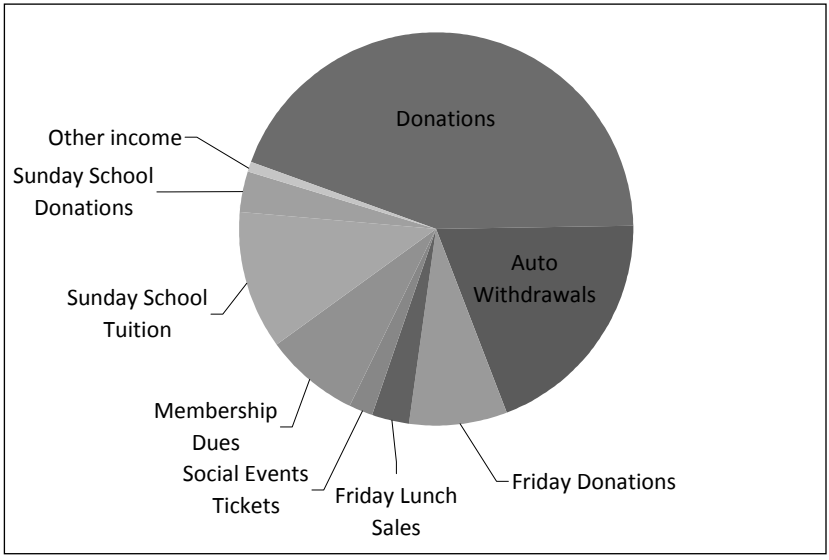

Figure 3.2 Mosque income (2005).

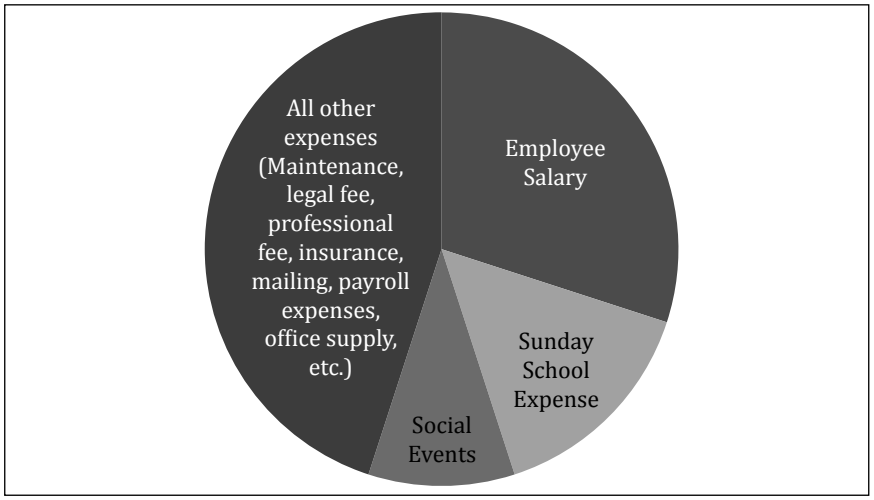

Figure 3.3 Mosque expense (2005).

expansion project. After *khutba* and before *salat-ul-Jummah*, Mr. Hasan took the podium and made another plea for donations.

"Brothers and Sisters, I'd like to take this time to ask you once again for your support of our community and to invest in the house of God." Mr. Hasan made a passionate speech about the importance of maintaining and expanding the mosque as a way to invest for the hereafter. For the past few months, he had been asking for donations at least once a month and then once a week from people who attended the Friday *Jummah* services. Before he finished his speech, an air of impatience had started to gather.

"I have twenty envelopes here. I am only asking twenty of you to donate as much as you can. Can we do this?" Mr. Hasan challenged the crowd. No one answered. He asked more specifically, "Can anyone give $5,000? Anyone?" The prayer hall fell silent. Mr. Hasan requested yet again. Still, nobody responded. He then asked, "Can anybody come up with $2,500? Anyone?" He asked twice. Finally, somebody raised his hand, breaking the discomforting silence in the prayer hall. "*Takbir*!"[5] Mr. Hasan praised God loudly. "*Takbir*!" the crowds responded. "*Takbir*!" Mr. Hasan praised God again and handed out more envelopes to people who had raised their hands. "Can anybody come up with $1,000?" Mr. Hasan continued. A few more envelopes were handed out. People shouted "*Takbir*!"

A few rounds later, Mr. Hasan was not able to hand out any more envelopes. But he was still trying. The crowd became more and more unsettled. Finally, a man stood up and raised his voice, "Brother, I very much appreciate your effort. But we are on a tight schedule here. Many of us are going back to work. . . " He was interrupted by another man, whose voice cracked a little bit with emotion, "I've been watching this [pleas for donation] for

a long time. I must say that you can't expect us to run the mosque all the time. This is our mosque, this is also your mosque, [and] we must share the responsibility. We did our share and you have to do yours. You can't expect a few physicians to run this mosque. They have families to support too." The crowd went silent for one second then more people were trying to speak out.

Seeing the situation was soon to get out of hand, Imam Siddiqui quickly suggested an elder man to make *adhan*. "*Allah hu akbar*! *Allah hu akbar*!"[6] The old man called for prayer. People were clearly not content with the situation; however, they immediately stopped arguing, stood up, and formed into straight lines, shoulder to shoulder to offer the most rewarding *salat-ul-Jummah*.

The relationship between social class and religion is important in sociological inquiry. Both Karl Marx and Max Weber have devoted long pages to elucidate the interplay between religion and class. Religion has been seen as the tool of the rich to dominate the poor; while it also has been instrumental in the struggle among the poor to combat social injustice, poverty, and violation of human rights. In addition, religion is an important indicator of social status, determining a person's position in the social stratification system. Religion in the United States has achieved many new roles as immigrants widely established their religious institutions based on voluntary membership. Religion is seen as one of the most important social forces that creates, maintains, and challenges both the status quo in society and the power structure within religious communities (see a review of such studies in Christiano et al. 2002:135–51).

In the United States, the relationship between social class and religion is especially intriguing given the wide range of religious traditions and the diverse backgrounds of religious believers in this country. Concerning the sacred, the supernatural and life after death, religion is probably the only dimension in American society that has the capacity to break down the divisive boundaries based on race/ethnicity, gender, and social class (DeYoung et al. 2003). The roles of religion in preserving the ethnic cultures of immigrants are evident (Min 1992; Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000). The reciprocal relationship between immigrant religion and social class is also pronounced. On the one hand, immigrants have sought to achieve social mobility with the help of religious congregations; on the other hand, the impact of religion in the process of adaptation and identity construction is mediated by social class (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000). American society has gone through a number of fundamental changes throughout its short history, particularly with the arrival of new immigrants after the passage of Immigration Act of 1965. The changing characteristics of immigrants such as shifting socioeconomic status compared to previous generations will undoubtedly affect the future of American religious congregations (Ammerman 2005).

Despite that many scholars have considered the intersection of religion and social class in new immigrant congregations, little attention has been directed to how social class affects Islamic congregations in the United States. In the existing studies on American Muslim communities, the role of social class or socioeconomic status is often considered in relation to Black Muslim movements, particularly the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad, founder of the Nation of Islam, had employed his religious teachings to shift the membership from mostly lower-class African Americans to predominately middle-class African Americans during his time (Mamiya 1983). When Louis Farrakhan took over the Nation in 1977, he not only recouped the lower-class African American membership but also attracted a large number of black middle-class men (Lincoln 1996). The Nation of Islam was further invigorated by young black men who had become alienated from the American mainstream due to criminalization and incarceration (Lincoln 1996). African Americans turned to Islam in response to the collective memory of slavery, which had denied their ancestors' basic human rights for much of American history (Dannin 2002).

In fact, social class has long been the other powerful force that creates unease between African American Muslims and immigrant Muslims. Better educated and economically more stable, the post-1965 immigrant Muslims have significantly improved the social standing of Muslim Americans in general, further pushing African American Muslim communities to the periphery. According to the National Mosque Project, most of the data centered on low-income households and the less-than-high-school-educated population came from the financially stressed inner-city African American mosques, while the immigrant mosques were more likely to be better off (Bagby et al. 2001).

Among immigrant Muslim communities, Arab and South Asian Muslims are the most studied ethnic groups, particularly those who are concentrated in the major metropolitan areas like Detroit, Chicago, and Los Angeles (Wasfi 1964; Cainkar 1991; Aswad 1994; GhaneaBassiri 1997; Walbridge 1997; Abraham 2000; Abraham and Shryock 2000; Schopmeyer 2000; Read and Bartkowski 2000). Speculations about the socioeconomic status of South Asian and Arab Muslims are abundant. South Asians are generally thought to be of higher socioeconomic status compared to Arabs. However, such an impression is usually based on the general South Asian and Arab population without distinguishing Muslims from the non-Muslims (Leonard 1997, 2003; Haddad and Esposito 1998). Still, South Asian Muslims are perceived as having a relatively higher socioeconomic status compared to Muslims of other ethnic groups. Therefore, South Asians are more "conspicuous and powerful in Muslim American discourse and politics" and are even referred to as "the powers of diaspora" (Haddad 2002:235). However, a study on ethnic enclaves in Chicago shows that Indo-Pakistani Muslims appeared socioeconomically lagging behind Indian Hindus and Sikhs (Numrich 2000), suggesting the socioeconomic advantage of South

Asian Muslims may be exaggerated. Studies on other minority Muslim ethnic groups are almost nonexistent, except for a few that deal with African and Bosnian refugees that include a substantial number of Muslims (Coughlan and Owens-Manley 2006; Franz 2005). The lack of solid data and the widespread assumptions limit the incorporation of social class into the study of Muslims in the United States.

Elise Goldwasser's (1998) study probably provides the most detailed close-up look at the divergent socioeconomic backgrounds of immigrant Muslims in the United States. She examined the economic conditions of a group of diverse immigrant Muslims in Durham, North Carolina, and showed the impact of socioeconomic status in the process of Americanization among immigrant Muslims. She compared the experience of middle-class immigrants to lower-class immigrants and found that the economically more prosperous ones were more likely to hold onto their Islamic way of living, while the poorer ones tried to become American. She argues that "economic security is the pivotal factor influencing the degree to which immigrants preserve their Islamic ways of life. . . . [A]ssimilation is related to financial security and socioeconomic status." (Goldwasser 1998:302)

The shortage in research on the role of socioeconomic status among American Muslim communities and the interesting, yet one-dimensional findings of Goldwasser's study, call for further investigation of the impact of socioeconomic status on how American Muslims negotiate their religious identity in American society. Given the importance of socioeconomic factors among immigrants and the difficult relationship between this-worldly activities and otherworldly goals in most religions, this chapter examines how socioeconomic factors affect the intergroup relations in Riverside Mosque and how they shape people's religious identity and their attitudes toward American life.

As voluntary organizations, religious institutions in the United States do not receive financial subsidies from the government other than tax benefits and exemptions. The survival of a church, a synagogue, a *gurdwara*, a temple, or a mosque exclusively depends on the generous contributions from its members (Ammerman 2005). Therefore, donations and membership dues are critical for maintaining these places of worship. In Riverside Mosque, contentious opinions, arguments, and even quarrels burst out every now and then surrounding the financial issues in the mosque and the responsibilities of community members.

The expenditures on an Imam's salary, Sunday school, social events, legal fees, professional fees, and other maintenance services add up to more than $100,000 a year. The Mosque Executive Board has to rely heavily on voluntary donations, annual *zakat*,[7] and membership dues to cover those expenses and keep the mosque running. Even though the community is growing at an impressive speed and Riverside Mosque is not in debt, the financial situation of the mosque has not been optimal for many years. Donations usually reach the peak during the holy month of *Ramadan*,

as members pay their *zakat*, and then drop off significantly afterward. In addition, many community members send *zakat* back home to the "old world." Only sixty members (both individuals and households), that is, about one-third of the registered members, actually paid their annual membership dues of $150 in 2005. By the end of 2007, the community had raised $250,000 in a span of more than two years. However, without another quarter of a million dollars, the Mosque Executive Board could not move forward. By the end of 2008, the mosque expansion project still remained on the conceptual map.

Given the central role of mosque in the life of Muslims, especially when they live as minorities in the midst of non-Muslim majorities, maintaining the financial stability of the mosque becomes a priority and the success of a mosque is linked to the level of religious commitment of its members. In the eyes of many community members, how well the community maintains the mosque is equivalent to how committed it is to Allah, as a collectivity. In Mr. Hasan's pleas for donations, he spoke about the relationships between this life and the life hereafter. For him, wealth in this life is but an illusion. He proclaimed,

> The main goal of a non-believer is to get good clothes, good cars, good houses, everything material. They worry too much about this *dunya*.[8] But the goal of a Muslim, a good Muslim, is the eternal life of the hereafter, the *akhirah*.[9] A good Muslim should work to please Allah and to earn rewards of the hereafter. Be mindful of the Day of Judgment when all of us have to stand in front of Allah. We are not judged by how much money we have in *dunya*, but how well we served Allah.

He acknowledged that people's financial capabilities vary. A $50 donation from a poor person shows as much devotion as $5,000 donation from a wealthy person, if not more. The willingness to donate is what counts. This kind of rhetoric reinforces the paramount importance of financial donation and links it to individual religiosity. Whether and how much one donates to the mosque thus becomes an important measure of his/her devotion to the mosque, the community, the Muslim *ummah*, and ultimately, Allah.

On average, Muslims in the United States are mostly middle-class and well-educated. According to Project MAPS (Muslims in American Public Square) telephone survey of Muslim individuals in 2001, 58 percent of the respondents were college graduates, 24 percent had some college education, 12 percent were high school graduates, and only 6 percent had less than a high school education. In terms of income, 28 percent earned more than $75,000 a year and 22 percent earned between $50,000 and $74,000. Although 50 percent of Muslims have an annual income lower than $50,000, only 10 percent earns less than $15,000. In terms of occupational locations, Muslims are mostly in professional or technical (22 percent), managerial (12 percent), and medical (11 percent) fields (Leonard 2003:60). The middle class background of Muslims in the

United States has been confirmed by subsequent national surveys on Muslims (Pew Research Center 2007, 2011).

In contrast, the financial situations of many mosques have not been very optimistic. Among the 631 mosques surveyed in the Mosque Project, only 24 percent reported an income of more than $100,000 in 2000 (Bagby et al. 2001:61). The lack of funding that many mosques face may be attributed to the nature of new immigrants and the growing transnational ties across the continents. Compared to other mosques in the United States, Riverside Mosque is fairly well-maintained and financially stable. This financial stability is achieved by a growing number of Muslim immigrants who are keen to invest in their future on American soil. A fairly large number of physicians, businessmen, and other professionals contribute to the financial strength of Riverside Mosque. The number of physicians is growing constantly due to the well-established hospitals and medical research facilities in the area.[10] Muslim business networks in Riverside have also been growing. Muslim-owned businesses range from gas stations, grocery stores, hotels, restaurants, and small retail businesses to professional services, such as insurance, tax, and financial services. The number of other professionals, such as computer and electric technicians, bankers, and CPAs is also stable. In addition, several local universities help to create a constant supply of Muslim researchers and scholars who make a small yet important financial contribution to the mosque, in addition to their intellectual input.

Riverside Mosque also accommodates a large number of refugee families who arrived in Riverside at different times—mostly Bosnians in the 1990s, followed by Muslims from the war-torn regions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Horn of Africa. Families that arrived earlier tend to be economically better off, while the new arrivals are more likely to be impoverished and struggling to survive. Compared to voluntary immigrants who usually possess recognizable educational credentials, strong language skills, and wide social networks, refugees tend to lack necessary skills and are ill-prepared for immediate employment opportunities. Although refugees receive government subsidies, they rely on the mosque to build new social networks and occasionally seek financial support from other community members.

The diverse socioeconomic backgrounds of mosque attendees complicate the inter-group relations within the community. The financial burden is disproportionately tilted toward the high-income physicians in the community, followed by successful businessmen, and then other professionals. A membership system is in place according to the bylaws; however, many people who regularly attend the mosque have never registered. Among those who are registered, many do not pay their dues or mix membership dues with other forms of charitable giving. Donations from the monthly auto-withdrawal accounts of a number of high-income physicians and businessmen contribute a great deal to the financial stability of the mosque. Therefore, it is widely believed that the wealthy physicians and

businessmen have kept the mosque viable. Their generosity is solid evidence showing that they are devout Muslims who are entrusted with this-worldly success, blessed with wealth and good life, and are able to sustain the test of Allah. In fact, they are also expected to donate more because generosity shows how detached one is from the love of this-worldly life and how devoted they are in serving Allah.

Although no one could make a definitive conclusion that members from the lower social class never donate a penny, it is assumed that they do not have the ability to donate as much. However, many believe that even the low-income families can give more money to the mosque than they might be willing to. For example, at a community open forum, the mosque accountant—a member of the community—showed that if every registered member or household paid their $150 annual dues, a relatively small amount, the mosque income would increase by about $20,000, which is not a small amount for the growing community. The resentment from the high-income members, as shown at the beginning of the chapter, reached its peak when the Mosque Executive Board began vehemently asking for funds for the mosque expansion project. The burden again rested on the shoulders of the high-income households. The lower-income families were therefore rendered "free riders."

In reality, except for auto-withdrawal accounts and membership dues, donations are usually made anonymously in accordance with *sunnah*. I learned a *hadith* from one of my interlocutors that teaches believers to hide their charity in order to avoid falling into the state of *Riya'a*.[11] The Prophet said, "Seven (types of) people will be covered with Allah's shade on a day when there is no shade but His shade, (from among them) a man who gives a charity hiding it, that (even) his left hand does not know what his right hand has spent." *Sadaqah*, collected throughout the year,[12] and *zakat*, paid at the end of *Ramadan*, are largely given anonymously. Therefore, there is no way to track down how much one person or one household has donated, who made the donations, or the background of the donors. As a result, where the donations come from remains a mystery. Although there is no question that high-income members have indeed donated a large amount of the money that pays for the upkeep of the mosque, there is no evidence showing that low-income families are indeed "free riders" of the congregation. Whether or not there are "free riders" in the mosque, it is apparent that financial contribution has become one of the most important criteria, if not the most important, to measure the religiosity of the more affluent members. In contrast, the lower-income members are exempted from such scrutiny. In Riverside Mosque, the peculiar situation of a growing immigrant community dictates that the religiosity of its members of divergent socioeconomic backgrounds be treated differently.

Religiosity—the extent of religious commitment—remains a complicated concept. While various typologies have been developed and different factors have been identified, religiosity is generally measured by asking a

wide range of questions related to three dimensions, including belief (knowing), action (doing), and experience (feeling) (Becker 1960; Glock and Stark 1965; Stark and Glock 1968; Clayton and Gladden 1974; Davidson 1975, 1977; Roof 1979; Mueller 1980; Cornwall et al. 1986). Sociologists and psychologists created complex scales and indices to capture the variations that exist across race/ethnicity, social classes, genders, and life courses, etc. The most often used and the most problematic measure of religiosity is church (temple, synagogue, mosque, *gurdwara*) attendance. It involves the frequency of participation in congregational worship services. This indicator is easy to measure, enabling comparisons across groups. However, it cannot measure the strength of a person's belief in the supernatural beings, such as God, and to what extend religion influences individual life. Also, it does not apply to some religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, which emphasize personal practices instead of collective activities. Measures of religious practice also go beyond church attendance. They involve faithfulness in private devotion and regularity of private prayer, as well as participation in church-related organizations and donations. This measure again emphasizes the behaviors rather than the intangible beliefs. Religious practice is different from church attendance and can be used to examine people of non-Judeo-Christian traditions (see Greeley 1989).

Religious beliefs measure the degree to which a person believes in the supernatural beings. Although more difficult to measure, it has been seen as a more reliable method to gauge the level of religiosity since it examines the spiritual dimension of a person's religious commitment. Scholars often ask a series of questions in order to capture religious beliefs more accurately. Questions gauging an individual's belief in God, life after death, and sacred scriptures can be tailored to accommodate different religious traditions. Recent large scale surveys have made important progress in measuring people's religious beliefs by including multiple items that reflect the variations across religions (e.g. Spilka et al. 2003; Smith 2005).

After 9/11, the heightened attention on Islam and Muslims encouraged many Muslims to learn more about their religion (Yip 2004; Peek 2005, 2010; Verkuyten and Yildiz 2010; Sirin and Fine 2008). The large number of publications on Islam reflects the diverse approaches Muslims take to understand Islam in light of a new global political situation. The different interpretations of Islam and the divergent practices among Muslims of different Islamic sects require reconfiguration of the ways we measure Islamic religiosity. Although sharing the same roots with the other two Abrahamic traditions—Judaism and Christianity—Islam developed a unique system of world-views and rituals. Considering the ideological and behavioral differences between Muslims and Christians, there have been attempts to develop methods to better measure Islamic religiosity. One such effort resulted in the creation of Muslim Religiosity-Personality Inventory, based on a study of religiosity among a national representative sample of Malaysian Muslims (Krauss et al. 2006). Two constructs—"Islamic worldview" and "religious

personality"—measured both beliefs and practices within Islamic traditions. Islamic worldview is a *tawhidic* or divine unity worldview including beliefs in God, angels, messengers, books of revelation, the Day of Judgment, and the divine decree. Religious personality contains multiple measures that correspond to the "five pillars of Islam" and two other factors—relationship with human beings and the rest of creation—reflecting Muslims' relationship with the larger society (Krauss et al. 2006).

Beliefs and practices are deemed equally important in Islam, as Islam has been depicted as a way of life. Many practices according to the Qur'an and the *sunnah* serve as indicators of one's religiosity. Although specific religious practices vary among Muslims around the world, the "five pillars" of Islam are universally believed to be the foundation of the religion and a must for Muslims to follow. Muslims, no matter what nationalities they are, which theological schools they follow, or which languages they speak, share the same religious beliefs and follow the same basic religious practices. How well a Muslim adheres to the "five pillars" shows how devout he/she is.

The *Shahadah* (or the profession of faith) is the basic creed or tenet of Islam. The statement that "I testify that there is no god but God, and I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God" is the foundation of all other beliefs and practices in Islam. The five-time daily prayer (*salat*) is the second pillar of Islam. The prayers must be performed at five specific times every day—before sunrise (*fajr*), early afternoon (*zuhr*), late afternoon (*asr*), soon after sunset (*maghrib*), and late evening (*isha*). *Salat* is generally recognized as being the principal step reinforcing one's faith. *Salat* can be performed at home, in a mosque, or at any place that is free of impurity. However, the most preferred way is to pray collectively in the company of others or a congregation. Therefore, Friday *Jummah* attendance—though only obligatory for men, not women—is also an important marker of religiosity. Congregational prayer allows Muslims to strengthen their faith with the presence of their fellow believers and creates a sense of fraternity or sorority during the shoulder-to-shoulder prayer that conveys the message of equality and unity in Islam, which has extraordinary appeal to religious converts, such as African American men (Warner 1997). The third pillar of Islam, *zakat*, or alms-giving, is charitable giving by Muslims based on their wealth. It is obligatory for Muslims who are able to do so. *Sadaqah*, or non-compulsory charitable giving, is also highly encouraged in Islam. Fasting from dawn to dusk during the holy month of *Ramadan* is the fourth pillar of Islam. This practice encourages self-discipline and reaffirms faith. Although fasting is not unique to Islam—as Christianity, Judaism, Baha'i faith, Hinduism, and Buddhism all have fasting in one form or another—fasting in Islam is a more rigorous form of fasting, which demands a greater amount of self-restraint. During fasting, one has to abstain from water, food, sex, cheating, lying, or purposefully deceiving for selfish reasons. Any wrong thinking or doing can invalidate fasting and transform it into mere starvation. The last

pillar, *Hajj*, is a pilgrimage that occurs during the Islamic month of *Dhu al-Hijiah* in the Holy city of Mecca. Every capable adult Muslim—men and women—who can afford to do so is obliged to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his or her lifetime. The pilgrim, or *hajj*, is honored in his or her community and held as an exemplar of Muslims of strong faith.

In addition, because the Qur'an sits at the center of Islam, the recitation of the Qur'an is an important task for devout Muslims. The Qur'an is a recitation of what is believed to be God's actual words revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel. Muslims believe that any translation of the Qur'an is just a translation instead of the Qur'an itself. Only the Qur'an in the Arabic language is *the* Qur'an. Therefore, Muslims all over the world strive to learn Arabic in order to understand God's revelation in its original form. Being able to speak Arabic and understand the meaning of the Qur'anic verses, especially by a non-Arabic speaker, implies that he/she has devoted a great amount of time and energy to Islam. It is a clear sign of faith and a high level of religiosity.

Moreover, Muslims are required by their religion to follow a number of dietary restrictions. According to the Qur'an, Muslims must not eat animals that die of themselves, blood, pork, and animals dedicated to entities other than God. Muslims should also avoid gambling, alcohol, and other intoxicants. Most Muslims also believe that Muslim women should practice *hijab*, or covering the hair, and dress modestly. It is true that different interpretations of the Qur'anic verses exist among Muslims, resulting in divergent views on modesty. Nevertheless, most Muslims still regard *hijab* together with long and loose clothing as a symbol of piety for women.

Given the multidimensional religious beliefs and various religious practices in Islam, it is particularly difficult to measure the religiosity of a Muslim. Living in the United States also creates certain obstacles for Muslims to fully follow these religious requirements, due to factors that go beyond personal control, such as work schedules and dietary restrictions. For example, in Islamic countries, the work schedules during *Ramadan* are usually shortened and shifted toward the latter part of the day to make it easier for people to fast, fulfilling the fourth pillar of the faith. However, such accommodation is usually absent in the United States. Muslims have to make a genuine effort to practice the ritual.

During my research, I encountered many types of Muslims. Some pay more attention to practices, such as the five daily prayers, Friday prayers, fasting, and *zakat*, while others put more emphasis on an internal cultivation of faith and knowledge. Some insist on the literal understanding of the Qur'anic verses, while others take a more interpretive approach that involves more human reasoning and contemplation. Some are more inclined to keep their religiosity private, while others tend to express it more outwardly. In this case, it is not sociologically meaningful to rank different indicators and to reach any conclusions as to whether one is more

religious or more observant or more practicing than the other because—sociologically speaking—each indicator carries the same weight, and after all "only God knows who deserves a life in heaven," based on my interlocutors. What is important here is how people evaluate other people's religiosity and their own religiosity in light of the "free rider" problems when economic contribution to the mosque has become equivalent to one's spiritual devotion to Allah, indicating the importance of social class and status in intergroup relations.

A MODEL MUSLIM

Dr. Sulayman is a successful physician. He came to the United States as a young man more than thirty years ago. He completed his residency and landed a job at a clinic in Riverside specializing in cardiology. Thirty years later, Dr. Sulayman has earned a lot of respect not only in the field of cardiology but also in the Riverside Muslim community. Dr. Sulayman works very hard. Although he slowed down quite a bit after he turned fifty, he still works five days a week and takes on-call shifts. Hard work pays off. Dr. Sulayman drives a Mercedes and his wife enjoys the option of not working for money. His children are enrolled in prestigious private universities. The family takes vacations around the world every now and then. According to the American Medical Group Association's *Medical Group Compensation and Financial Survey*, an experienced Cardiologist earns about $400,000 on average per year.[13] Whether this number accurately reflects Dr. Sulayman's income is not important. His beautiful million-dollar home in the quiet outskirts of the city clearly indicates his social status and lifestyle.

Dr. Sulayman is also a practicing Muslim. He prays five times a day, attends every Friday *Jummah* service as long as he is not traveling, fasts a full month in *Ramadan*, attends *Taraweeh* prayer every evening during *Ramadan*, keeps all his food *halal*, and pays *zakat*. He has also made *Hajj*, thus completing all the requirements for a devout Muslim. More importantly, he makes generous donations to the mosque, generous enough to gain him lifetime membership in the community. Lifetime membership, according to the mosque Constitutions and bylaws, is awarded to "those persons who meet all the qualifications of membership in the General Assembly and who have made outstanding contributions to the XXX for many years."[14]

Physicians are paid little in Dr. Sulayman's home country. But applying the same skills in the United States could make a big difference, which is why the opportunities in this country attracted Dr. Sulayman when he was a young man. The "American Dream" does not discriminate against well-educated and skilled professionals from the Third World. Dr. Sulayman made it all by himself. Other than a well-paying job, a house, and nice cars, he also enjoys the benefit of being in a democratic country rather than his home country, which was ruled by dictators and corrupted presidents.

Moreover, he is blessed with lawfully made money that he can use for the cause of Allah. He could be the same practicing Muslim if he was in his home country, but he probably would never be able to donate as much to the mosque and to Muslims who suffer around the world. Eva Ali, a first-generation Syrian American woman, believes that being a good Muslim in the United States means more than inner spiritual purification and outward religious practices; one must make financial contributions to the *ummah* because he/she is now living in the richest country in the world and is better-off than many people living in the developing countries. Charitable giving, in this case, has become an important measure of piety.

Dr. Sulayman is wealthy, standing firm within the top 1 percent of Americans. Many people believe that it is very easy for him to donate hundreds of thousands of dollars to the mosque at any time. This reputation creates financial burdens on Dr. Sulayman, because he is expected to donate generously to the mosque all the time. His name is on various organizations' lists for fundraising functions, both religious and non-religious, and both Islamic and non-Islamic. His wife receives phone calls asking for donations every now and then. However, his big house, nice cars, children's tuition, and all the other expenses required to maintain his living standard cost a lot of money.

Dr. Sulayman financed his home by taking out a mortgage. Whether such practice complies with the Islamic law is debatable. Many people in the community think mortgages are *haram*,[15] distracting righteous Muslims from following the *Deen*.[16] Some high-income physicians in the community do not think highly of those so-called "American Dream mortgages." Dr. and Mrs. Ahmad and their four children used to live in a rented house, although Dr. Ahmad is a physician and earns a decent income. The Ahmads refused to take a mortgage to speed up their pursuit of the American Dream. Rather, they saved money for more than a decade and finally purchased their first house using cash in 2006. For the conservatives, the Ahmads are the role models in the community, because they successfully resisted the temptations and still realized the American Dream. "You don't have to forsake your religion to achieve the American Dream. There is an Islamic way to achieve it," Mrs. Ahamd said proudly.

Although Dr. Sulayman is criticized by some for being liberal and tamed by the materialistic American Dream, he is still highly respected in the community. Not everyone can work so hard and still practice every tenet of Islam, and surely not all the rich physicians are generous enough to donate so much to a voluntary organization like Dr. Sulayman.

THE "MODEL MINORITY"

The Bosnian civil war was the most brutal chapter in the breakup of former Yugoslavia. On February 29, 1992, the multiethnic republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs, and Muslim Slavs

lived side by side, passed a referendum for independence, which not all Bosnian Serbs agreed with. Under the guise of protecting the Serb minority in Bosnia, Serbian leaders dispatched arms and military support for them. In April 1992, a confrontation between the Patriotic League and local Serb units erupted, and the paramilitary Serbian Guard intervened, killing Muslims in the first massacre of the war. When the European Community and the United States granted recognition to Bosnia and Herzegovina a few days later, the Serbs invaded eastern Bosnia and attacked Muslim cities and towns (Burg and Shoup 1999). Bosnian Muslims were suddenly thrown into deep darkness. Their lives had been changed forever.

Zamira, a Bosnian woman in her fifties, told me that she could never forget the bombings that had killed some of her family members, burned down her house, and forced her to leave everything behind almost overnight and restart her life at age forty in a completely strange country. The nightmare of artillery bombardment and sniper fire still haunts Zamira fifteen years later. Alisa, a twenty-year-old Bosnian girl, can still vividly recall the appalling attacks on her village:

> We had to hide in the mountains when Serbs were bombing our village. We hid for many days. I can't remember how many days because I was too young. But I remember that we were all so scared, and I could hear shooting and bombing from where we hid. We only packed a small suitcase and thought we would be back in a few days or weeks. But we couldn't. We had to leave the country completely. It was hard. Our house was burnt down. But thank God, no one in my family was killed.

Although Alisa spent most of her life here in the United States, what happened back in 1992 had left a deep scar in her memory. Zamira and Alisa are two of the many Bosnians in Riverside. Many of their compatriots, both Muslims and Christians, arrived in the United States as refugees escaping the bloody Bosnian war in the 1990s with the help of various NGOs and the U.S. government. The most difficult thing for the Bosnian refugees was restarting their lives in a strange setting beyond what they had expected. They left their homes with almost no preparation. Most of them did not speak English, and their educational credentials were not acceptable in the United States. Some of them had to take manual jobs in factories with the help of refugee services, and others were hired as maintenance staff in local universities and hospitals. Jasmina, a former pharmacist in Bosnia, had to work as a housekeeper because her Bosnian degree was not accepted here and it took time for her to learn English at the age of forty. The sudden plunge of social status made it especially difficult for her to readjust to her life that was interrupted by the war.

Bosnian families who arrived in Riverside in the 1990s are an important part of the Riverside Muslim community. However, they did not become active participants in the community until recently. Their experiences in the United States accentuate the importance of ethnic community as they were uprooted from everything they were familiar with and parachuted into a

strange country. Like other immigrants who found ethnic religious community more comforting (Choy 1979; Kim 1981; Hurh and Kim 1990; Min 1992; Warner and Wittner 1998; Yang 1999; Ebaugh and Chaftez 2000), Bosnian Muslims also sought to establish a Bosnian mosque where their children could learn the Bosnian language. In the past, even though they did not have money to rent a place for gatherings, they occasionally invited itinerant Bosnian Imams from larger cities to lead Friday *Jummah* prayer services and *Eid* prayers in their homes. They also organized their own Sunday school where the Qur'an was taught in Bosnian. My respondents in Riverside Mosque worried that the Bosnians were becoming estranged from the rest of the community:

> We welcome the arrival of Bosnian brothers and sisters. They came all of a sudden in the 1990s. Though we don't know much about the Bosnian families, I think it is great to have so many people from different cultures and different ethnic groups. It is good to everybody. But Bosnians are not very active in the community. Everybody's a little concerned. Whenever there is a special event in the community, we always make sure to let the Bosnian community know. We ask them to please come every time . . . they have never hosted any *Iftar* dinner during *Ramadan*. It is probably the language barrier [that keeps the Bosnian community from participating actively].

Sarah, the White convert, believed that the alienation of the Bosnian community had to do with the sense of self-righteousness among some Muslims in the community. She said,

> Bosnians probably don't feel accepted by the community. Many of them think of themselves as outsiders of the community. They don't think of themselves as belonging to the community. Some Arabs are too radical by saying "don't even bother to show up if you don't believe in and practice Islam one hundred percent." Arabs think that mosque is for people who are "perfect." But nobody's perfect. Bosnian brothers and sisters are lacking in Islamic education prior to coming to the States. This kind of extremism has created a very negative atmosphere in the community toward Bosnians.

The language barriers and the lack of rigorous religious training have indeed kept the Bosnians from becoming an integral part of the community. However, socioeconomic status may be an even stronger factor causing such alienation. Abe, a Syrian-American, pointed out,

> Culturally, Bosnians don't share anything with anybody in the community. One really has to make a big effort to fit in the community. Our lifestyles are different. Also, just like my grandparents, Bosnians have to struggle to make a living in the States.

Abe thought that Bosnians should take the advantage of the larger community that is just right around the corner when they need it:

> However, the time is different now. There were no washers, dryers, or vacuums in my grandparents' time; my grandmother had to scrub clothes and the house by hand. There was no Muslim community here to help them out. It's different for Bosnians. They have a community here to help them out. There is Sunday school. They have opportunities to raise their kids in an Islamic way.

To the Bosnians, their lifestyles are just too different from the rich people in the mosque. Although the South Asians and Arabs are all good-hearted Muslim brothers and sisters, they would not be able to fully comprehend how much Bosnian Muslims have to struggle to make a living. These Bosnians work hard to start again and try to make their lives better than what they had in Bosnia. Although they were forced to leave their homes, America gives them hope. Alisa works part time in a super market while completing her degree in nursing at a local university. Her parents are both factory workers in Riverside. She and her siblings all have to work their way through college. She hopes that she can finish college soon so that she can make more money for the family.

Religion is very important to Alisa, but she does not have time for it. She cannot go to the mosque all the time. She has to work, study, and help with household chores. Her parents cannot go to the mosque to pray on Fridays either because they also have to work. When I asked her about membership dues, she was puzzled and told me that she did not know that they had to pay to be part of the community. Her parents donate some money every now and then, but she did not know how much. She puts a dollar or two in the donation box when she goes to the mosque. "I don't know how much my parents give to the *masjid*. But, we are really struggling. I just got my green card and started working part-time," she said. When I told her that I had called a few times trying to reach her, she smiled and apologized, "Oh, I'm sorry. But we are not home during the day. There is no heat in the house. It's freezing. We just spend the day on campus or at work or somewhere else. But we are usually home in the evening though. Call me in the evening." A few months later when I met Alisa again in the mosque, she told me excitedly, "My mother said that she wants to invite you to have dinner with us. We just bought a house. We're really happy."

The life of first-generation immigrants can be quite tough. This is especially the case for refugees such as the Bosnian Muslims in Riverside Mosque. Alisa's family is an example of an average Bosnian family in Riverside. In the past, Bosnians appeared less active in the community—few of them attended Friday *Jummah* or showed up at community social events. They did not donate or only donated a little, and to make it even worse, they wanted to have their own mosque.

However, the situation has gradually changed in the last several years. The financial conditions of families that came with young children have

improved a lot as the children grew up, made their way through college, found well-paying jobs, and eventually alleviated the financial burden from their parents' shoulders. Zamira is very proud of her daughter Aida. Coming to the United States as a teenager, Aida learned English quickly, graduated from college with good grades, went through medical school, and is now working in New York as a physician. Ali, who came to the United States with his parents, has also made it through the college. He was recently accepted to a highly-ranked graduate program in a prestigious private university in the Midwest. The elder Bosnians have also acquired some English, learned how to drive, and settled into the American way of life.

In the past decade, as the Bosnian Muslim community grew, their financial condition has improved, the language barrier has decreased, and they are psychologically better prepared for the new life. However, instead of establishing a Bosnian mosque of their own like other Bosnians in larger cities, the community decided to become more visible in Riverside Mosque. They still cannot donate as much as the wealthy doctors, but they can pay their share. In 2006, the first fourteen families to pay their memberships dues were all Bosnian families. In his annual financial report, the president of Riverside Mosque made a special note to acknowledge Bosnian's contributions to the community. He said, "Bosnian families were the first to pay their 2006 membership dues. But most of us don't pay. I believe most of you are doing better than them. Our Bosnian brothers and sisters showed us a good example of love of Allah." He also highly praised the Bosnians' contribution to the Sunday school and other community events.

In 2007, to help raise funds for the mosque expansion project, Ali and another Bosnian man spoke to their community during a dinner gathering in the mosque urging them to donate generously. He said, "We have received so much from the community. It is time for us to do something for it." He believes that Bosnians can give more to the mosque because they have been able to work their way through tremendous hardship, and they can certainly do more for the cause of Allah. Faith in Allah, prayers, fasting, *zakat*, and *Hajj* only shows individual devotion. Financial contribution to the mosque demonstrates the willingness of Bosnians to unite with their Muslim brothers and sisters, to share the responsibility of maintaining the house of Allah, and to be part of the Muslim *ummah*.

REALIZING THE AMERICAN DREAM

In the Community News column in the June 2006 issue of the community newsletter, Imam Siddiqui wrote a few paragraphs to welcome the new families that had just moved to Riverside:

> Welcome to Brother XXX and his family. May Allah make their moving easy and prosperous, keep them with us for years to come. Amin.

> Welcome to Brother XXX and sister XXX, . . . welcome to our community. May Allah make their settlement easy and smooth and make this new place for them a place of prosperity and success and let their baby come with a lot of joy and goodness. Amin.

American experiences have profound meanings to Muslim immigrants. Many of them come to realize the American Dream of a happy and prosperous life. Indeed, Muslims in the United States are mostly middle-class and, on average, fare better financially than Muslims elsewhere (Pew Research Center 2007). Like other immigrants, they must work hard to achieve the dream in a country where racial/ethnic minorities still face a glass ceiling and other forms of institutionalized discrimination in their careers and thus have limited upward mobility (Min 1992). Even though they are economically comfortable, as Muslims, they must combat bigotry against them and their religion in American society. Their beliefs, values, and attitudes constantly interact with multiple religious traditions, diverse racial/ethnic identities, and divergent worldviews and values in the larger society. Their religious institutions are also influenced by the mainstream Protestant traditions like most immigrant religious institutions (Warner 1993; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Ammerman 2005). Living in the United States makes it almost impossible to live in complete isolation from the mainstream society. The ways Muslims view their religion, their tradition, their fellow Muslims, and American culture are redefined and shaped by their American experiences.

Donation or charitable giving has become an important part of American religious life. The voluntarism manifested through charitable giving is a fundamental character of American religious culture (Ammerman 2005). It is also a sign of becoming part of American society through voluntary civic participation, especially among second-generation immigrants (Ecklund 2005, 2006). Although sociologists are reluctant to explain the low level of charitable giving among religious people through the lens of religious scriptures and to equate the low level of donation to low religiosity (Smith and Emerson 2008), donating to the poor and needy is still positively related to religiosity (Regnerus et al. 1998; Gruber 2004).

In Riverside Mosque, donation/charitable giving, or *sadaqah*, given to the mosque is defined as an important indicator of faith or religiosity because the mosque is a voluntary and non-profit organization that must survive on its own. In this country, religion is strictly separated from government affairs and people also like to keep their religion a private matter. Despite that individualism is regarded as a crucial and defining characteristic in American religious culture, the collective nature of congregationalism is also influential in how people practice their religions in the United States (Wuthnow 1988; Ammerman 1997, 2005). Religions are practiced collectively as people gather together and form their religious congregations (Ammerman 2005). Religion has gone beyond a personal matter

in many ways. This collective nature of American religion should not be taken for granted. Without state regulation and support, an individual's dedication to the collective form of worship, education, and community development is critical for the survival and growth of each faith tradition in America. Therefore, whether or not one makes a generous donation to support the congregation shows her/his religious devotion. Moreover, how much one donates according to his/her ability is even a stronger indicator of one's religiosity. The rich and the poor immigrants in Riverside Mosque both make a conscious effort to show their commitment in protecting their house of worship. If one fails to show his/her devotion to the mosque, he/she is looked down upon and regarded as a disingenuous "free rider." In order to shake off this negative image, one has to make an effort to show that he/she not only takes religion as a personal matter but also strives to become more religious by contributing to the collectivity—in many cases in economic terms.

These are the efforts that many immigrant Muslims would not have to make if they had never come to the United States. On the one hand, mosques are state sponsored in Islamic countries. Muslims are obligated to pay *zakat*; whereas they are encouraged but not required to give *sadaqah*. People attend mosques in their neighborhoods but do not have to maintain mosques by themselves, because mosques are administered by the government. On the other hand, in Muslim countries, the mosque is only a place for worship, not a community center or a school, and people usually hold community events outside their mosques. The mosque's function as a community center is one of the characteristics achieved by new immigrant religious institutions as the result of immigration (Ebaugh and Chaftz 2000). The multifunctional mosque in the United States became a place for people to recreate their faith tradition and preserve their ethnic cultures. The social structure and religious culture in the United States pushed through changes in immigrant communities, where people develop a new understanding of being a devout or religious person in America.

Going beyond the religious connotations of donation, the ability to donate also conveys another message in the context of immigration. It not only demonstrates one's religious devotion but also shows one's ability to succeed in America. Success means different things to different people given that people come to the United States for different reasons. Some Muslims believe that the only reason for a Muslim to live in a non-Muslim society is to spread Islam. While others believe that Islam is not against this-worldly activities and human pursuit of wealth, as long as one earns it through lawful ways and as long as one is mindful of the life hereafter and spends his/her wealth for the cause of Allah. Still, others believe that the respect for freedom, justice, and human rights in American society makes this country more Islamic than many other so-called Islamic countries where immoral secular cultures and ruthless dictators have corrupted the spirit of Islam. Nevertheless, just like the previous generations of immigrants and pilgrims

that have populated this land, no matter what their purposes were, they all inevitably become deeply involved in the on-going process of reinterpreting the meaning of "being American" and redefining the American Dream.

Successful Muslim professionals, like Dr. Sulayman, embody the American Dream. This American Dream is constituted of big houses, nice cars, well-paying jobs, and other things related to material success. Dr. Sulayman is rich. He worked hard for it and he made his fortune lawfully. However, this American Dream is also accompanied with problems that might affect his spirituality. Living in the United States, Dr. Sulayman has to try hard to accomplish all the ritual requirements that he has been doing for a long time. He works during *Ramadan*. He is on call when he attends Friday *Jummah*. He pays mortgages and works hard to keep up his living standard and to pay off his children's expensive tuition. To some people, he is quite accomplished. He not only achieved the American Dream but also sustained the test of Allah by being such a generous patron of the mosque. However, negative comments about him signify the contending attitudes toward the American Dream. America gives him the opportunity to become rich, but wealth is also a liability. There is a fine line between the American Dream and what some of his critics call "*haram*."

As impoverished refugees of war, the Bosnians also embody the American Dream. Like the early European pilgrims who came to the United States to escape religious persecution and oppression, Bosnians also survived tremendous hardship and maintained their faith as they sought to become more involved in the *ummah* in Riverside. They are making their way to the classic American Dream—achieving freedom, justice, and human rights in the New World. This dimension is extolled among Muslim communities. A paragraph written by a Muslim commentator clearly articulates this aspect of the American Dream:

> [For] many Muslim immigrants, the American dream is rarely about owning a home, a car, or a boat. Rather, it is about experiencing political and religious freedom. Most leave their countries because of political and religious persecution. They leave their comfortable homes and loved ones, with or without a choice, but always in search of the place that grants that basic human right, freedom to speak one's thoughts . . . they uproot themselves to salvage the part of their souls that seeks intellectual freedom, integrity and respect.[17]

The experiences of the Bosnians and other refugees in Riverside symbolize both the strength of Islamic faith and the American ideal of self-made men and women. The fact that they overcame huge difficulties to settle down in this land of opportunity inspires and sets an example for others to follow. My interlocutors, even the affluent professionals, applauded this version of the American Dream. Some believe that the American Dream achieved by the Bosnians is even more "noble" than what the middle and upper-middle

class voluntary immigrants have accomplished, as it exemplifies complete equality and self-reliance.

Variations in socioeconomic status make a difference in religious participation and many other dimensions of religiosity (Chaves and Gorski 2001). The friction in regard to the "free rider" problem in Riverside Mosque reflects the importance of social class in the American Muslim community. Goldwasser's (1998:302) observation that "economic security is the pivotal factor influencing the degree to which immigrants preserve their Islamic ways of life" still holds true. However, the path of becoming part of American society is not as singular as she points out. Change occurs when people at the lower economic spectrum move upward toward the middle. Not only do people of higher socioeconomic status strive to preserve their Islamic way of life, people of the lower socioeconomic status also seek to "live Islam in their own ways." In fact, people of higher socioeconomic status may face greater challenges than those of lower economic status. Since the religiosity of a person contains many dimensions and each dimension means something different to different people, it would be premature to conclude that people of higher social class are more likely to stick to the Islamic way of life, while people of lower social class are more likely to be on the assimilation path.

Although congregationalism has become an important characteristic of American religious culture, individualism remains consequential. In the United States, people are free to choose whichever religious tradition, denomination, or sect with which they are comfortable. People also enjoy the freedom to practice their religions differently from the majority without running the risk of being persecuted. Such conditions are instrumental in molding an "American Muslim" identity. As we have seen, competing visions of Islam and the American Dream both exist in Riverside Mosque. "American Muslim" identity must be flexible enough to allow the diversity and the individualism that define the American culture. Without such flexibility, it would be difficult to imagine the future of American Muslim community, as there is no hierarchical structure of religious authority within in Islam as found in Catholicism.

It is important to note that Riverside Mosque is a largely middle class and upper-middle class congregation, especially when compared to the other African American mosques and Islamic centers in town. Although some of its members—the refugees—belong to the lower class in terms of income, they are not uneducated and have made significant progress toward becoming part of the middle class. Social class matters. It opens doors for minorities to enter the American mainstream. For example, Dr. Hussein, a well-known Muslim physician in Riverside, gained substantial respect among the non-Muslim community in Riverside and entered the Riverside Hall of Fame for his continuous contribution and generous support of children with autism.

It is within this context that I now turn to women in Riverside Mosque, who have gained substantial power through the immigration process and are seeking to play more important roles in their community.

And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends one of another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, and they establish worship and they pay the poor-due, and they obey Allah and His messenger. As for those, Allah will have mercy on them. Lo! Allah is Mighty, Wise.

—Qur'an 9:71

4 The Majority and the Minority

March 18, 2005, may be a day of no significance, but for Muslims in the United States and elsewhere, it is an important day to remember. The news that Amina Wadud, an African American Muslim, an Islamic scholar, and most importantly, a woman, had acted as an Imam and led prayer for a mixed-gender congregation in New York City on March 18, 2005, dropped a bomb among the faithful.[1] Against the backdrop of the growing visibility of Muslim women in the United States and the increasing influence of Muslim women scholars and social activists, Amina Wadud's mixed congregation ignited fierce debate on gender in Islam among women and men in Riverside Mosque. "Female Imam" became the hottest topic of the afternoon after *salat-ul-Jummah* and the next many days. Some were excited by the bravery of Wadud to break the age-old gender barricade; others were outraged by her blatant violation of Islamic tradition and called it heresy. The community was divided into two camps—the progressives and the conservatives—and gender did not matter. Many women were among the strongest opponents of Wadud, while some men welcomed her challenge of a tradition that found no support in the Holy Qur'an. The debates did not stop on issues related to women's role in congregational prayers, but extended to gender equality in general—an ongoing debate in the community.

To address the increasing inquiries about women's role in Islam, Imam Siddiqui devoted several sermons to explain the Qur'anic verses about female witnesses, inheritance, and the different roles of men and women. He stressed that women and men are treated equally in Islam. He stated,

> Qur'an and Islamic teachings assure that [a] woman is not in any way less than a man in her humanity, in her spirituality, in her reward, [or] in her role in the society[.] [T]hough she is not similar to man in her look and physical structure[,] she has all rights and responsibilities like men.

He further elaborated the status of women in Islam. He said,

> Islam came for both men and women. Islam is not made by man to discriminate [against] women. This is the religion of God who is the creator of both

> genders . . . He cannot favor one gender on the expense of [the] other, one of his names is *al-adl*, *al-hakam*, He is the Fair and the Just.

He also explained the complex status of women as witnesses in legal cases and financial deals and preached,

> It is wrong to think that Islam treated women with injustice in some of the issues as some people think that Islam consider[s] woman half of man in some cases like inheritance, giving witness, [and] blood money. They think that this is the value and the position of woman in Islam. But if you study Islam with careful observation you will realize that Islam considered woman equal to man in her original humanity, in her honor as [a] human being.

Before the Wadud event, on the front page of the February 2005 issue of the community newsletter, an article entitled "Women Created for Family Life?" caught everybody's eyes. In this article, Imam Siddiqui wrote,

> We have been used to thinking that women have been created for the family life and for raising children, and thus their natural place is in their homes. Nothing in the Qur'an or *Sunna* clearly supports such a view or assumption. Such a division of labor between the husband who earns the living of the family and the wife who stays at home doing housework is a societal experience, which has occurred for a very long time throughout history in so many societies, including the Arab society at the time of Islam, and the subsequent Muslim as well as other societies until recent times when change has come out. Women learn and work equally to men, and the family responsibilities are requiring more financial resources. Caring about the home has to be reviewed, and the Prophet's traditions indicate his assistan[ce] to his wives. However, such a modern experience of women's work and the consequent need for husband's help in the housework in so many countries does not necessarily mean that it is an eternal natural law. Social change never stops; and norms are introduced, maintained or abandoned according to their practical benefit.

The mixed message conveyed in this article is perplexing. As the debates escalated, many posed questions regarding Imam Siddiqui's essay on women. Imam then wrote another piece about the different yet equal roles of men and women and published it in the April community newsletter. He wrote,

> There is an equal responsibility for both [men and women] in deeds, reward and in the consequences but they are different in some of the matters and this is justice because they are different in physical creation

> and form that is why their job[s] [are] different. It is not possible to say that the woman is just like man in everything. It is obvious that the physical body of a woman is different from a man. Woman is created for different job[s]; woman is prepared for the motherhood that is why Allah fashioned her in a way that she can fulfill her job in the best way. . . . Trying to twist this nature will destroy the family relationship, [and] destroy the domain of woman. It is injustice for woman; it is burdening her with something that she was not created for. When Qur'an and Islam maintained this natural difference in some of the issues it is not because of injustice rather it is out of justice.

Most women welcomed these sermons and writings of Imam Siddiqui. Some were especially contented by the "orthodoxy" of these messages, for they show the true essence of Islam. Huma, an Arab woman in her fifties, said, "Islam is to protect women, so we don't have to sustain the hardship working outside. Women's place is home, raising good Muslims, *insh'allah*." However, a small group of progressive women did not find resonance in these writings. Gina, another Arab woman in her thirties, said,

> I think what the Imam said is still speaking in a very patriarchal tone. What does it mean that "women are prepared for the motherhood" and "it is burdening her with something that she was not created for"? I think these are too ambiguous and indicating that women should stay home to raise children.

To Huma, Gina's opinion is "the Western idea," and not "Islamic." To Gina, Huma's idea is influenced by the "patriarchal" dominance in traditional Arab societies and has nothing to do with Islam. These different views, based on the same Qur'anic verses, led to further friction and conflict in Riverside Mosque.

COMPETING DISCOURSES ON MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

Among many of the changes that occurred in American society in the years after 1965, the arrival of new immigrants contributed to the changing gender relations in response to the second wave of the feminist movement. Unlike the early waves of immigrants, the new waves of immigration brought many more females and changed the composition of the U.S. population (Gordon 2005). Women were becoming more visible in politics, work places, and religious institutions. The impact of the increasing visibility of women in religious congregations, especially new immigrant religious institutions, caught much scholarly attention (Ammerman 1997, 2005; Warner and Wittner 1998; Chaves 1999; Ebaugh and Cheftz 2000).

In immigrant religious congregations, women continue to play various traditional reproductive roles. But they are also able to expand these roles into non-traditional realms, especially by participating in volunteer activities. Through these activities, women in immigrant religious congregations challenge the patriarchal status quo (Dolan 1988; Williams 1988; Christiano 1991; Min 1992; Haddad and Smith 1994; Kim 1996; Numrich 1996; George 1998; Warner and Wittner 1998). Since men often lose their status in the process of migration, in some immigrant congregations, women assume leadership roles and introduce changes to the traditional patriarchal dominance in the religious sphere (Ebaugh and Chafetz 1999). This observation resonates with the findings of a number of studies that show religious institutions, as a social and physical space, offering opportunities for women to network with other women and build feminist consciousness (Weaver 1986; Hargrove 1987; Kaufman 1991; Winter et al. 1994; Wuthnow 1994; Ammerman 1997). However, the empowerment of women is often achieved in the practice of unofficial and domestic religion where women achieve informal power (Brown 1991; Diaz-Stevens 1993; Jacobs 1996; Neitz 1995). In many cases, women use religion to redefine selfhood (Chen 2008), challenge the patriarchal explanation of religious practices (Bartkowski and Read 2003), and construct new religious identities (Haddad et al. 2006).

Muslims living in the West have caught the attention of many scholars (see Buijs and Rath 2002; Lenoard 2003). In addition to research on Islamic law, Islam and politics, and Muslim identities, gender issues have also stimulated heavy debate. The focal point is often the Muslim women's stand on veiling and head-covering (Read and Bartkowski 2000; Bartkowski and Read 2003; Badr 2004; Weiner 2004; Ruby 2006). Researchers also studied mate selection (Zaidi and Shuraydi 2002), marital relationships (Hassouneh-Phillips 2001), reproductive decisions (Van den Eeden 1999; Al-Saawi 2001; Basu et al. 2004), and other family-related issues (Sherif 1999) among Muslim women in the United States. These studies enable social scientists to better understand the roles of Muslim women in society and the process of identity construction. However, only a handful studies have paid attention to Muslim women in public spaces, such as schools and work places (Aswad 1994; Read 2002); while almost none considered women's roles inside Mosques and various religion-related activities, such as inter-congregational and inter-religious dialogues, until recently (Predelli 2004; Hammer 2012). This neglect is largely due to the cultural practices of gender segregation that causes the overall lack of participation of Muslim women in public space and the traditional restrictions on women's presence in the religious sphere.

In light of the growing influence of women in immigrant religious congregations in the United States and the global Islamic feminist movement, Muslim women's changing roles in the household, labor market, and mosques have also received scholarly attention (Aswad 1994; Read 2002). Although the traditional expectations for women are largely related to

non-religious factors—family, marriage, and childbearing—a growing number of American Muslim women are becoming more assertive in the religious sphere and identify themselves using Islam as an essential element (Haddad et al. 2006:16). More and more Muslim women in the United States now play important roles in men's traditional territory, acting as leaders of religious organizations and academia. It is evident that Muslim women have become increasingly influential within their communities and in the larger society through the effort of Muslim scholars and social activists (Mattson 1999; Webb 2000; Leonard 2003; Haddad et al. 2006; Hammer 2012). Feminist reinterpretation of the sacred scripture also contributes to this change (Waddud 1999, 2000). Many female converts were attracted to Islam because of the feminist message of Islam (Gehrke-White 2006). A "paradigm of Muslim woman" is being developed in the process of redefining gender roles in Muslim societies and transnational Muslim communities (Haddad et al. 2006:145).

However, this paradigm is frequently criticized as "mirror[ing] Western discussion about the role of women" (Haddad et al. 2006:145). Lamya al-Faruqi, an influential American Muslim woman thinker argues that Western feminism only applies to the Western culture and cannot be transplanted to other societies. For her, the fundamental difference between Muslim women and Western women is that Muslim women view Islam as essential to their identity while Western feminists are against religion (Haddad et al. 2006:149). Another influential thinker, Maryam Jameelah, also emphasizes that Islam provides the ultimate solution to problems women face in society (Haddad et al. 2006:149). This line of thinking reinforces the traditional perspective on the role of women and serves to create a strong conservative base among Muslim women. Ironically, facilitated by modern technology, such as the media and the Internet, these traditional views about the role of women in Islam not only survived but have had an important impact on Muslim communities, both in Muslim countries and non-Muslim societies (Haddad et al 2006:146).

Regardless of their differences, both camps use the sacred scripture, the Holy Qur'an, as their essential source to either support the traditional expectations of women or challenge the patriarchal dominance. Traditional women view the Qur'an as unchangeable and take a literal approach toward it. On the contrary, "progressive," "liberal," "secular," or "feminist" Muslim women see it as interpretable and flexible to accommodate the changing social conditions. The approach enables women to seek liberation and transformation of self, while challenging male supremacy. Although holding opposite views, many women from both camps are equally well-educated and have studied the Qur'an carefully. Their conflicting understandings of the religion and the West present a challenge in the creation of an overarching "American Muslim" identity.

Undeniably, the sense of sisterhood is still strong among Muslim women in the United States regardless of their conflicting views on certain issues

such as *hijab* and Islamic clothing (Bartkowski and Read 2003). This strong sisterhood is often built on a shared religious identity constructed in the process of interacting with non-Muslims in the West. However, in my study, I also observed competing views about the role of women in Islam and divergent attitudes toward gender relations in the community. In the public discourses, such as Friday sermons and the community newsletters, Imam Siddiqui spoke about the Islamic perspective of women that is sometimes ambiguous. On the one hand, women are encouraged to pursue a bigger role in the community; on the other hand, male dominance is also justified by drawing from the same sources. Similar conflicts also exist among women. Women who invoke the Qur'anic verses to challenge the status quo are usually more articulate and assertive in the public discourses. In contrast, women who have a traditional perspective are less vocal but are often supported by the dominating males. Differences in both secular and religious education, cultural upbringing, and socioeconomic status divide women in many ways. The conflicts among women reinforce the divisions within the Riverside Muslim community and give a glimpse of the complex gender relationships within American Muslim community at large.

In this chapter, I first provide a brief portrait of the women in Riverside Mosque. Then, I discuss the growing awareness of Muslim identity among women. This "achieved identity" through inter-faith dialogue activities serves as the foundation for a strong sense of sisterhood. However, women's power and influence in the community are still very limited. Their minority status and invisibility are demonstrated by the "removal" of a woman Executive Board member and the mixed responses among her fellow women members. Women who seek to exert more influence in the community and who adopt a progressive view of gender relations in Islam remain in the minority. The divisions among women deepen as the progressives push to achieve more egalitarian gender relations in the mosque. The complex relationships among women in Riverside Mosque suggest that it is the competing views among women that, ironically, reinforce male dominance, render women powerless, and divide the community.

WOMEN OF RIVERSIDE MOSQUE: A BRIEF SKETCH

The Muslim women living in Riverside are far from homogeneous. While the majority are still first-generation immigrants from the Middle East and South Asia, American-born generations are growing and becoming a significant part of the community. There are also a number of African American women and White women, mostly converts to Islam.

Among the nearly sixty women I became acquainted with throughout my study, most of them were born Muslims—only nine of them were converts. Almost all of them were Sunni Muslims. Only a few were from Shi'a families. Their differences were also in their religious views, which were partly reflected

in their clothing styles, especially outside the mosque, which I observed at occasions such as family gatherings, community activities, school events, etc. Among the women in Riverside Mosque, about two-thirds wore some sort of head-covering; some were stricter, while others were more relaxed. Among those women who wore *hijab* both inside and outside the mosque, some of them wore long and loose clothes, such as *abaya* or *jilbab*, while others wore western style clothes. The younger *hijabis* were usually fashion sensitive.[2] They wore fashionable western-style clothing in innovative ways to meet the Islamic requirements. Throughout my research, I only met three women who wore full sets of *niqab*, which covers their heads and their entire faces. Their hands were covered with black gloves and their shoes were hidden under the floor-length *abayas*. The other one-third did not cover outside mosque for different reasons. These women were from different ethnic backgrounds, age cohorts, and immigrant generations.

Muslim women in Riverside also differ in terms of socioeconomic status. Since a large number of Arab and Indo-Pakistani men in this community are physicians or other high-income professionals, their wives are often homemakers. Some of them are active volunteers in various charitable organizations, while others are less keen on venturing outside the household. Wives of businessmen often work many unpaid hours for their family businesses and some even work full-time. The exceptions are the Bosnian women and recent African immigrants. Since most of them came to the United States as refugees, they tend to experience economic downward mobility in the process of migration. In order to make ends meet, most women have to work full time outside the household. There is also a sizable group of well-educated women professionals employed in a wide range of occupations, including investment banking, computer engineering, education, and medical related professions.

The socioeconomic differences can be roughly linked to ethnicities. Compared to women from other ethnic groups, Indo-Pakistani women tend to be more fluent in English and are better-educated. They also tend to have post-secondary degrees. The majority of those without post-secondary degrees received high school education. On average, Arab women tend to be less educated, especially recent immigrants who came to the United States for family reasons. However, there are also several school teachers and physicians among them.

In terms of the immigrant generations, most married women are first-generation immigrants, while only about ten were born or mostly raised in the United States. Teenage girls were typically born and raised in this country except for some Bosnians girls who came to the United States as children. I also interacted with a group of female college students; some were attending colleges in the Riverside area, and others were enrolled in universities in other cities or states and only visited home during school breaks. Regardless of their religious views and ethnicities, most of them have maintained close ties with their traditional cultures.

In terms of marital status—except for young women who were still in school or college—almost all women were married. Many of them were involved in arranged marriages and were married at an early age. Some parents also arranged marriages for their American-born children even before they graduated from college hoping family life could rein in their energy and keep them from doing *haram*, which is largely associated with premarital sex prevalent in American society.

A small group of women play leadership roles in organizing a variety of social events; more tend to be passive participants; and, the rest do not participate in any community events. Some of them are more outspoken, while others are less opinionated. A sizable number of women have very traditional views about gender roles, while many hold more egalitarian opinions. Among those women who take a more egalitarian approach to gender relations, a handful of them pursue gender equality more publicly while others like to keep it to themselves. In general, although a number of women ventured outside the household to pursue professional careers, most of them are still largely responsible for housework, child rearing, and other culturally related reproductive roles. This situation is changing, however, as their college educated daughters become more inclined to develop careers outside the home.

Regardless, all of them have experienced some kind of discrimination while living in a non-Muslim society, all of them are challenged about their views on gender relations in Islam every now and then, and all of them face questions—at least occasionally—about their Muslim identity and their attitude toward living in America. Encountering scrutiny in American society, they have become more aware of their surroundings and themselves. Their shared Muslim identity creates strong sisterhood among the women when they are facing the outside world. In the meantime, their competing views and practices generate frictions and conflicts within. The public and private discourses on gender issues within Riverside Mosque and its community demonstrate the women's divergent approaches to living as Muslims in American society. Religion is an important source for these women to draw upon to either maintain their traditional gender roles or to challenge the patriarchal power and gendered space in their community.

As a woman researcher, I had easy access to the women in Riverside Mosque. I interacted with them on a weekly basis when they fulfilled their religious duties at Friday *Jummah* and prayer services during *Ramadan* and on *Eid*. I observed them exert their influence in community affairs when the Women's Committee met monthly to plan social events and discuss mosque maintenance issues. I also observed women's Qur'an reading group, *halaqa*, and Sunday schools where most teachers were women. In addition, I was frequently invited to their homes on different occasions such as *Eid* celebrations, family gatherings, bridal showers, etc. My close interactions with these women and my in-depth interviews with many of them provided valuable information to shed light on divergent opinions

toward gender relations among Muslims in the United States. The formal interviews I conducted with twenty women confirmed my observations of their religious views, attitudes toward American society, and their parenting methods for their American-born children.

BRINGING OUT THE RELIGIOUS SELF THROUGH INTER-FAITH ACTIVITIES

Searching for commonality has become more important than debating the differences within the American Muslim community in post-9/11 American society. For Muslims in the United States, establishing a common ground is extremely appealing. The terrorist attacks put Muslim Americans in a tough spot where they had to defend their identity as Muslims. The conflict between Islam and the West may be hard to reconcile; and a common ground among Muslims themselves is as difficult to come by. Although the universal sisterhood has been a strong factor uniting Muslim women (Bartkowski and Read 2003), achieving a shared identity is no easy task. As Haddad et al. (2006:17) pointed out,

> The rhetoric of commonality may represent an important development in American Islam, and certainly has its advocates in many corners of American Muslim society. Still, such identification is easier said than done for many women who reasonably think of themselves first as Arab or Indonesian or Nigerian, with Islam simply an understood ingredient in that identity. What it really means to be American, for them, may be somewhat more difficult to figure out, and some immigrant Muslim women simply do not have the educational or emotional resources to deal with it. Their concern is rather with their children and making sure that somehow cultural particularities are not completely lost in the search for new identities.

Thus, the spokespersons of "American Islam" emphasize the universal message of Islam and work diligently to construct a shared American Muslim identity that is based on a religion deemed as pluralistic and accommodating in nature. Studies on Muslim communities—immigrants, indigenous African Americans, and the American-born generations—all suggest the important role of Islam in bridging gaps and building a shared "American Muslim" identity (see Haddad and Esposito 1998; Haddad 2002; Khan 2002; Schimdt 2004).

In her study on Muslim college students, Peek (2005) found that young Muslims develop their religious identities through three stages—as an ascribed identity, as a chosen identity, and as a declared identity. When religion is an ascribed identity, Muslim youth tend to take it for granted and view religion as part of the cultural tradition of their families. Such

religious identity is even denied as it relates to the past and the older generations. When youth make a conscious decision to embrace their Islamic identity, religious identity becomes a chosen identity that often excludes national and ethnic identities. Peek (2005) argued that the events of 9/11 served as a crisis that led to the development of a declared identity. Youth asserted their Muslim identity to combat public misconceptions of Islam and to achieve a positive self-perception (Peek 2005). This conceptualization is useful in analyzing the identity formation among other Muslims or religious minorities who suffer from prevalent prejudice in society.

Although far away from the epicenter of 9/11, Muslims in Riverside clearly felt the rising tides of suspicion and even hatred against them. All of a sudden, they had to prove their "Americanness" and reach out to the non-Muslims in Riverside. In order to deal with grief and fear that emerged within the community, a group of women formed the Women's Committee, which aimed at bringing all women together to strengthen the sisterhood at this critical time. Reena was one of the founders of the Women's Committee. She recalled,

> It was right after the 9/11 event. Everybody was feeling very upset and very sad about what happened to those innocent people in New York City. At the same time, we were worried about the damage it did to the image of Muslims living in the States, which has not been positive to begin with. I thought that we should do something. I called Sarah. I only met her in the *masjid* a few times; [I] don't really know her. But I heard she is very active in the community. So, I called her. She shared the same feeling as I did. We decided that we should get more women and do something together. That was how it started. We called up other women we knew and asked them to call other women they knew. Then, we set up a time for the first meeting. [The] Women's Committee started this way. We now meet once a month either in the Mosque or in somebody's house. We [have] planned many activities since then. We organize community gatherings, volunteer in the homeless shelter and food pantry, and help with the Sunday school.

To the leaders of the Women's Committee in Riverside Mosque, what makes Muslim sisterhood strong is their faith and their traditionally marginalized position in the community. For many years, the women in the Riverside area mostly socialized with women from similar backgrounds based on kinship, ethnicity, and residential areas. They had not been active in communicating and interacting with women of different ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic status let alone their non-Muslim neighbors. Many stay-at-home wives of high-income professionals or successful businessmen had been enjoying quiet and affluent lives in the suburbs and had little connection with refugees and women from low-income families. Working women were often excluded from private gatherings that were usually organized around the schedules of stay-at-home mothers.

In the wake of 9/11, Riverside Muslims realized that they could no longer ignore the misperceptions and hatred toward their community. Like other mosques nationwide, Riverside Mosque endured vandalism. Women and men also suffered different forms of discrimination and prejudice because of their religion. Many women especially faced direct challenges, questions, and even humiliation in the mall, in the supermarket, and at their workplaces. Some women were ordered to take off their *hijab* by their supervisors at work. Women who had been active in the local community, like Eva, a first-generation Syrian-American woman, now had to try harder to dispel misconceptions about their religion and assert their Muslim identities. Although Eva does not cover her hair and her white skin does not easily set her apart from the people she works with, she still frequently encounters bigotry against Islam and Muslims.

Crisis also brings opportunities. It was after 9/11 that Riverside Mosque started attracting more attention and media coverage. More and more people wanted to know about Islam. In the months after 9/11, Riverside Mosque received the most visitors since it was built in 1994. In the following years, Riverside Mosque continued accommodating visitors from a wide range of backgrounds. Not only did journalists come to visit more often, but professors in local colleges and universities also contacted the mosque to arrange field trips for their classes. Muslims in Riverside Mosque were asked about their attitudes toward the United States and were questioned about controversial issues in their religion. Their religious identity gained such prominence that everyone had to take his/her religious identity seriously.

According to social psychologists, although a person's social identities and the salience of these identities tends to be stable, critical events could change the salience hierarchy and lead individuals to rearrange their identities' salience order (Cahill 1986; West and Zimmerman 1987; Nagel 1994, 1995; Stryker 1980; Vryan et al. 2003). The tragic events of 9/11 altered these women's identity salience hierarchy, which used to stress motherhood, family life, and ethnic identity. Muslim identity especially moved up on the ladder, standing out to bring Muslim women together. As a born-Muslim, first-generation South Asian immigrant, and the wife of a successful physician, Reena's identity matrixes are very different from Sarah, who is a White convert, former Catholic, and the wife of a middle-class Arab engineer. However, the 9/11 events brought them together to work toward the same end. As women, they are both mothers, wives, and daughters; however their Muslim identity builds a stronger alliance between them. Muslim identity, though the meanings of it are still contested, serves as a common ground to bring these women together.

Since 2001, the Women's Committee has successfully gathered a large group of women and planned a number of high-profile, inter-faith and charitable events. For instance, the Women's Committee spearheaded a cookbook project pooling together more than two hundred home-cooking recipes donated by more than twenty women in the community. Titled *Global*

Cuisine: Flavors of Our Community,[3] this cookbook highlights the diversity of Riverside Mosque and a strong sense of sisterhood. The funds raised by this cookbook were contributed to the mosque expansion project. In addition, the Women's Committee has also been instrumental in reaching out to their non-Muslim neighbors to get them to know the real Muslims and dispel misconceptions about Islam. Although women are often seen in the dining area inside the mosque, they are in fact behind many outreach programs, from lectures, workshops, inter-faith dialogues, to mosque open-houses and dinner parties. Among these activities, the women's inter-faith dialogue group was the most successful and influential. Sarah described women's inter-faith activities vividly as "talking across the fence" to their neighbors.

In 2004, with the support of the Women's Committee, a local Catholic church, and the Center for Women's Intercultural Leadership at a local college, Sarah took the initiative and organized an inter-faith dialogue group for Muslim and Christian women in the area. Women of Riverside Mosque, local Catholic churches, and churches of various Protestant denominations met monthly to discuss topics of common interest, including the theological commonalities and differences between Christianity and Islam, women's roles in each religious community, how to raise children religiously in a secular society, how to pass down ethnic cultures to the younger generations, and how to develop healthy family relations, etc. This inter-faith dialogue group started by Riverside Muslim women became increasingly known among local inter-faith organizations. More and more women from different faith traditions became involved in the group. A small survey that I conducted on the twenty women who were regular participants in this group clearly shows that dialogues help bridge the gaps among people of different faith traditions and mitigate misunderstanding and hostility. Christian women were surprised by the kindness of Muslim women; while Muslim women were amazed by the willingness of Christian women to learn about Islam. Through exchanging their knowledge of Islam and Christianity, Christian and Muslim women both came to better understanding of the commonalities Christianity and Islam share. Both sides benefited from the opportunity to meet and talk to people from different faith traditions.

A Catholic woman wrote, "I am convinced that only by dialoguing with others of differing cultures or religions can we come to understanding, empathy, affection and peace." Another Catholic woman applauded her experience in the inter-faith dialogue group as "unforgettable." She explained,

> I would say [I'm] enriched [by the group]. For years I have believed the statement in eleven major religions in the world having Scripture in their Holy writing that admonishes to treat others as they would like to be treated. My continuing searches for [this] common understanding delight me.

Muslim women also share similar sentiments. Fatima, an Arab woman, noted,

> I believe that in order to form and maintain communities of people who respect and understand each other, we must get to know one another . . . The Qur'an compels Muslims to acknowledge that we were created into tribes that we may know one another.

For Muslim women who suffered from increased discrimination after 9/11, interacting with Christian women brings them hope. Maryam wrote,

> I have been verbally assaulted many times by strangers because it's obvious by looking at me that I am Muslim. In this group, there has been respect on both sides from the very beginning, which has certainly been refreshing. I had to overcome a bit of wariness because of the past experiences to be a positive contributor to the group . . . I live in a community where my family is virtually the only Muslims, we are often the target of people who wish to "run their own agenda" on us. The Riverside community is much more diverse, and has been for some time—Muslims are not new to the area. This difference perhaps made my attitude more jaded than was necessary at the beginning, and to my delight I have found that the Christian women have been open, curious, and respectful. They have demonstrated a sincere desire to learn and understand.

Muslim women also find their faith strengthened and their Muslim identity affirmed in interacting with other faith traditions and explaining Islam to non-Muslims. Saima told me that she learned a lot about Islam through inter-faith dialogue because she had to learn about each month's topic first before sharing with other women and answering their questions:

> Once, a [Christian] woman asked questions about polygamy in Islam. I told her it is not like what people think. According to the Qur'an, if a man is to take more than one wife, he has to treat them equally. The Qur'an says it is not possible for a man to treat two women equally. Though I know this, I had to look into the Qur'an to find specific verses to show her and explain to her. In order to explain this to her, I also asked a scholar about this.

Other women shared similar stories about the importance of inter-faith dialogues in helping them learn more about Islam and how to be better Muslims:

> I am a born Muslim, so I've never paid any attention to it until 9/11 happened and people around me started questioning my faith. Interacting with other women [of different faith traditions] helps me to understand Islam. I have to explain what Islam is and what the Qur'an is all about to them. So, I have to learn it first . . . I feel that I'm more Muslim than ever.

The rhetoric shows that these Muslim women reinforce their Muslim identity through inter-faith dialogue activities where they research about the meaning of Islam and the Qur'an.

Interestingly, inter-faith dialogue activities also reveal the competing religious views and opinions among Muslim women. In the past when religious identity was not so salient, women tended to avoid the topic of religion and mostly emphasized their shared roles as wives, mothers, and daughters. These common roles among women created a strong sense of sisterhood. Although the sense of sisterhood is still strong, competing religious views and divergent understanding of the Qur'anic verses incite conflict. Women often have different opinions about *hijab*. Some think it is required of Muslim women; others think it is optional. In a discussion about *hijab*, women holding different opinions are challenged by Christian women who want to find out the Islamic perspective on *hijab*.

Increased mutual understanding can grow out of contention. I was told a story about an Arab woman who used to have very biased views about Christianity and changed after attending the inter-faith activities:

> When I first met her, she [the Arab woman] was against Christians. She said that she didn't like her kids to be close to Christians. We had candle light vigils in the mosque after 9/11 to show our solidarity and sympathy toward the victims of 9/11. This Arab lady said that she doesn't believe in this candle thing. She said that she didn't like it, and she wouldn't go. Two weeks later, she completely changed. I think her husband was very much involved in the inter-faith activities. Now, she has also become an active member of the inter-faith group. Now, most people want to learn different religions and different [theological] schools in Islam. The 9/11 events indeed have a very big impact on everybody in the community.

In many aspects, 9/11 created an opportunity for Muslim women to develop a strong religious identity and define themselves increasingly by their religion rather than by ethnicity or by their roles as mothers and wives. Definitions of Islam and Muslim identity are constructed in dialogues in response to their internal struggle of who they are and the external pressure of those who seek to find what Islam really is. This "achieved identity" (Hammond 1988; Warner 1993; Yang 1999; Peek 2005; Chen 2008) becomes the foundation for a strong sisterhood. Their growing interest in playing bigger roles in the mosque, however, meets various challenges.

SARAH'S REMOVAL

To some degree, women have achieved a bigger role in the community. As the women's inter-faith dialogue group grew, Sarah won respect from

both women and men in both Muslim and non-Muslim communities for her dedication in promoting mutual understandings between Muslims and Christians and her pragmatic approach to dealing with problems. Sarah was elected to the Mosque Executive Board in 2004—the first woman to serve on the Board since the mosque was established in 1994—and remained the only woman on the Board before she moved to another state. The Women's Committee also became a standing committee in the mosque, mainly responsible for organizing social activities and Sunday school activities. During her term on the Mosque Executive Board, Sarah helped organize more activities for women and children, especially inter-faith activities. She also encouraged Muslim women to become part of the local community by working as volunteers at the homeless shelter and food pantry. Sarah became the face of Riverside Mosque. She was frequently invited to give talks in local religious and non-religious organizations. She was especially known among the non-Muslim communities who were eager to build inter-faith relations with other religious groups. However, Sarah left the community feeling hurt by what she called "bigotry against women's growing influence in the community" as much as by the lack of support from her fellow Muslim sisters.

Formerly a Catholic, Sarah has been a Muslim for more than two decades. She lived in the Middle East with her husband for many years before moving to Riverside in 1998. According to Sarah, she was invited by the "brothers" to serve the community. She had already gained a lot of respect in the community for her initiative in forming the Women's Committee and later the women's inter-faith dialogue group. At the General Membership Meeting in April 2003, she was elected to be one of the nine members of the Executive Board for a three-year term. She was appointed secretary and was responsible for keeping the minutes of all Board meetings and the quarterly general member meetings, publishing these minutes in community newsletters, and keeping all corporate records (except financial records) and documents.

Sarah worked whole-heartedly for the mosque. She spent countless hours and a lot of energy planning activities, organizing meeting minutes, and circulating them among community members. Her hard work was well received, but it also created an ambiguous attitude toward her. She was criticized for being too rigid and too strict. Some argued that she did not understand the particular situation facing Muslim immigrants. The conflict between her and the other Board members—all males—gradually grew throughout her years on the Board, mostly due to her "American upbringing" and her role as mother of two.

Initially, Sarah felt her voice was intentionally neglected because "the South Asian and Arab men do not want to listen to a woman because of their big egos." Then, Sarah found that she was intentionally marginalized and even excluded from Board meetings on several occasions. She was very upset that she was not able to attend several meetings, which

were scheduled after the *Isha* prayer during *Ramadan* at around 10 p.m. She felt that the men intentionally kept her out of the loop because they knew that she would not be able to attend meetings at that "unreasonable" hour. To Sarah, scheduling a meeting at that hour was equivalent to throwing her out of the Board, because these men should have understood that a woman has to stay home with her children at night. She felt that her presence on the Executive Board had a mere symbolic meaning. Although her election to the Board had indeed encouraged women to become more active participants in the community, it seemed just to give women the impression or illusion that they had achieved power and equal status with men in the community.

The conflict between Sarah and the rest of the Board members deepened as she tried to push through more changes. Sarah believes that it all began with her criticism of the Executive Board's failure to abide by the mosque bylaws, such as holding General Membership Meetings on a quarterly basis and following procedures to elect Executive Board members. Because of these bylaw violations and her belief that the bylaws should be improved, Sarah drafted a set of new bylaws and presented them to the Board before the mosque incorporation took place.[4] She believed that since the mosque was going to be incorporated as a non-profit religious organization in the United States, it could no longer run in the old-fashioned way. It had to follow the American standards abiding by the laws and operating democratically. General Membership Meetings must be held regularly for members to voice their opinions. Voting must be held to ensure individual's rights. For Sarah, these actions could greatly improve the quality of spiritual life for all community members. She also believed that the Board members were public servants who should not promote their personal agendas or manipulate public opinions. However, her enthusiasm to institutionalize the mosque according to the American standard was not well accepted. She believes that this was the reason that eventually led to her "removal" from the Executive Board before the designated election date.

The Executive Board members filed incorporation papers in February 2006. The nine members elected in 2003 were going to serve as the initial members of the incorporated Riverside Islamic Society, Inc. until elections were held in October 2006. To complete the organizational structure of the corporation, the Board of Directors was supposed to hold a meeting to put their signatures on the new bylaws. However, each Board member was also asked to sign a "written consent," a two-page legal document that was drawn up by Mr. Hasan, another member of the Executive Board. By signing, Executive Board members agreed to give up their right to a face-to-face meeting. Signing also meant consenting to several resolutions, including adopting bylaws. Not happy about this situation, Sarah emailed Mr. Hasan saying that she felt a meeting was needed. She wanted to clarify the status of the bylaws, which the General Membership Meetings had not even seen, much less ratified. She did not get a reply from Mr. Hasan.

Instead, the next day, the incorporating officers (five Board members) met and replaced Sarah with a new male member. He signed the bylaws as the new Board member.

Without getting any notice of her replacement, nor seeing any sign of a General Membership Meeting, Sarah was infuriated. She sent a certified letter to the new secretary of the Executive Board to contest her removal and request records, such as the minutes of the meetings where her removal was discussed. She asked for proof that the procedure and reason for removal were legal according to the state law and mosque bylaws. She received two letters: one from the new Board members and the other from the attorney of the mosque who, wrote on behalf of the incorporated Riverside Islamic Society. Sarah believed that those letters were sent to her per Mr. Hasan's request, who had had problems with her for a long time. In the letter from the attorney, Sarah was told that she "was not elected to the Board of Directors of the new Corporation." She was also arguably "directing obstructive and/or harassing behavior toward certain members of the Board of Directors."

These accusations were beyond comprehension. Sarah had never imagined that the Executive Board could turn against her because she had worked so hard for the community for so many years. It was heartbreaking. The bylaws she drafted were not adopted. Rather, the Board preferred the bylaws written by Mr. Hasan, who invoked Qur'anic verses in his bylaws and emphasized that the bylaws must be consistent with the *Shari'a*. Mr. Hasan not only authored the new bylaws, but he also made them effective with only seven Executive Board members' approval, which was against the regulation written in the bylaws. The General Membership Meeting that was required to rectify the bylaws was never held either. What was most concerning to Sarah were the many rewritten codes in the bylaws that "put enormous authority and power in the president's hands, and remove[d] previous checks and balances." The new bylaws read,

> Members' primary role is to elect and remove Board of Directors; respect authority figures; and abide by rules and regulations at all times.
>
> There is no advisory type body elected by members. Instead, directors appoint "honorary trustees" to five-year terms. Trustee's role is to be "silent" until the President asks them to intervene.
>
> The President, among his many powers, has the right to discipline and discharge employees, and media contact is to be strictly done by the President. The Imam holds his position at the discretion of the Board, primarily to the President.

Sarah felt that her rights were violated and the Board conducted its business in a totally undemocratic way. She thought that these men still wanted to run the mosque as they used to in their home countries. "There

are too many old practices going on in this mosque," said Sarah, who was quite frustrated and full of emotion. She thought that there was a lack of transparency in the decision-making process and too much dictatorship. "This is not Islam!" she said. Sarah thought it was dangerous for a small group of rich people to be running the mosque.

Some Board members thought Sarah was a respectable Muslim sister and a good Board member and that she had done a lot of good things for the community. However, they did not like her rigidness and her insisting on practicing that much democracy in the community because "democracy doesn't work everywhere, just like the American style democracy won't work in many other places." They felt that holding so many General Membership Meetings would just create more conflicts, waste time, and make the decision-making process much less efficient. Some decisions could be made among the Board members without the need to have everybody to vote. After all, this was a voluntary organization. The Board members are not paid and they spent their precious time just for the sake of Allah and the community. How could they do any harm to the community? To others, Sarah is a White American and a woman; as such, she was conscientious, nevertheless, she was too idealistic and impractical.

When other women learned about the situation, they felt sorry for what had happened to Sarah. However, instead of protesting against the "dictatorship," all the sympathy or anger was kept private. Sarah was told that her removal had nothing to do with her. There was no conflict between her and the other Board members. The male Board members only wanted to save her from working too hard, especially when she was about to relocate to another state because of her husband's new job. "We just did not want to burden her with so much work," one women said. Some of their husbands were the Board members who were involved in the incident, therefore, they chose to keep quiet. Protesting would not work anyway. After all, the bylaws were signed and the incorporation had been completed. Some women thought that Sarah should not take this too seriously. "Nobody was doing this to humiliate her. It was all well-intended," Asma, a South Asian woman, said. A letter drafted by Sarah on behalf of the general members to demand the immediate resignation of the officers and directors of the Executive Board was never sent out. Overwhelmed and without support, she quit fighting.

At the General Membership Meeting in early 2007, the issue of Sarah's "removal" was brought up when Sarah rejected a plaque presented to her as a token for her outstanding service in the community. The Board members spoke about the changes of personnel—replacing Sarah—on the Executive Board and emphasized that they only did so because Sarah was going to move out of the area soon. Reena was the only woman who spoke out for Sarah at the meeting, "You've [the Executive Board members] made a few mistakes. Why not accept it and move on?!" The men did not apologize and they had already moved on. The man who took Sarah's place as a Board member defended himself and the Executive Board. He said that he had

to follow the stories from the other eight Board members instead of the story told by Sarah alone because he must follow the majority. That is what democracy means; the majority rules.

Sarah's "removal" from the Executive Board vividly demonstrates gender relations in Riverside Mosque. Although the public discourse relentlessly supports gender equality, it provides little substantive and concrete support for woman's active engagement in the community affairs, especially in the decision-making process. Women's primary roles are still limited to motherhood and within the household. Even though women's roles have been expanded in the congregation through the Women's Committee and the inter-faith dialogue group, these roles are basically the extension of traditional roles. Since immigrant religious congregations are usually a place of worship and a community center simultaneously (Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Ammerman 2005), women's influence is mostly confined within the non-religious sphere. It is true that women are now playing more important roles—including some leadership roles—traditional cultural norms and the dominant interpretation of the sacred scriptures still put males on the preferred list when a congregation seeks people to serve its needs (Ebaugh and Chafetz 1999). Women are usually asked to play roles that men cannot fill. Similarly, Riverside Mosque also functions like a traditional patriarchal household to some extent. Women are indispensable and encouraged to be part of the family. However, if a woman seeks to change the traditional order of the household, she then cannot be tolerated.

Moreover, the reluctance among women to support Sarah indicates the minority status of progressive women in the community. Sarah's achieved influence and visibility in the community did not change her status as a powerless minority, as demonstrated by the lack of support within the community, especially from her fellow Muslim sisters, when she was defending her rights. In the United States, Muslim women scholars and social activists have indeed gained considerable attention and have become the prominent speakers for Islam through their roles in national Islamic organizations and academia (Haddad et al. 2006). However, as shown in this case, the power of the conservative base among women is too strong to be taken for granted. It is not to say that these women actually have any power in the decision-making process. It is exactly their powerless position in the community and their willingness to conform to the tradition of male dominance that contributed to the "removal" of Sarah from the Executive Board. Their lack of enthusiasm in fighting against the male domination not only weakens the Muslim sisterhood but also reinforces the subordinate position of women.

THE SOURCE OF CONFLICT

To my interlocutors, Sarah's removal from the Executive Board had nothing to do with religion but politics in the mosque. Or, it was all because of

the quarrel between Sarah and Mr. Hasan about the new mosque bylaws. But everyone agreed that the divisions among the Muslim sisters were evident. The proposal of bringing down the screen separating men and women was a major ingredient for conflict.

The traditional roles of women in Muslim societies have largely kept women from attending the mosque on a regular basis. As Islam is being transplanted by Muslim immigrants to America, women's relations with the mosque are also changing to reflect the new roles mosques adopted in the New World. Although women are not required to pray in the mosque and attend Friday congregational prayers according to the religious teaching, and many women have never set foot in a mosque in their home countries, it has become a common practice for women to attend mosques regularly in the United States (Bagby et al. 2001). For immigrant Muslims, the mosque is not only a place for worship, but also a place for community gatherings where immigrants find religious and ethnic companionship, comfort, and support.

To accommodate women, most mosques in the United States are structured in various ways to ensure that the two genders are properly separated. In almost two-thirds of the mosques surveyed by the National Mosque Project in 2001, women pray behind a curtain or partition or in another room (Bagby et al. 2001:9). In 1994, however, only a little more than half of the mosques in the United States had such arrangements for gender segregation. The American mosques have become increasingly segregated. Some mosques are intentionally designed with two separate entrances for men and women to enter the prayer areas. Others use screens, mobile walls, or some other dividing equipment to delineate two separate areas for men and women. Women's dining areas are also usually separated from the men's. As I described in Chapter 1 of this volume, Riverside Mosque conforms to the traditional practices of gender segregation, however, not strictly. The architect of Riverside Mosque did not erect a wall separating women's and men's prayer areas. Nevertheless, the large prayer hall on the second floor was conveniently divided into two separate areas by mobile screens (see Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1 of this volume).

In Riverside Mosque, the progressive women's fight against gender inequality started by trying to remove the screens that divided the prayer hall into two sections, one for men and one for women. The progressive women were not pleased by this practice, because they feel it excludes them from the community. They complained that women tend to chat among themselves during the sermons, because they cannot see the Imam on the other side of the screen, which makes it harder for them to concentrate. Other women find it is impossible to follow the Imam when performing prayers, since they only see screens in front of them. Some feel frustrated that they cannot raise questions after the sermons and become fully engaged in religious rituals.

Asma is one of the women who has been trying to remove the screens in the prayer hall. These women draw on the practices during the time of

Prophet Muhammad when women and men were not separated by a screen, or a wall, or anything of that nature. They believe that removing the gender separation is *the* way to return to the true essence of Islam as taught by Prophet Muhammad through his own behaviors. To them, putting women behind screens is degrading and against the core teaching of Islam that bestows women with the rights to own and inherit property, to consent or refuse a marriage proposal, and to initiate divorce. The progressive women find support in scholarly works that argue cultural, ethnic, and institutionalized religious traditions may dictate a subordinate and passive role for women, while the teachings in the Qur'an propose an egalitarian view (Wadud-Muhsin 1992; Minces 1994; Damji and Lee 1995; Azhar 1999).

However, the conservatives have their reasons for practicing gender segregation. They agree that, during the Prophet's time, women simply stood behind men during prayers without a physical barrier to separate them. However, gender segregation was taught by great religious scholars and has been maintained in most Muslim communities for centuries. Therefore, there must be good reasons for such practice. Some women told me that it is for the benefit of both genders. They argue that the separation helps both men and women to concentrate more on their prayers and thus benefits both sides. Noha, a woman from Sudan, believes that gender segregation is for the protection of women. She said, "At the Prophet's time, people were very nice to women and they were religious. But it has changed. No men today can be compared to those at the Prophet's time." These conservative women sometimes complain that Riverside Mosque is "too liberal." Men and women not only share the same entrance but also eat at the same table.

Throughout the years, the Executive Board has rejected Asma and her friends' proposals many times. The rejection came not only from men but also from women who hold more conservative views toward the practice of gender separation. In fact, some men were supportive of the proposal to remove the screens, such as Imam Abdullah. Frustrated, Asma eventually lost hope and gave up. However, the progressive women have still achieved small successes. They have been innovative in dealing with the deeply rooted traditions that, for them, are religiously unfounded. On one of the Fridays, *Hajja* Eva decided not to sit behind the screen. She walked out of the designated area for women and sat at the table behind the men's territory. From where she sat, she could see the Imam and hear the sermon better, but the screens still stood between men and women. While some women who do not like the screens chose to stay behind them, a few more women joined *Hajja* Eva and chose to express their opinions through actions. Abe, a second-generation Syrian American woman, chose to join her aunt, though Abe is very strict about *hijab*.

In early 2007, Sophia, a graduate student, started circulating a petition from the women in the mosque to urge the Executive Board to remove the screen panels in the prayer hall. She was supported by the progressive women in the community and gathered nearly forty signatures of both

men and women—an amazing result, yet still far from enough to make a huge impact on the Executive Board. Many women who were not happy about the screen refused to sign the petition and be identified, fearing to be labeled as "liberal." Some were completely against removing the screen, while others—not particularly against it or for it—remained neutral. One evening, some of the progressive women took the issue in their own hands and made a bold move. They removed the front screens before the evening prayer. For the first time, women could see the Imam during his sermon. However, it did not even last for one night. Immediately after the prayer, some other women, feeling shocked and violated, quickly moved the screens back to their original places.

A few days later, the Executive Board announced that they would replace the solid panels with stained glass screens, allowing the women to see the Imam during prayer services while maintaining two clearly defined areas for each gender. Some progressive women and men were against this decision, criticizing it as hypocrisy. However, the Executive Board did it anyway. The three front panels were replaced, whilst the solid side panels remained. Sophia, Asma, and other the women who supported the removal of the screens were disappointed but had to accept the fact that this was probably the best they could hope for.

The role religion plays in this case is essential to understand the diversity within Muslim communities in the United States. Women's status in Islam has long been a controversial topic. Given the difficulties in understanding the meanings of the original words of the Qur'an, scholarly opinions on how to interpret the sacred scripture have a huge impact on gender relations in Muslim societies. The traditionally all-male clergy have served as authorities in interpreting the Qur'an and *hadiths* (Munson 1988). Women's voices have not been heard until recently. In addition, any condemnation of the subordinate position of Muslim women in the Middle Eastern studies is often labeled as an imposition of Western values (Weiner 2004).

In spite of all the difficulties, new Islamic feminists turn to the Qur'an for evidence of gender equality and criticize the oppression of women. Several American Muslim feminists have put forward a feminist reading of the Qur'an evident in *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* by Amina Wadud (1999), *American Muslims: The New Generation* by Asma Gull Hasan (2000), and *Life So Far* by Bettey Friedan (2000). Islamic feminist scholars and activists unanimously use the Qur'an as their primary source to condemn the maltreatment of women and to argue for equal rights for women in Muslim communities. They believe that, in Islam, men and women enjoy equal status. In fact, Muslim women have played important leadership roles from early on. Islamic scholars draw upon the example of Aisha, one of Prophet Muhammad's wives, who led an army and taught both women and men. Women holding such convictions are often labeled as Islamic feminists or "Muslim feminists" (Haddad et al. 2006:19).

People of various backgrounds have embraced Islam as a universal religion. As Islam reshapes the local practices and traditions, local cultural elements have also dyed Islam into different colors (Lewis 2002). Although Muslims all over the world strive to follow the core teachings of the faith, their interpretations of the religion and their lifestyles vary substantially, which particularly affects the understanding of gender issues in Muslim communities. The conviction that Islam should be pure and free of cultural influences also has a significant effect on many people's views about women's roles. In Riverside Mosque, people holding conflicting views on the roles of women all draw on the teachings of the Qur'an and *sunnah*. Religion is invoked by competing groups as the nexus of their arguments. The conservatives criticize the influence of Western culture on the progressives; while the progressives believe that the traditional interpretation of Islam is a product of patriarchal cultures prevalent in Muslim societies. Even though some people are more likely to stand somewhere in between on the continuum of opinions, the polarized position of the conservatives and the progressives causes conflicts, harms the sense of Muslim sisterhood, and in turn weakens the unity of the community.

Despite the successes that the progressive women have achieved in gender equality, they remain a minority in Riverside Muslim community. The inter-faith dialogue group, although successful in many aspects, remains small in size. Most women in the Riverside Muslim community are neither involved in inter-faith dialogues nor most community activities. The sense of community and civic participation is still weak among women. Activities are mostly carried out around the household and within limited social networks often based on kinship and ethnicity. The primary role of the Women's Committee remains within traditional women's realms such as food preparation and child-rearing. Although female activists and progressive thinkers gained considerable visibility in the community, they are too small in number to challenge the status quo through general body voting or to change the traditional gender roles maintained by the strong patriarchal cultures. Saima, one of the long-time members of the Women's Committee, joked about the role of women in the community, "Well, we can't make any decisions. But we might be able to put some pressure on our husbands so that they can make the right decisions." After Sarah's removal from the Executive Board, women face a major setback in pursuing a more prominent role in the mosque.

Conservative women do share a sense of sisterhood with the progressive women and often avoid getting into any conflict with the progressives; however, the conservative women's reluctance to support Sarah and Sophia shows the enduring differences between the two camps. These differences are often deeply rooted in divergent religious views and are hard to alter. Although the causes and consequences of specific events vary, Islam—with contestable interpretations—becomes a basic source of conflict. Women across different racial/ethnic groups, socio-economic class, and educational background unite or divide based on their competing religious views.

May Allah protect all of us from the temptations of this world, protect our youngsters from the temptations and the misguidance of this age, from the peer pressure and inculcate in their hearts spirit of faith, sense of identity. Make sacred values and good characters dearer to them. Give them the spirit of faith and the moral courage to overcome the challenges of peer pressure, drug[s], drinking, dating, and fornication. Amen.

—Imam Siddiqui, in his sermon "Importance of Youth"

5 American vs. Muslim

The community was deeply saddened by the tragic news of Amin's death in a car accident the day after the blissful celebration of *Eid al-Fitr*. People were shocked and awed by the imminent reality of death. The whole community was shrouded in grief. Amin was only twenty-one years old. Born to first-generation South Asian immigrant parents, Amin grew up in Riverside and was a college student at the time of the accident. He was a troublesome teenager but still loved by many uncles and aunties who watched him grow up in the community. He was finally returning to his faith after much struggle and this year he had fasted for the full month during *Ramadan* and prayed five times a day for the first time. Everyone was relieved and pleased by his change. Amin's family loved him deeply and was completely unprepared for his death.

Amin's death was alarming to many parents because what killed him was not just a simple car accident. At the time of the accident, Amin was in the car with three American friends who were all drunk. They were going home after a party at almost 10 p.m. One of the drunken boys insisted on driving and Amin sat in the passenger seat. The drunken driver sped at almost 100 miles per hour through a local street with a speed limit of 40 miles per hour. When the police spotted them and tried to stop the car, it had already gotten out of control. The accident happened less than a mile from Amin's parents' house. The drunken driver and the other two drunken passengers survived. Amin does not drink and had not touched alcohol the night he was killed. A parent's worst fear turned real at the end of the blessed month of *Ramadan*. The *Eid* party decorations were still hanging up, but according to the Islamic tradition, the community had to prepare for a funeral and bury the deceased as soon as possible. Two days after *Eid*, Amin's body was wrapped in white cloth and laid to rest.

Amin's death generated a negative emotion toward American society within the community. Parents and young adults tried to make sense of their experiences living as a religious minority in the largely Judeo-Christian United States. There are many "good" things about this country like prosperity, freedom, human rights, and so on. At the same time, there are also so many "bad" things like pre-marital sex, drug addiction, binge

drinking, and gang fighting—one thing after another. Parents are worried day and night, fearing their children will one day become one of those "American kids." Although Muslims believe in predestination and the people of Riverside Mosque believed Amin's death was predestined, they also tried to imagine what might have happened if Amin had never made those American friends; what if he had never gone to the party; what if he had only hung out with Muslims; what if he had been more religious; what if?

There is no doubt that any parents, Muslim or non-Muslim, are equally worried about the safety of their children, are concerned with the problems of binge drinking among young adults, and painstakingly educate their children to stay away from all the negative elements in society. Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus alike are all working hard to find a cure for the social illnesses that plague American society. Parents in Riverside Mosque understand that. However, when a tragic death hits so suddenly, there is little room to think. "American" becomes the equivalent of "poison" and "evil."

Muslims' ambivalent views about the "American culture" are recognized and addressed by many scholars around the country (see Haddad and Esposito 1998). These mixed feelings about America divide the Muslims of Riverside Mosque. The progressives believe that "bad" things such as excessive drinking, pre-marital sex, drugs, and violence are not "American." Every society has its problems. So does American society. These problems are the products of secularization and modernity. When religion becomes a mere human creation, then there is no fear for punishment, for the Day of Judgment, and for Hell. Americans are probably the most religious people in the world. The great strength and vitality of religion in America will eventually prevail and cure these illnesses. Muslims in the United States should be proud of their American identity and demonstrate their strength in front of their Muslim brothers and sisters around the world.

However, the conservatives believe that the progressives are brain washed and addicted to the material prosperity of the West. They think the progressives are just painting a rosy picture of America and trying to find excuses to permanently stay in the land of *kafir*, or the land of disbelief. Alcoholism, promiscuity, homosexuality, violence, pornography, and many other social problems are just part of American culture. They believe that Muslim parents must protect their children from getting too close to this American culture:

> Even though we have to stay in this country, we must raise our children as righteous Muslims. If you want to protect your children, you must keep them away from American kids because when they get drunk they could kill you. If Amin had never made these American friends, God forbid, he would still die one day but at least not like this.

The two seemingly conflicting identities present a huge challenge for Muslims living in the United States. First-generation adult immigrants may not

worry so much about becoming American. The lingering memories of their teenage years spent in their home countries and their deep affection toward their homeland are likely to last forever. Although they now live and work in the United States, they still eat ethnic food, drink ethnic beverages, and wear ethnic attire in their everyday lives; they talk about news that is happening in their home countries and are concerned with the political situations back home. Some may have been American citizens for many years. Yet, they hardly feel American and the hope of returning home gets stronger as they age.

However, this is no longer true for the American-born children of these immigrants. The younger generations were born in this land. They were educated here, work here, and probably will die here. Their entire lives are associated with this land called America. They speak impeccable English, and they attend American schools. To them, what is happening in their parents' home countries is only of remote interest. They talk about football or baseball, watch "Lost," and follow the events during the presidential campaigns in this country. They are Americans, irrefutably American. For many ethnic minorities in this country, religion helps them to assimilate. They can be both American and Christian. However, it seems that the word "American" does not rhyme with the word "Islam" and being a Muslim makes one an unauthentic American. In the eyes of many Americans, the geographical scope of Islam only encloses the faraway lands in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Indonesian islands, while the United States is a Christian, or a Judeo-Christian society.

Young Muslim adults are at the forefront in the battle against stereotypes and bigotry toward their religion and their lifestyles. The belief that the vision of being both a Muslim and an American could be achieved simultaneously is still nascent and has not been widely accepted. According to a survey conducted by the Muslim Public Affairs Council in 2005, nearly half of American Muslims between the ages of fourteen and twenty-six feel a conflict between their Muslim identity and their American identity.[1] In the recent Pew Research Report on Muslims in the United States, researchers also found that "younger Muslims in the U.S. are more likely than older Muslim Americans to express a strong sense of Muslim identity, and are much more likely to say that suicide bombing in the defense of Islam can be at least sometimes justified" (2007:1).

Nevertheless, proudly being "American Muslims" has become the goal of a number of American Muslim organizations and is frequently expressed by the young adults I encountered in Riverside Mosque, regardless of their race/ethnicity or ancestry. These organizations strive to engage in "public affairs, civic discourse and party politics" in order to "gain influence in the American political system."[2] They create magazines and journals to provide "an open forum for the discussion of ideas and issues of concern to Muslims in America from various points of view representing no one school of thought, ethnic group, or organization."[3] Nourah, a twenty-year-old

college student, believes that she is an "American Muslim," rather than "a second-generation Pakistani" living in the United States. She said,

> I believe that religion is a more important identity marker for second-generation Muslims in the United States than the culture of our parents. The culture of our parents and grandparents has become very weak among us. Like, I understand some Urdu words, but can't speak, read or write the language. We wear western clothes and don't wear ethnic clothes very often. At most, we wear *salwar kameez* on *Eid* or at wedding functions. I'm no longer a Pakistani but an American.

Combining Muslim identity and American identity presents an enormous challenge. It is especially difficult for the American-born younger generation who are coming of age in the post-9/11 American society. At Riverside Mosque, young adults constantly struggle between their American identity and their Muslim identity. Many of them have found a way to live as both; however, compromises are often made. Although they call themselves "American Muslims," they often organize most of their lives around one identity, either American or Muslim. The tension between American identity and Muslim identity is evident. In this chapter, drawn from the stories of four young adults, I analyze the various ways young Muslim adults in Riverside Mosque have learned to negotiate their multiple identities in the United States.

ASIFA: "I AM A MUSLIM IN AMERICA"

After the Gulf War in the 1990s, Asifa came to the United States at the age of five with her family. She was born in Kuwait, but she is a Palestinian in terms of ethnicity. Asifa's family first settled in New York for a year, then moved to Chicago, and finally settled down in Riverside. She entered the second grade after her family arrived in New York and was put into an ESL (English as a Second Language) program as it was assumed that she knew little English. However, the teachers soon found out that her English was excellent and placed her into a regular class. Asifa recalled her experience in school as the only Muslim girl:

> It soon became apparent that my family was different than those of my friends, especially my mother who wore the *hijab*, I was the only girl in the school whose mother wore a *hijab*, but most people accepted it. I began fasting in the third grade during *Ramadan*. It was really difficult at a young age with no other children besides my brother also fasting. During lunch I would sit in the cafeteria and hear many comments on how I could not eat. I would later spend lunch during *Ramadan* in the library.

Asifa's parents were dedicated to raising a good *Muslimah* in the United States. They helped Asifa learn to recite from the Qur'an and taught her how to pray. They also sent Asifa and her brother to the Sunday school that was first held in a small community center, then in the mosque when it was established in 1994. For Asifa, praying became the biggest part of her life from the time she was young. Her family "helped, supported, and nurtured" her into the Muslim she is today.

Growing up as the only Muslim girl in the elementary school was not easy. Once reaching puberty, Asifa started wearing *hijab* and full-length loose clothes like her mother. This made it even more difficult. Asifa recalled,

> In middle school peer pressure increased as it did for any other teenager. I could no longer dress the same way I did in elementary school, it was really difficult for my friends to understand how it was summer and I couldn't wear shorts and tank tops. I did not only face issues with the clothes I wore in the summer but also when participating in sports or gym class, which mostly required us to wear shorts or uniforms that would prevent in my dressing modestly. I slowly started to avoid sports because of not wanting to hear student's comment on what I [could] and [could not] wear. Even though I thought middle school could not get much worse; it seemed to prove me wrong. I had to face the problem of dating, which is the most important topic in middle school. My family stressed avoiding relationships with the opposite sex since I could remember. [S]o even though I did, you will always have girl friends who try to play match maker. Most of my friends were kind and understood my religion and its restriction on dating, but you will always encounter pressure in middle school with students encouraging dating in the United States.

The situation improved somewhat in high school. She recalled,

> In high school I got to meet a few Muslim girls who became good friends and helped me understand and learn more about myself. I was now able to go to more girl parties, slumber parties, and [have] friends to spend time with at the Masjid. Another great factor about high school was the fact that most of my American friends were true mature friends who had understood me and accepted me for the way I am, which made my high school years enjoyable.

Asifa's American friends thought that her religion had kept her from having fun, but she thought otherwise:

> Despite the fact I couldn't go to the prom, hang out with boys, or swim during gym class, I became involved in many activities that I enjoy such

> as community service, teaching at Sunday school, and spending time with the women who supported me through the whole ride.

Although she grew up in the United States, Asifa always distinguishes herself from her "American friends" and firmly maintains her Muslim identity. She appreciates her "American friends" for understanding and accepting her. Nevertheless, she does not see herself as American. Being an "American girl" entails wearing miniskirts, attending proms, playing sports, wearing shorts, dating boys, etc. There is nothing in Asifa that makes her "American," except her perfect American English.

However, she also saw the advantage of living in the United States. Asifa compared herself with her cousins in the Middle East and believed that this country offers her the opportunity to enjoy freedom that many girls in Muslim countries would never enjoy:

> I learned to drive and got my driver's license which soon resulted in me getting a job. My parents encouraged me to drive and work unlike the stories I heard about my cousins in the Middle-East who were discouraged to do what I do because of culture. As a woman in American society I got to experience freedom that I know many girls around the world could never have at my age or [in their] lifetime.

Two years after 9/11, Asifa entered a women's college. Her experiences in this college especially inspired and enriched her Muslim identity. Asifa liked her college experience a lot:

> I have entered a world of acceptance and freedom that I have never experienced in my life. I have the right to choose what I want to do with my life and have met women who are just as passionate about their future as I am. I have learned about a wide variety of cultures, religions, and diversity. Living in America has given me the freedom to practice my culture, traditions, religion, and shape my life in the way I decide to as a Muslim in America.

In college, Asifa participated in various student activities and was especially active in promoting students' awareness of the Israel-Palestine conflict. She and a few other students organized Arab Culture Society that aims to educate their fellow students who know little about Arab culture. For Asifa, she is a Muslim and an Arab. She enjoys the freedom of living in the United States. However, her religious identity and citizenship does not add up together. She is a "Muslim in America," not an "American Muslim." Soon after she graduated from college, Asifa got married to a young man from a good Arab family in the United States. Both families gave their blessings to the newlyweds. Although Asifa was not in a hurry to get married, her mother believed that marriage is good for young people, especially in America, where temptations are everywhere.

SHAWN: "I AM TOO AMERICAN"

As the only son of a successful physician, it was natural for Shawn to follow the footsteps of his father. Born and raised in Riverside, Shawn made it through elementary school, middle school, high school, and college with excellent grades. He was admitted to a reputable medical school after graduating from college. He worked hard for his degree and practices Islam in his spare time.

Life for a Muslim boy is quite different from life for a Muslim girl, if she is a "practicing" Muslim girl like Asifa. Shawn did not have to deal with problems like *hijab* and shorts, though it was still difficult to fast during *Ramadan* when he was the only person fasting among his friends, and he had to explain why he could not eat. He played sports from primary school to medical school and made many friends on the soccer fields, mostly White. He is good looking, fair-skinned, and has an atypical Muslim name. He is not "super religious" and he does not like those "super religious" people. His parents gave him a lot of freedom to search for an identity on his own. According to Shawn's mother, Shawn and his siblings are all very much "Americanized." They attend the mosque only occasionally and skip five daily prayers from time to time. Except some special occasions, such as *Eid* celebration and family dinners, Shawn rarely wears *salwar kameez*. His sisters do not cover their heads; instead they dress like average American girls. They wear short-sleeve T-shirts, low-rise jeans, and sporty shorts sometimes. But religion is an indispensable part of their life. They follow the dietary restrictions, avoid having relationships with the opposite sex, fast during the month of *Ramadan*, and celebrate religious holidays.

Shawn grew up in this relaxed environment, and it worked well for him. He does not engage in drinking, dating, or gang fighting. Rather, he is always a good student in school and a good boy at home. Although he skips some daily prayers here and there, he fasts during *Ramadan* and attends *Jummah* as much as he can. Living in the United States as a religious minority, Shawn believes that one cannot be that rigid all the time. To him, a strong belief in the only omnipotent God and Prophet Muhammad as his last messenger and avoiding *haram* things is more meaningful than praying five times a day but also doing *haram* things at the same time. Shawn's opinion toward gay and lesbian rights is liberal, which is deemed by the "ultra-religious" people as unIslamic. Even though he does not support homosexual behaviors, Shawn believes that everybody should enjoy freedom in the United States and he does not really care why people are homosexuals or how they want to live their lives.

Shawn's family celebrates New Year's Day, Independence Day, and Thanksgiving like typical Americans. But they celebrate *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha* instead of Christmas and Easter. His parents often invite both Muslim and non-Muslim friends to their house, which shows Shawn the option of being American and Muslim at the same time. The family visits relatives in Pakistan frequently. However, they rarely spend more than two

weeks over there. Shawn and his sisters feel they are too American for their Pakistani cousins. Their religious views are liberal and their lifestyle is very American. When talking about marriage, Shawn said, "I doubt that any Pakistani would want to be with me. I'm too American."

ELZINA: "I AM A MUSLIM, BUT THEY DON'T THINK SO"

I met Elzina in a small grocery shop where she worked several days a week to help her parents pay the bills. I did not know she was a Muslim until she said "*As-salaam Aleikum*" on the phone while I was waiting to check out. I told her about my research and asked her if we could meet sometime to talk about her experience as a Muslim living in the United States. She said, "Ok, but not right now. I'm very busy. Why don't you call me on Sunday? It's usually slow here on Sunday." I went back to the grocery shop on Sunday. Elzina greeted me and asked me to sit with her behind the cash register. She handed me a bottle of mango juice, and we began the conversation.

Elzina came to the United States as a child with her parents and siblings to escape the war in Bosnia. They first spent some time in Florida with some relatives. Then they moved to a few other cities before finally settling down in Riverside. Her parents were both working in a factory "making not that much." But, they still managed to own a small house and send their children to college. Once they were old enough to work, Elzina and her siblings took jobs on the weekends and during school breaks to help the family make ends meet. Elzina started working when she was sixteen and worked all the way throughout her high school years. Before she started her freshman year in college, she had saved enough money to pay off the first year's tuition. When we met, Elzina was a sophomore in college. She told me that she had to find a better-paying job for the summer so that she could save more money and not have to work during the school year. She wanted to finish school as soon as possible so that she could start making real money, help her parents get a new car, and help her little sister to go through college without working as hard as she had.

"I know a few Bosnian girls in the mosque. But I've never met you there," I said.

"I don't hang out with those Bosnian girls who think they are very religious," Elzina was straightforward, "They think I'm completely American, like I'm not Muslim anymore. I don't care what they think." She shrugged and moved to an unrelated topic, "Tell me about China and Chinese Muslims. I'm fascinated." Elzina didn't hide her curiosity once she found out that I was from China.

After chatting for a little bit, she asked me if I would mind standing outside with her for a little bit while she smokes. I was a little surprised, but agreed. Most people I encountered during my research were the "religious"

Muslims who attend the mosque. I had little access to the "unmosqued" Muslims in Riverside.

Elzina lit a cigarette skillfully, then pointed to a red two-door sports car with her name printed on the front plate.

"It's an old car, like 1990. But my boyfriend painted it to make it look better. He also gave me this plate as my birthday gift. I was like, are you crazy? Now, everybody knows my name. He's like, it's ok, and it's such a pretty name." She laughed, tapping the ash off her Marlboro, and her eyes were filled with happiness.

It was apparent that Elzina was deeply in love with her boyfriend. I asked her more about him. She was happy to talk about him. She told me that he is an American, White. His family is Catholic, but he is not really into religion.

"My boyfriend is a very nice person. He is not religious, but he respects other people's religion, not like those people who think they know everything," said Elzina frowning.

I asked, "Does his family know that you're a Muslim?"

Elzina nodded, "Yes, they know. My boyfriend's family is very nice to me. They asked about my religion and thought having a religion is a good thing." She continued, "We plan to get married once I finish school."

"I heard that Muslim girls are not supposed to marry non-Muslims," I said, raising a tough question.

"Well, I heard that too. But I don't know why. If he respects my religion, there is no reason why I can't marry him. My boyfriend told me that his parents have different religions, like, you know, different churches, but they get along well. My parents met him. They think that he is a good person. My mom is very religious. It's like, I mean, if somebody uses our pan to cook pork, she'd get rid of the pan and get a new one," Elzina said, tackling my question.

"Do you think you can still be a Muslim if you marry him?" I pushed a little more.

"I think so. Like I said, I am a Muslim. I'll always be a Muslim. I don't think one should change his religion for whatever reason. We should just be happy with what we are," Elzina shrugged again.

She told me that she used to go to the mosque, but some of the Bosnian girls thought she was no longer a Muslim because she smokes and dates just like Americans. "I know I am a Muslim. I am very sure about it. If they don't think I am, forget about them. They just can't bear people who are a little different from them."

SAAMIR: SEEKING THE PURE ISLAM

I never spoke to Saamir in person throughout my study because I knew he would not talk to me. Saamir is known as one of the "*wahabbis*" or

"*salafis*" in the community, who would not talk to women in the mosque and for sure would not meet me for a long conversation. However, I have heard stories about him and saw him change. I decided to use him as the last case for comparison. It is not only because his change was radical, but also because *Wahabbism*'s attractiveness among American-born young adults is usually overlooked by scholars who advocate for an "American Muslim" identity.

Saamir was one of the ordinary Bosnian boys in Riverside. He grew up in a typical Bosnian refugee family and made his way to college. Like other Bosnian boys, he learned about Islam in the United States mostly from his parents, who became aware of their religious identity after the persecution started in Bosnia and Herzegovina and became more and more religious as they were uprooted and sought refuge in foreign countries.

Saamir was not particularly religious until he went to college, where he met a group of Muslim students who were advocating a type of Islam that was free of cultural pollutants—that is, an Islam that is pure and free from the influences of Bosnian culture, Arab culture, South Asian culture, American culture, and so on. This group of young adults believes that how Islam is being practiced today is no longer the same as how people during the Prophet's time practiced the religion. For example, the Bosnian ethnic clothes are not Islamic because the blouses girls wear may be too tight and therefore not modest. Their colorful and stylish headscarves and long skirts only attract more attention, which violates the Islamic principle of modesty. Moreover, many Muslim men are clean-shaven, which is also not Islamic. A pious Muslim man should wear full beard as suggested by the *sunnah*. These young adults also criticize the unauthentic ways Muslims are engaged in making *salat*, the details of performing *salat*, and the relaxed gender separation among Muslim communities in the United States, among other issues. Saamir was deeply attracted to this "pure" Islam.

He joined the *Wahhabis* and started growing his beard. It did not take long for him to look very different from many other Muslims in the community. He now wears a long and untrimmed beard. He goes to pray with his pant legs rolled up high to avoid having them touch the floor, a practice endorsed by the teachings of the *Wahhabis*. He does not attend community dinners because women and men are not strictly separated and they socialize with each other in Riverside Mosque. When the schism occurred (see Chapter 2 of this volume), he joined the new mosque and rarely came to Riverside Mosque again.

MUSLIM AS A FLEXIBLE CATEGORY

The multifaceted concept of "American" and the equally diverse implications of "Muslim" provide ample sources for debate. Born and/or raised in the United States, many Muslim youth are facing a tough task of figuring

out their identities. Joshi (2006) applies a concept of "lived religion" to analyze the religious life of young Indian Americans. She argues that religion is a lived experience. Sunday schools, peer pressure, the community, and the world around these young Indian Americans map out the paths to live religiously and provide new ways for them to think about their religious tradition. However, religion is a lived experience and its meaning changes for each individual over his/her life span. She stated,

> Whatever the future holds for this cohort or the younger generation rising behind it, the experience of these research participants reveals not only what the different manifestations of lived religion looks like over the life span for the research participants but also how the meaning attached to the experience changes across the life span and varies from participation to participant. (2006:88)

I observed the same phenomenon in my research. Islam provides a framework within which Muslims live. How a scholar experiences it is very different from how a street peddler experiences it. The same logic applies to the youth. Their different social classes, education attainment, peer groups, and individual experiences work together to influence how young Muslims prioritize their lives and where Islam stands in their lives.

Asifa is the official role model for youth in Riverside Mosque. She is regarded as a good *Muslimah* who is able to hold her Muslim identity strong at a chaotic time and in a land of disbelief. Being Muslim to her is to learn the Qur'an, wear *hijab* and loose clothes, pray five times a day, fast during *Ramadan*, and to avoid drinking, dating, and everything else that is considered *haram*.

It is a bit different for Shawn. Shawn does not pay so much attention to whether he prays on time and if he wakes up for *fajr*.[4] He is more concerned with how to balance religion, study, sports, friends, and many other things. He practices his religion as much as he can and enjoys his life as much as he can.

For Elzina, life has not been a joy ride. She has to work extra hard to get where she wants to be. She is certain that she is a Muslim and does not care what others think about her. For many people, she is merely a born Muslim, and she has gone astray. However, Islam still plays a role in her life as shown in our conversation. Since religion is a lived experience, Elzina's Muslim identity might be prioritized differently in the future. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the validity of her claim, "I am a Muslim."

Saamir manifests his Muslim identity by staying away from any culture, including Bosnian and American. To some degree, Saamir shares many similarities with Asifa for they both prioritize their Muslim identities. They organize their life surrounding the Muslim identity, rather than the American identity. Their American citizenship is very different from the "cultural citizenship" (Ong 1996; Siu 2001:9) many immigrants have

achieved living in the United States. For Asifa and Saamir, it is mostly or completely residential.

AMERICA AS A LAND OF FREEDOM

For hundreds of years, generations of immigrants from all over the world have made America their home. Despite the considerable hostility and prejudice many immigrants have to face in the new world, the United States is believed to be the land of opportunity and freedom (Eck 2001). Although this "freedom" could be linked to both positive and negative outcomes, the rhetoric of "America as a land of freedom" reoccurs among Muslims in Riverside and must be taken seriously.

On the one hand, some Muslims believe that the very idea of freedom is a hotbed for social problems. Excessive drinking, promiscuity, drug abuse, violence, and gun crime plague this country. People are free to do everything because they are not afraid of God. Lubna, a first-generation Lebanese immigrant and school teacher, believes that young people cannot be given too much freedom because they are still very confused about their identity and have to be guided. In a sermon, Imam Siddiqui also spoke about the relationship between freedom and rules, and between rights and responsibility. Imam Abdullah raised similar concerns for the unchecked freedom in the United States.

On the other hand, as Asifa argues, living in America offers her opportunities to enjoy freedom like driving and working. Living in America also offers Elzina freedom to pursue upward mobility. Shawn's parents' laid-back attitude may not be possible if they were not living in the United States and the peer pressure in Pakistan would be too heavy for Shawn to live in his own way. Even Saamir enjoys the freedom of seeking out a different way to practice the religion from his parents and other Bosnian young adults.

The contradicting reality of American society constantly challenges these Muslim young adults to face the clashes between their Muslim identity, American identity, and ethnic identity. Whether they are "perpetual foreigners" or "the designated others" (Joshi 2006) largely depends on how they deal with these sometimes conflicting identities and how the salience of these identities shift in times of crises.

IDENTITIES IN TENSION

Most people will have to frequently deal with certain tensions among their multiple identities. This is especially true among minorities in a society. The "double-consciousness" (Du Bois 1903) used to describe the psychological situation of African Americans is also useful to understand Muslims, especially Muslim youth who were born/raised in the United States.

Psychologists Sirin and Fine (2008:195) analyzed the psychological state of more than a hundred Muslim youth from various backgrounds and found that Muslim youth were able to "piece together the fragments of identity in highly divergent ways." They developed a theoretical framework of "hyphenated selves" to understand how multiple selves coexist and stay peacefully within these youth.

Reconciling the American self and the Muslim self is a task every Muslim youth is engaged in, no matter how "Muslim" or how "American" they are—by their own or others' standards. Some believe that in order to be a good Muslim, one must distinguish what is American from what is Islam. The "American Muslim" identity just sugar coats the stark differences between being a Muslim and being an American. Amin's death is partially the result of his trying to fit into American society. Even though he did not drink, he went to the binge drinking party and made bad friends. "If you are a Muslim, a good Muslim, you just can't hang out with Americans," Ateeq, a South Asian man, argued when asked to discuss the relationship between American culture and Islam.

Similarly, Suhail, another South Asian young man, does not think it is possible to reconcile his Muslim and American identities most of the time. He said, "From the minute I am awoken by the *adhan* at dawn, I am quite aware of the stark differences. I feel like this difference translates very strongly into other parts of my life as well." He recalled one incident when his employer very clearly was treating him differently from his coworkers. Suhail was deeply offended, and at that point, did not even feel like a "real American," despite being born and raised here. He said that no matter what he does in life, he will always just be identified as a Muslim and nothing else:

> This is OK with me, but I feel that the term "Muslim" has been used as a derogatory term. I am proud to be a Muslim. But I just wish people would also look a little further than my religion and see me as an entrepreneur, philanthropist, student, and citizen. I feel that I can only be an American if people forget about my Muslim face.

The gap between being Muslim and being American seems too wide to be bridged. Impeccable English is usually an ignorable factor when a person has a Muslim name and a "Muslim" face. The racialized image of Islam (Joshi 2006), to a certain degree, prevents American-born generations from fully integrating into American society. In Riverside Mosque, young parents prefer to give their children Muslim names upon birth—such as Abudullah and Mohammad—hoping that they will carry on the faith tradition when they grow up. However, I was told of a few incidents in which young adults with distinctive Muslim names were asked to change their names at work to John, or Peter, or something else that was more "American." A young African man named Jihad shared his experiences with me:

> When I worked in the 7-Eleven [gas station] down the road with my friend Osama, my boss made us put "David" and "Brad" on our name tags. He said to us, "Don't take this personal. I like you two, and you're good employees. But my customers are going to freak out if an Osama and a Jihad are working here.

Although Asifa has successfully maintained her Muslim identity, there are some things in "American culture" that she cannot reconcile. She cannot swim in the public pool and go to the prom like her American friends. Her religious belief sets her apart from the "Americans." She is still an American citizen and enjoys the freedom of driving and working in this country. Nevertheless, it is her strong Muslim self that keeps her conflicting identities in check.

There seems to be little tension among Shawn's multiple identities. He handles them well by making compromises here and there. His American identity is more defined when he compares himself to his cousins, both in Pakistan and even in the United States. As he goes through the medical school and becomes the first American-educated physician in his extended family, it is unknown how his identity will change in the process. However, it is likely that his American identity will hold him together as he encounters the larger society. This American identity certainly makes room for his religion.

The American-born generations in Riverside Mosque range from new born to more than sixty years old. The children of the first-generation immigrants who are coming of age are facing the most challenges among them. Their multiple identities collide and restructure at different points of time in relation to the changing world around them. In this chapter, I profiled four young Muslims in Riverside who had developed different understandings of their religion and their lives in the United States. The boundaries of Muslim identity clash against the multifaceted American life, making an "American Muslim" identity hard to come by. Abe's feeling about her multiple identities represents the enduring conflict:

> When I'm in America, people think that I'm a Syrian. But, when I got back to Syria, people there think I'm an American . . . Culturally I'm not Syrian, but I'm not American either. Often, I feel closer to American born Muslims and converts. We are a new generation of Muslims.

Conclusion

Diversity, Solidarity, and the Path to Americanization

"Do you think people [of Riverside Mosque] will stay together?" I asked Abe, a second-generation Syrian-American. Her answer was a firm, "Yes." Reaffirmed in her faith by putting on *hijab* as an adult, Abe believes that her religion can be culture-free and thus brings together people who are divided along ethnic lines. She said,

> I have friends of different backgrounds. I have Syrian friends, and I also have Pakistani friends. Friendship is not based on culture but religion. I made all my friends in this mosque. I am proud of the diversity in our *masjid*. People sometimes quarrel, but we will stay together.

To Abe, Islam's unifying power is strengthened in American society, because American society itself is the product of immigrants from diverse backgrounds. In contrast, when I brought up the same question in front of Amina, a first-generation immigrant from Morocco, she depicted a very different future. "I think as soon as people get enough money, they are gonna build their own mosques and run them as they wanted," she said with a grim smile. After spending more than a decade in Riverside, she is convinced that the diverse group of people in Riverside Mosque stay together not because they want to; rather, because of the lack of financial resources. As a first-generation immigrant who personally experienced the sectarian violence in the Middle East, Amina believes that it is exactly people's commitment to their own understandings of the religion that would exacerbate the existing divisions among Muslims.

Although Abe and Amina offered completely different forecasts of the future of their congregation, the underlying concerns that emerge from their arguments are similar. They both point to the importance of sustaining a diverse religious community in American society. Abe hopes that Muslims in the United States can demonstrate their compatibility with the core American values by achieving a unified mosque that tolerates and embraces differences. Similarly, Amina worries that the old practices will strengthen various stereotypes about Muslims and further set Muslims apart from the American mainstream. Terms like "backwardness," "anti-modern,"

and "violent" are often attached to Islam. If Riverside Mosque, a mosque built by immigrants who came to America in search of their dreams, succumbs to the pressure of the lingering influence from the old world, it will surely confirm these stereotypes and make Muslims a perpetual alien, if not enemy, in American society.

Throughout my research, I was constantly struck by the reoccurring rhetoric of diversity by most community members, even among those who have vehemently criticized others, inflicted conflicts, and spearheaded schism. They all value diversity, however, their understandings of diversity vary. For some, there should be one version of Islam, under which different racial and ethnic groups are unified into one *ummah*. For others, Islam is never free of culture and therefore accommodating different races and ethnicities means accommodating a religion that has been manifested in different ways. These complexities made it imperative for me to look beyond the surface, look deep into the internal dynamics within this growing suburban Muslim community, and strive to present a holistic picture of the community.

Diversity can be costly. In Riverside Mosque, tensions and conflicts are undeniable facts. Yet, in an attempt to maintain harmony, community members are often reluctant to even acknowledge these issues, let alone openly debate on them. Some of the events that I documented in this book are indeed hot-button issues that my interlocutors find difficult to discuss openly. In fact, in any diverse community like Riverside Mosque, conflicts are common and expected. The conflicting religious views, the uneasy feelings about people's unequal financial contributions to the mosque, the reluctance of women to help other women, and the confusion among young adults about their lives in the United States, all provide ample sources for conflicts, which lead to schism.

In the eyes of the critics, the belief in diversity that upholds Riverside Mosque as a distinctive religious institution is in fact not real multiculturalism, but misguided by the ethnocentric idea of assimilation. One of my interviewees, a South Asian scholar, commented that just as the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants who had dominated the process of assimilation in the United States by forcing minority cultures to submit in order to join the American mainstream, the good intention of building a diverse mosque is likely to bolster the domination of a single ethnic group or a single school of religious thoughts, instead of fostering a truly integrating community.

Putting religion aside, ethnic conflict alone can inflict considerable damages on congregational life. Therefore, it is the ethnic religious institutions that have largely facilitated the process of Americanization (Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Yang and Ebaugh 2001). Within ethnic religious institutions, immigrants find it less challenging to complete their transition from sojourners to citizens by developing an adhesive pattern of identity to bridge their ethnic cultures and mainstream

American culture (Hurh and Kim 1990; Yang 1999; Chen 2008). In fact, the multiracial/multiethnic mosques in the United States were mostly established out of the "needs" instead of the "wants" (Abusharaf 1998; Babgy 2011). As more mosques are being built, residential patterns in American cities and suburbs are likely to accentuate the importance of ethnic solidarity and subsequently affect how Islam is being practiced in the United States.

However, the fact that Riverside Mosque remains strong and continues to grow demonstrates the vitality of the idea of diversity. The mosque, as a public space, allows people from diverse backgrounds to learn and rehearse essential skills to engage in American life. The successful integration of Muslims and Islam into American society relies on the successful building of mosques that include people from different races and ethnicities, social classes, Islamic sects, theological schools, and immigration generations. Ameliorating the old-world conflict, a racially/ethnically and socioeconomically mixed mosque embodies the American Dream that promotes freedom, equality, and individual rights—values compatible with the principles of Islamic teachings. The Riverside Muslim community has faced and will continue to face various challenges; yet, it is exactly the experiences of dealing with these challenges that creates group solidarity and makes it more integrated into the American way of life.

Islam in the United States is mostly an immigrant religion. It was spread to the new world by both African slaves and generations of Muslim immigrants. It has gone through several stages of development since the sixteenth century when the Atlantic Slave Trade brought the first Muslims to America (Austin 1997; Diouf 1998; Nyang 1998). Many Muslim slaves were highly literate. Their existence challenged the institutionalized slavery system that was based on the conviction of Africans being morally and intellectually undeveloped (Alford 1986; Diouf 1998). However, due to the harsh working and living conditions under slavery and the end of slave trade in the 1860s, Islam largely disappeared from public attention (Nyang 1998:10–11; Diouf 1998:198–205).

The real development of Islam in the United States started with the first waves of voluntary immigrants at the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century who came to the new world to seek a better and fuller life. These immigrants retained their religion and passed it down to their American-born children. However, they were not particularly keen on developing Islamic institutions and commonly identified themselves in terms of ethnicity and national origin (Haddad 2002).

African American Muslims helped spread Islam in the United States. Troubled by alienation and displacement because of internal migration from the Deep South to industrial cities in the North, African American Muslims developed their own versions of Islam before joining the global Muslim *ummah*. Islam helped these dissident African Americans reclaim the spiritual roots of their enslaved ancestors and fight against racism. It

also offered them an alternative to Christianity, a religion dominated by the Whites (Jackson 2005; Curtis 2006).

Islam ultimately put down roots in American soil as the result of the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, which brought in a large number of Muslims from the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Muslim communities in the United States are now a mosaic of diverse racial and ethnic groups from all over the world. They come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, speak different languages, belong to different socioeconomic groups, and follow different theological schools (McCloud 2006).

The watershed 9/11 events turned a page in the history of Muslim Americans. In the years after 9/11, Muslims have been trying to rectify their damaged images and demonstrate that Islam is compatible with modernity. It is within this context that the majority in Riverside Mosque seeks to maintain the unity of their community. Their success in maintaining a diverse membership in their mosque, despite some setbacks, shows that Islam is compatible with a number of important values that uphold American society. The conflicts and schisms that the community experienced suggest that building a truly American Muslim congregation requires the building of a shared theological framework. The future of Riverside Mosque will be shaped by the outcome of the ongoing debate on "American Islam" vs. "Islam in the United States."

Yet, since its beginning, the Riverside Muslim community has been challenged by issues related to migration. Many believe that migration is compatible with Islamic law and is even encouraged by Prophet Muhammad who said "seeking knowledge even unto China." However, they are not absolutely sure if the United States, and the West in general, belong to *Dar al-Amn* (abode of safety) or *Dar al-Harb* (abode of war). The U.S. invasion of Iraq and the Bush administration's "War on Terror" intensify the growing confrontations between the West and Islam, leaving some to question their decision to move to the United States. Some lament that the "American Dream" that attracted them to this land has been plagued by the increased hate crimes and prevalent racial profiling against them, jeopardizing their pursuit of their dreams. Their experiences provide important insights for us to understand the often contradictory perceptions among Muslims toward their lives in the United States. The many conflicts that I have observed in Riverside Mosque demonstrate the ambivalent attitudes of Muslims toward American society and its essential values such as freedom and individual rights. Their indecisiveness toward conflicts points to the difficulties in attaining unity within American Muslim communities and indicates the enormous barriers in the process of constructing the "American Muslim" identity.

In the face of anti-Muslim bigotry across the continents, Muslim academics advocate that the priority of the Muslim community is to discard sectarian conflict and achieve a unified identity (Khan 2002;

Leonard 2003; Ba-Yunus and Kone 2006). Their effort has been successful to some extent in bringing the Muslim communities back to the same line based on a shared faith. Religion becomes a unifying power. Along with the growing trend of inclusiveness in American immigrant religious organizations (Yang and Ebaugh 2001), many ethnic mosques also encourage the participation of Muslims from other racial/ethnic groups and intentionally embrace the concept of diversity (Badr 2000; Bagby et al. 2001).

Nevertheless, the very meaning of the emerging "American Muslim" identity is highly contested. Some commentators argue that the "American Muslim" identity "often reflect[s] a middle class assimilationist bias," and there is a wide gap between the portrayed images of American Muslim communities offered by Islamic scholars and the experiences of ordinary Muslims in the real world (Leonard 2003:100–25). As immigrants and/or children of immigrants, the people gathered in Riverside Mosque developed divergent perspectives about "America." Depending on their religious views, immigration experiences, and socio-economic status, they arrived at different understandings of the "American Dream." They dream of freedom, justice, and human rights. They also dream of financial stability and prosperity. Their dreams are constantly being shaped by American foreign policies and the changing global political environment, as well as the public discourses in their mosque influenced by religious scholars both inside and outside the United States, various Islamic organizations, and the mass media.

It is inevitable that immigrants—if intending to stay permanently—would have to find a way to adapt to American society and fit into the established American social, political, and religious structures. Just as R. Stephen Warner (2005) argues that religious disestablishment, religious diversity, and religious vitality go hand in hand in the United States, American society indeed offers great opportunities for people from an array of backgrounds to establish their own religious worship places, continue their religious practices, and transmit their cultural and religious traditions to their American-born offspring. This friendly environment ensures the continuous negotiation over the meanings of "American Muslims" identity.

The kinds of conflicts I observed in Riverside Mosque are not anything new among immigrant communities. It took a long and painful struggle for the Catholics to finally become part of mainstream America (Greeley 1977; Fisher 2002: Phan 2005). American Catholics not only had to negotiate their relations with mainstream Protestants but also had to handle issues rooted in diversities within their own faith community. Although the growing number of Spanish-speaking Catholics from the Latin America has generated new issues for the Catholic Church, Catholics have largely joined together and become American. The history of Catholic communities in the United States and that of the Muslims differ in many aspects.

Nonetheless, it may still be useful to draw upon it as we look into the future of Muslim communities.

In his famous book *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote,

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. ([1903] 2007:8)

This "double-consciousness" is not only applicable to African Americans, as Du Bois intended, but also suitable for other minority groups in a society. Race, ethnicity, class, gender, and religion are among the many reasons why people have to struggle to cope with the state of double-consciousness and their multiple identities. American Catholics and American Muslims share similar experiences on their ways to "Americanization." In the United States, religion is "the culturally favored way for people to be both indisputably American and legitimately loyal to some pre- or supra-American identity" (Herberg 1960, cited in Warner 2005:2). This characteristic of American society provides a fertile soil for the growth of Islam and Muslim communities. "Americanization" has always been a long and painful process throughout American history. Given the growing awareness of their "American identity" among ordinary American Muslims and a thriving generation of pro-American Muslim scholars and leaders, there are plenty of reasons to picture a future of assimilation similar to that of the Catholics and Jews.

Nonetheless, Islam was and is still regarded as a foreign religion transplanted to American soil. In many of the books dealing with religion in the United States, Islam is often lumped together with Buddhism, Hinduism, and other Eastern religions, becoming the "other" in American society. These foreign religions have become "racialized" in contrast to the "whiteness" of Judeo-Christianity (Joshi 2006). Christianity has helped many Asian Americans "become White." By converting to Christianity and/or reinforcing their Christian identity, "the back door to whiteness" is opened up for non-black Asian Americans (Twine 1997, cited in Joshi 2006). This "otherness" and "non-whiteness" sets Muslims apart from mainstream Americans and fosters a sense of alienation among Muslims, solidifying their marginal position in American society. Race in American society is a vague concept. As a social construct, different standards have been employed to define the racial boundaries in history. Solely based on skin color, many Arabs and West Asians may well qualify to be considered "white." However, the image of Muslims as "non-white" in contrast to the "white" Christians and Jews became prominent in the post-9/11 era.

Islam has indeed become racialized (Maira 2004; Naber 2005; Ajrouch and Kusow 2007). In post-9/11 America, brown skin becomes equivalent to Islam in the eyes of many Americans (Joshi 2006: 97).

In addition to the racialized image of Islam in the United States, the ideological clash between Islam and the West is also a persisting reality given the global political structure and the U.S. government's interference in the Middle East and other Muslim countries. The image of the United States as a colonial power is deeply rooted and reinforced by the ongoing wars. Muslims' attitudes toward America are likely to remain ambivalent for a long time. Moreover, informed by theological debates among religious leaders and scholars, the competing religious views within the Muslim community are likely to last as well. The ambivalent views toward American society developed in the younger generations are especially alarming. The schism that occurred in Riverside Mosque demonstrates the tendency of polarization among young Muslim adults.

The impact of 9/11 on the American Muslim community remains strong a decade later. Its influence is reflected in many American Muslim communities across the country, Riverside Mosque being one of them. The 9/11 events set off a new wave of interest among Muslims to search for the meaning of being American. However, it also generated a stronger sense of alienation and marginalization. The shifting center of U.S. foreign policy from the Middle East back to the Asian Pacific (Clinton 2011) may well affect the immigration pattern in the Muslim concentrated Middle East. The strong economies in the Gulf countries, coupled with the economic downturn in the United States, are likely to create a trend of return immigration, making the future of American Islam more opaque.

Throughout my study, I paid particular attention to avoid taking a one-dimensional approach in my analyses, to be mindful of the complexity of the history, and to take care in drawing conclusions based on one set of phenomena. In this book, I considered the impact of a number of sociological factors, zoomed in on the conflicts within a single Muslim community in a Midwestern city in the United States, and organized the materials based on various conflicts within the mosque and the community around it. By looking into the difficulties and uncertainties the Muslim community faces in maintaining their racially/ethnically diverse mosque, this book points to the important roles mixed mosques play in integrating Muslims and Islam into American society. Riverside Mosque is still learning to deal with conflicts and tensions rooted in the old-world experiences and there have been setbacks in the process. Although diversity can be costly, the previous chapters clearly show that diversity promotes freedom, equality, and individual rights—values compatible with the principles of Islamic teachings. The genuine appreciation for diversity can be trained through resolving problems in a diverse religious community.

The many sources of conflict in Riverside Mosque that I observed and documented in this book suggest that it is premature to claim that Muslims

in the United States have sorted out the complex relationships between their Muslim identity and the American Dream that brought them to this land, found the solution to grow as a unified community, and become genuinely integrated in American society. Despite these conflicts, since its establishment two decades ago, Riverside Mosque has been serving Muslims in the area, welcoming and accommodating many different individuals and families. Many children were born in the area and grew up in the mosque. They were exposed to diversity and conflict even though they may not be able to fully comprehend the far reaching implications of the phenomena and events at the moment. Their close proximity to people who come from diverse racial/ethnic groups and different social classes, and subscribe to different interpretations of Islam and divergent perspectives of American society will have a profound impact on them as they develop their own identities. When they come of age in the coming decades and take leadership roles in their congregations, these early influences are likely to play out in many ways. Genuine appreciation for diversity requires training. The quest of the new generation of American Muslims will continue as they seek out a way to maintain a diverse membership in their mosques.

As Muslim identity becomes more salient in post-9/11 America, the "American Muslim" identity will continued be contested. Katie, a White convert in Riverside Mosque, believes that Islam must be free of any cultural influence. She argued,

> I don't really identify with the term "American Muslim." I am a Muslim who happens to be an American. I don't think the answer to uniting our community is to find a new identity. I think better we should strive to put Islam first and cultural practices second. So many times these two get so intertwined with each other that the separation is hard to define. We must keep Islam and its teachings first and foremost in our minds and the rest will take care of itself.

On the contrary, in another conversation with Imam Abdullah, he told me that the idea that religion could be culture free is a form of *Wahabism*. Religion and culture cannot be set apart. Religion is rooted in culture and culture is shaped by religion. "Some people are scared by culture. In fact, what they are doing is to replace Indian Islam, American Islam, Chinese Islam with Arab Islam," Imam Abdullah argued. "Islam must be rooted in the local culture."

The divergent opinions that co-exist in Riverside Mosque remind us of the intensity of the ongoing immigration debate. Muslims are not alone in the battle to fully make sense of American experiences. Whether the "American Muslim" identity will have the expected effect will largely depend on whether an overarching civil religion can be developed to breakdown the boundaries of Judeo-Christianity and provide a safe haven where Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, and all other

religious people can genuinely feel at home. The definition of "Americanization" must be reconsidered to provide a more meaningful foundation for these dialogues to take place. The competing paradigms of assimilation and multiculturalism must also be invited into this ongoing discussion. Multiculturalism is meaningless if it essentially creates compartmentalized identities and de facto segregations. Assimilation maybe "a dead idea," yet the subsequent development of a number of variations within the broad paradigm of assimilation is conducive in bringing about a new form of assimilation that would change the very meaning and scope of the American mainstream (Alba and Nee 2005). Islam and Muslim communities in the United States should be studied within this revised theoretical framework of assimilation. Americanization is no longer a Euro-centric cultural hegemonic idea, but a more flexible process where a "composite culture" can be developed (Alba and Nee 2005:10). The frictions, conflicts, and schisms that occurred in a voluntary religious organization, such as Riverside Mosque, are necessary as much as inevitable in cultivating such "composite culture" within a Muslim community marked by diversity, leading it onto the path of Americanization.

Epilogue

A series of important events that occurred during the last few years, especially the economic downturn in 2008, had a far-reaching impact on transnational migration. Against the backdrop of global economic crisis, the antagonism toward immigrants in American society began fermenting. The lasting backlash against Islam coupled with the growing negativity toward immigrants in general further solidified the boundaries between Muslims and others. For many Muslims, the hope of achieving the American Dream has become gloomier.

On the other side of the globe, the glittering cities on the Arabian Gulf are rising. Their names are no longer strange to many Americans. The discovery of oil in the 1920s under the vast Arabian Desert and the enormous wealth brought by soaring oil prices in the 1960s triggered earth-shaking changes in the region. Multiple nation-states, ruled by hereditary sheikhdoms, were formed as the British withdrew its power from the region. Small villages along the coast occupied by pearl divers, fishermen, and traders, and the scattered settlements of the Bedouins in the desert witnessed an incredible change of lifestyle. SUVs replaced camels, while skyscrapers occupy the sites of the old herders' tents. Smooth highways decorated by lush flower beds and thriving palm trees connect the previously isolated settlements in the desert. Today, many of these small states in the Arabian Gulf are among the richest countries in the world. Local residents enjoy the state-of-the-art facilities and all the convenience modern society has to offer.

The city of Dubai, best known for its magnificent Burj Khalifa, enormous shopping malls, and luxurious hotels, is touted as the glamorous "Las Vegas in the Middle East." Relying on oil revenue, its strategic geographic location, and the liberal visions of its ruler, Dubai has miraculously elevated itself from a small fishing and pearling village to a spectacular metropolis. Yet, despite its Manhattan-style skylines, the traditional *Khaleej* culture deeply influenced by Islam has been kept intact. Sandy and white-colored mosques dot every neighborhood. The tranquil sound of *adhan* is heard five times a day in every corner of the city. With its arms wide open to modern technology and

its mind clearly guided by Islam, Dubai offers an alternative to the American Dream.

Relaxing in the leather sofa chairs in Starbucks on the campus of American University of Sharjah where I have been teaching for the past four years, Norah shared with me her family's experiences in the United States. Unlike many of the Muslim immigrants I encountered in Riverside, Norah's family has a different take on American life. Having lived fifteen years in California, Norah's father decided to "bring the children home." Although holding an American passport, Norah does not identify herself as American. The time spent in America was but a process in which a Muslim family sought to return home. In Norah's narration, "home" has a broader meaning than Syria. In fact, the family did not choose to move back to Syria. Instead, they settled down in Dubai, regardless of the stringent immigration policies that rarely grant any foreigner a permanent resident status. "Home," to Norah's family, is where they can live with Islam in their everyday life; "home" is where all the restaurants offer *halal* foods; "home" is where the children can learn about Islam and the Qur'an in schools; "home" is where one can hear *adhan* in the shopping malls; "home" is where Friday is a holiday and no one has to struggle to take time off from work to celebrate the *Eids*. The well-paying jobs in a Muslim society, such as the United Arab Emirates, are inviting to some American Muslim families, like Norah's.

Norah is not the only one whose family has moved back to the Middle East from the United States. While teaching in the United Arab Emirates, I met many Muslim expats from the United States, who chose to move back to the Middle East to raise their families. For these "returnees," being Muslim is too challenging in America. As the economic conditions improve in the Middle East and the political reforms deepen as a result of the Arab Spring, the West is no longer the only destination for immigrants who are seeking better lives. The trend of "return migration" may start playing a role in reshaping the American Muslim communities.

When I revisited Riverside Mosque in September 2011, exactly ten years after 9/11, the community had doubled its size. The first phase of the mosque expansion project had been completed and a distinctive medal minaret had been placed at the hill side entrance. The community celebrated *Eid al-Fitr* in the spacious and well-lit multifunctional community hall for the first time. I saw many new faces at the banquet. Many of them were recent immigrants in town. Although facing an increased unemployment rate, the United States is still appealing to migrants. While chatting about my life in Dubai, many people in Riverside Mosque quickly pointed out a number of unjust practices in the Emirates. Many had read the recent book *Dubai: Gilded Cage* and enthusiastically discussed the hidden social problems with me.[1] The differentiations American Muslims consciously make between "Islamic states" and "Muslim states" is important in their decision of either staying in the

United States, or returning to the Muslim world, or maintaining transnational ties in both worlds. When I revisited Riverside after spending two years teaching in an American style university in a Muslim country, my initial conviction that diversity is the unique characteristic and strength of American Muslim communities growing in the shadow of 9/11 was further confirmed.

Appendix
Unstructured Interviews (N=32)

Characteristics	*Categories*	*N*	*Percentage*
Gender	Female	23	71.8%
	Male	9	28.1%
Age	Under 30	13	40.6%
	31–40	7	21.9%
	41–50	5	15.6%
	51–60	5	15.6%
	60+	2	6.3%
Marital Status	Single	9	28.1%
	Married	21	65.6%
	Other	2	6.3%
Race/Ethnicity	Arab	7	21.9%
	South Asian	10	31.3%
	Bosnian	5	15.6%
	African	4	12.5%
	African American	2	6.3%
	White	4	12.5%
Educational background	High school or below	11	34.4%
	College	9	28.1%
	Post-graduate	14	43.8%
Occupation	Student	11	34.4%
	Professional	8	25.0%
	Self-employed	2	6.3%
	Maintenance Staff	3	9.3%
	Homemaker	7	21.9%
	Retired	2	6.3%
TOTAL		32	100%

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Notes

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Adams ([1931] 2001).
2. Evangelist Franklin Graham used the words "evil and wicked" to describe Islam. Similar comments were made by other evangelicals and conservative Christian clergies in the period after 9/11. For a thorough discussion on anti-Islamic rhetoric after 9/11, see Cimino (2005).
3. In order to protect the confidentiality of my research subjects, I used pseudonyms throughout the entire writing process and altered some detailed information about certain individuals. The city and the name of the mosque were also altered for this purpose. These changes, however, have no perceivable effect on the analysis. The basic demographic characteristics for the city are factual. People who are familiar with the community and the city may be able to recognize some of the people and events documented in this book.
4. Various institutions and organizations offer a wide range of estimates of the Muslim population in the United States. The following are some examples from various publications: 6.7 million (1997) J. Ilyas Ba-Yunus; 1.2 million (2000) National Opinion Research Center; 1.6 million (2000) Glenmary Research Center; 2.0 million (2000) Hartford Institute for Religious Research; 1.9 million (2001) American Jewish Committee; 4.1 million (2001) Britannica Book of the Year; 2.8 million (2001) American Jewish Committee; 1.1 million (2001) American Religious Identification Survey by City University of New York; 6.0 million (2001) Council on American-Islamic Relations; 1.9 million (2002) University of Chicago—Public Opinion Quarterly; 7.0 million (2002) Cornell University Study; 2.8 million (2003) The World Almanac and the Book of Facts 2003; 2 to 3 million (2006) American Society of Muslims; 1.4 million (2007) The Pew Research Center (eighteen years old and older).
5. Sunnis are followers of Sunni Islam, the largest branch of Islam, which is sometimes considered the orthodox form of Islamic faith. Shi'as are followers of Shi'a Islam, the second largest branch of Islam concentrate in Iran and Iraq. A dispute over the succession of leadership occurred in the seventh century after Prophet Mohammed's death, which led to this major schism in Islam. Ahmadis are the followers of Ahmadiyya, an Islamic reformist movement that began in British India at the end of the nineteenth century. Ismailism is a sect of Shi'a Islam.
6. *Ummah* is the Arabic word meaning universal community distinguished from communities of common ancestry and geography.
7. See the Appendix for more details on interview respondents.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Minaret is a distinctive architectural style of mosques, generally a tall slender tower having one or more balconies from which the summons to prayer is cried by the muezzin.
2. *Jummah* is an Islamic congregational prayer held every Friday afternoon.
3. An *abaya* is an Arabian style floor-length flowing robe.
4. A *salwar kameez* is a set of long shirt and loose pants common among people from South Asia.
5. *Hijab* refers to a type of veil that covers the head, particularly worn by Muslim women.
6. *Kufi* cap is a short, rounded cap worn by Muslim men, often during prayers.
7. In order to maintain the confidentiality of my research subjects, the demographic info of the city is slightly altered. However, the alteration does not change the overall demographic composition of the city.
8. This information came from the U.S. Census Bureau, the link is not provided in order to protect the confidentiality. Contact the author for detailed statistic report.
9. Ibid.
10. A group of students at a local public university rented a house close to their campus and established another mosque (the fifth Islamic center) during the course of this study. Chapter 2 of this volume discusses this new mosque in more detail.
11. *Masjid* is an Arabic word for mosque.
12. The real family name has been altered to protect the confidentiality of the research subjects.
13. *Hajja* is the feminine variation of *Hajji*, an honorific title given to a Muslim person who has successfully completed the *Hajj*, the religious pilgrimage, to Mecca.
14. *Halal* is the Arabic word meaning permissible in accordance with the Islamic law.
15. *Hajj* is the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca and one of the five pillars of Islam.
16. *Eid al-Fitr* is the celebration that comes at the end of *Ramadan*. *Ramadan* is a month of fasting, every day from dawn until sunset. The Islamic calendar follows the moon and so each year the dates are shifted forward by about eleven days in the normal calendar. *Ramadan* is the ninth month of the Muslim year, and is followed by *Shawal*. The first three days of *Shawal* are the *Eid* days.
17. This figure is based on a telephone directory of active Muslim families. Only the family head's contact info is listed. Children are not listed.
18. *Taraweeh* refers to additional congregational prayers performed by Muslims during the month of *Ramadan*. It is not compulsory and its length varies among different Islamic schools. The ritual is performed following *Iftar*, the feast after the breaking of fast at sunset.
19. The word *niqabis* refers to women who wear a *niqab*, which is a veil that covers the entire face, except for the eyes.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. *Jummah* prayer or congregational prayer.
2. *Asr* is the late afternoon prayer and *maghrib* is the sunset prayer.
3. God willing.

4. *Baba ghanouje* is a Levantine dish made of mashed eggplant mixed with olive oil and other seasonings.
5. *Chaat* is a word used across India, Pakistan, and the rest of South Asia to refer to small plates of savory snacks.
6. *Chaat masala* is a *masala*, or spice mix, typically consisting of dried mango powder, cumin, black salt, coriander, dried ginger, salt, black pepper, and red pepper.
7. *Astaghfirullah* means "I seek forgiveness from God (Allah)."
8. Islamic ritual ablution before praying.
9. F.O.B. stands for fresh off the boat.
10. Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. 2004. *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, http://religions.pewforum.org/portraits, retrieved January 12, 2009.
11. Hamza Yusuf, one of the charismatic leaders of American Muslim community, used the term "hijacked" after 9/11.
12. *Wahhabi*, a reform movement in Islam, originating in Arabia; adherents of the movement usually refer to themselves as *Muwahhidun* (Unitarians). It was founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahab (1703–1791), who was influenced by Ibn Taymiyya and taught that all accretions to Islam after the third century of the Muslim era—i.e., after 950 C. E.—were spurious and must be expunged. This view, involving essentially a purification of the Sunni sect, regarded the veneration of saints, ostentation in worship, and luxurious living as the chief evils. Accordingly, *Wahhabi* mosques are simple and without minarets, and the adherents dress plainly and do not smoke tobacco or hashish (2007. "Wahhabi." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. New York: Columbia University Press).
13. In this study, representatives of selected mosques were interviewed on a number of questions regarding the relationship between the Muslim community and American society. These representatives were usually Imams, Board members, or presidents of the mosques (Bagby et al. 2001)
14. Dr. Ihsan Bagby released new data on mosques in the United States in January 2012. The second wave of the survey was carried out in 2011, ten years after 9/11, suggesting that Muslims, instead of turning radical, have in general retained their positive outlook of American life. However, the divergent views continue to divide the community.
15. The Pew Research Center's 2011 survey found that Muslim Americans have more positive attitude toward the national conditions than the general public.
16. *Dupatta* is a long scarf that is essential to many South Asian women's suits. The *dupatta* has long been a symbol of modesty in South Asian dress.
17. Imam Abdullah is an Islamic scholar and an important religious leader in Riverside community.
18. Panera Bread is a bakery-café that mainly operates in the United States and Canada.
19. Glory be to God.
20. A *Muslimah* is a Muslim woman.
21. Quoted from a book on Imams in South Africa. In order to keep confidentiality, the citation is not provided here.
22. *Salafi* is a Sunni Islamic movement that takes the pious ancestors (*Salaf*) of the period of early Islam as exemplary models. The principle belief of *Salafism* is that Islam was perfect and complete during the days of Prophet Muhammad and his companions. However, throughout the history, many unwanted innovations have been added to the authentic Islamic tradition due to cultural influences and modern ideology. *Salafism* seeks to revive the

way Islam was practiced during the time of Prophet Muhammad. This term is interchangeable with "*Wahhabism*" though its followers reject such usage. (Moosa 2005)

23. The name of the university has been omitted here to protect confidentiality.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Katie is a White convert married to a Palestinian businessman. She was introduced in Chapter 1 of this volume.
2. This number is based on a community phone directory compiled in 1990. The editors used local yellow pages to locate as many Muslim families as possible, based on names that were thought to be common Muslim names. Only one name and one phone number was listed per household. However, actual mosque membership is much lower than this number, because many Muslim families do not regularly attend the mosque and are not registered members. Even in 2006, according to the mosque financial situation report, registered community members (households) made up less than one-third of the Muslim households in Riverside.
3. *Iftar* refers to the evening meal for breaking the daily fast during the Islamic month of *Ramadan*. *Iftar* during *Ramadan* is often done as a community, with Muslims gathering to break their fast together.
4. Excerpts from the community newsletter.
5. God is the Greatest.
6. God is Great.
7. *Zakat* is the practice of alms-giving in Islam based on accumulated wealth. It is one of the five pillars of Islam.
8. This life.
9. Life after death.
10. This observation is based on the community newsletters that introduce new arrivals to the community.
11. *Riya'a* means showing one's good deeds to others and doing the good deeds for other than Allah's sake.
12. *Sadaqah* is a non-compulsory charity given voluntarily.
13. "Cardiologist Salaries." *MoMMD: Connecting Women in Medicine*." Retrieved January 25, 2009. (http://www.mommd.com/cardiology-salary.shtml).
14. The real name of the community is omitted here.
15. *Haram* means legally forbidden by Islamic law.
16. *Deen* is the Arabic word for religion.
17. Imam Abdullah quoted this paragraph in one of his sermons. The original source of this paragraph is unclear.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. This event created huge interest among Muslims and non-Muslims around the world. All major news outlets reported about it and the varied reactions among Islamic clergies. For a detailed account of this incident see, Hammer (2012:13–35).
2. *Hijabis* refers to girls who wear *hijabs* on regular basis.
3. This cookbook was published in 2006 by a well-known cookbook publisher, whose name is omitted here to protect the privacy of the research subjects.
4. The mosque incorporated to become a child organization of ISNA.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. US Newswire. 2005. "Muslim Youth Survey: 'Muslim, American, or Both?' 46 Pct. of Young American Muslims Feel Conflict Between Muslim & American Identities." (Nov 29): NA.
2. From the Mission Statement of American Muslim Alliance. Retrieved January 2, 2008 (http://www.amaweb.org/images/special/Mission%20Statement.pdf).
3. "About Us." The American Muslim (TAM). Retrieved January 2, 2008 (http://www.theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/tam/about/).
4. Morning prayer.

NOTES TO THE EPILOGUE

1. Ali, Sayed. 2010. *Dubai: Gilded Cage*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

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