THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THAT THING ON THEIR HEADS: HOW MUSLIM AMERICAN WOMEN BECAME

NAVIGATORS OF A NEW CULTURE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

BY

TASNEEM MUSTAFA MANDVIWALA

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE 2019

For those who tread blindly—bravely—over bridges they cannot see the ends of.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible on my own.

First, I thank the University of Chicago's Department of Comparative Human Development for housing diverse faculty members and a remarkable interdisciplinary program which welcomed my work and supported it for the duration of my project. I also thank the University of Chicago's Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality which also supported my research and allowed me opportunities to present and discuss my work.

Specifically, Dr. Richard Shweder's guidance and support throughout my research process was invaluable in direct and indirect ways. Reading his work years before actually meeting and working with him is a testament to his academic influence on my own. Thank you, Rick.

I also thank Dr. Margaret Spencer both for her contributions to the literature of minority developmental psychology, from which I grew my own theories, and her ongoing encouragement and feedback on my research

I thank Dr. Anna Mueller for her insight into the methodology and design of my project and her overall enthusiasm for my work. What you're holding right now would have been about sixty pages shorter—and less thorough—were it not for her.

Finally, I thank all the other faculty members who took the time to have conversations with me, ask me questions that forced me to rethink and improve my research, and who offered support.

I thank my friends and colleagues, especially Drs. Keshia Harris, Rita Biagoli, Rebecca Frausel, and Emily Lyons, who infused my life with necessary laughter, perspective, and breathing during the research process.

I thank JCS, for helping me plant my own seeds.

I thank Anita Pilling, who removed herself from her own classroom countless times and sat outside the door on the floor with her work in order to give me a private space to pray in high school after the school's principal told me I was not allowed to do so in the library since it was a public space. Mrs. Pilling, you did more than just give space to a brief physical act of prayer: You gave space to the idea that there can be compassion towards and normalization of each other's differences across racial, cultural, religious, generational lines; you were doing the work before I even had the vocabulary for it.

I thank you, Sakina, for anchoring me when I was writing and analyzing the work contained herein while I was in a country not my own. You made the place feel a little more like home.

I thank my family:

My parents, Abba and Amma—You both did the hard work of being the first generation in America so that I could proudly say that I am the second. Your ethics of honesty, integrity, and humility continue to remind me to be the best version of myself I can be, professionally and personally.

My siblings, Taher bhai, Mariyah bhabi, Murtsai, and Alefiyah bhabi—Thank you for your long-distance support and excitement for my work, even though I am still relatively convinced you are all unsure of what it is I do exactly.

My babyjaans, Shirin, Husainah, Amatullah, Burhanuddin squared (BTH and BTM), and you whom I have yet to meet—I love you beyond words and am so proud to be your masi/faijee. Thank you for bringing indescribable calm to my heart and joy to my life.

My sister, Aren—You remain my inspiration. I still want to grow up and be just like you.

Lastly, I thank each young woman who agreed to speak with me, who trusted me with her ideas, perspectives, challenges, ambitions, successes, failures. I am privileged to be witness to the vast vulnerabilities and strengths embodied by each of you, and I hope my work does justice to your stories.

Overview

This dissertation examines the developmental identity trajectories of a previously unexamined minority population in the U.S., second-generation Muslim American women. Specifically, it aims to answer if, how, and why young Muslim American women's experiences and identity development processes differ from their peer groups, placing these questions within the socio-cultural context of post-9/11 and Trump era political rhetoric. It examines the population within the three age brackets of adolescence, emerging adulthood, and adulthood with the focus being on the former two groups. Through semi-structured qualitative interviews and brief demographic questionnaires, the 68 participants contributed their individual experiences and perceptions to help create a larger cross-sectional experiential image of young Muslim American women. To focus the results, I organized and analyzed the data using ecological terms of vulnerability: risks, coping mechanisms, protective factors, and emergent identities. Accordingly, differences and similarities between the participants were based on these terms rather than terms of ethnicity or sect.

My research supports the original hypothesis of the project: Yes, Muslim American women's identity trajectories do indeed differ significantly from their peers' due to specific vulnerabilities they face as a result of being at the epicenter of the three identities of Muslim, American, and woman. While all three age cohorts have some developmental overlaps with their non-Muslim peers, there are unique identity challenges that Muslim American women face; these are most conflicted during adolescence as this is the introduction into the larger public realm of mainstream American society. Because adolescence is generally a time during which individuals are sensitive to peer alliances and group- and self-identities initially form, being seen as a Muslim outsider during this time serves as a catalyst to Muslim girls' forced introspection regarding how they are viewed versus how they wish to be viewed. The adolescent girls, most of

whom wear the hijab, are often hyper-aware of how others are perceiving them, citing instances of Islamophobic prejudice that range from microaggresions to blatant harassment. At the same time, these girls navigate mis/perceptions of themselves at home and within their religious communities, dealing with an additional entirely separate set of gender biases and peer alliances. Ultimately, the friction between the vulnerabilities present in the school, home, and masjid spaces not only push the girls to devise particular coping mechanisms in order to deal with the risks, but also require them to begin an identity journey of choice: hijab or no hijab, more Muslim or more American, more independent or more family- and marriage-oriented.

These questions abate slightly during emerging adulthood, as certain risks do become less threatening to the individual's identity. Islamophobic aggressions, for example, are generally less bothersome to the emerging adult women; however, the instances that do occur tend to be much more traumatic (e.g., sexual assault or life-threatening physical assault.) These risks are replaced with other ones, though, often calling into question the emergent identities tentatively established during adolescence. While in some ways adhering to Islamic norms becomes easier and less embarrassing as individuals move away from a closed high school environment and into college and the workplace where distance and professionalism reign, in other ways, adherence becomes more of a risk as women realize that being a successful Muslim American adult requires walking a strictly timed tightrope of marriage, education, and balancing one's own desires for independence with parental obligations as a Muslim daughter. Marriage and education become simultaneous risks and protective factors: If a woman successfully completes college and gets married shortly thereafter, she is usually settled in her identity, maintains strong social support systems both through family and her religious community, and is generally well-adjusted and successful in both her Muslim and non-Muslim circles. The angst of being torn between

identities settles as the Muslim aspects of her life tend to gain dominance, but in a much more tempered way than her parents' generation.

However, if a woman's life trajectory does not follow the simple basic formula of undergraduate education and marriage, new risks do arise. She continues to be seen as somewhat infantile by her socio-religious community if she is not married, remaining a daughter rather than transitioning into the next—and adult—phase of her life, a wife. Alternately, she could also be seen as "too American," a negative quality that paints Muslim women as too independent and culturally dangerous due to their inability to appropriately carry on Muslim tradition. Because the Muslim aspects of the women's live gain dominance as they move through emerging adulthood into adulthood, the rejection or control experienced within the Muslim sphere of their lives becomes a greater risk. Even these outlier misfit women, though, are contributing to the shaping of the population by remaining present and determined to live authentic lives, even if those lives do not adhere to what is expected of them.

The responses of the adult cohort—a group that had come of age before 9/11 occurred—supported the hypothesis that 9/11 and the subsequent Islamophobic political rhetoric did not imprint on their identity formation as strongly as the other two age cohorts. As one participant said, they were able to practice Islam "innocently," allowed to publicly question aspects of the faith without fear of reinforcing stereotypes, and overall had an uncompromised and free relationship with their faith traditions. While they, too, became sharply aware of Islamophobia and endured prejudices like the other two age groups after 9/11, the adult cohort did not experience these factors as developmental risks as their identities were already strongly established and the protective factors of social support, family, and career in place. What does present as a risk for the adult cohort is the introduction of parenthood and the new question of

how to engage in and with religious communities they no longer feel connected to. Even though these women followed the expected and approved life course trajectories of getting educated and married, they now seem to be facing the unknown as they grapple with questions of how to pass on to their children the aspects of Islamic culture they believe in—community, faith, generosity, acceptance—without the aspects they are less enthusiastic about—unequal gender norms, social conservatism, lack of open conversation, mild xenophobia.

Even though from their teens to their thirties Muslim American women seem to be caught in a pressurized socio-cultural maelstrom, they are actually dynamic innovators at the forefront of a new American sub-culture. The current research shows that it is not the case that Muslim women are simply constantly struggling unarmed against socio-cultural norms. They lead rich, complex lives with various approaches to fulfillment, success, and happiness, and develop and rely on numerous support systems both within and without Muslim society. Ultimately, though, it is the choices a Muslim woman makes during her emerging adulthood years regarding her education, career, and family life that are birthing a specifically American Islam. While Islamic norms are still adhered to, they are observed with a different intentionality than first-generation immigrant Islam. There is more flexibility, more inclusion, and less social stigma and punishment on a range of issues such as hijab, education, and whether or when to have children. Just like with any cultural shifts, it is unclear when and how immigrant Islam will officially transmute into American Islam as the changes are gradual, often imperceptible, and sometimes impermanent. What is clear, though, is that the personal choices of second-generation Muslim women hold the power to have long-term public and political ramifications in the U.S.

Preview of Chapters

In the introductory chapter, I discuss the socio-political and socio-cultural context for the current research and state the purpose of the study. I then discuss the theoretical grounding in which I house myself as a researcher—cultural psychology, ecological development of the individual, and intersectional feminism—followed by a literature review. The bodies of relevant research include adolescent and emerging adulthood development, Islamophobia and stereotyping, and gender experiences within Muslim socio-cultural groups. The chapter closes with a detailed methodology section outlining the research process utilized.

Chapter 2 focuses on the first age cohort examined, adolescence. After a brief introduction to the literature and results specific to the cohort, the results of the questionnaires and the interview codes are presented. The chapter then delves into a detailed discussion regarding the codes, qualifying them as facets of vulnerabilities and specifying how they are unique to the population in question. Lengthy excerpts of the interviews are often included as primary supporting sources to the analysis.

Chapters 3 and 4 follow a very similar approach, focusing on the emerging adult and adult cohorts, relatively. The within-chapter organization differs slightly according to the research results themselves. For example, Chapter 2 follows a somewhat sequential ecological organization, moving from overlapping/population-specific risks to coping mechanisms/protective factors that are used to counteract those risks to emergent identities that evolve due to the preceding risks and protective factors. In contrast, Chapters 3 and 4 prove a bit more complicated as the same factors can recur in the women's lives as both risks and protective factors. The discussion of these factors is consequently organized according to the mutable life events, e.g., "marriage," "education," or "motherhood."

The final chapter serves as a conclusion to the study, enumerating various shortcomings and unforeseen weaknesses of the work such as a population weighted toward South Asian American Muslims and the varied socio-political chronological settings during which the interviews of the different cohorts were conducted. At the same time, it also highlights the potential benefits of the study and revisits the original aims of the research question, emphasizing that this work is an initial step toward successfully empirically examining an understudied but sensationalized population.

Chapter 1: Introduction

It is undeniable that in roughly the past fifty years, the U.S. has provided a vast number of opportunities for freedom, success, and safety to Muslims, immigrants and otherwise. After the combined effects of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Immigration Act of 1965, American legal norms insisting on religious tolerance and lack of prejudice based on race created an environment much more inviting, at least in theory, than many countries across the world. Muslim immigrants from South Asia and the Middle East especially took advantage of these new laws and ventured to the U.S., usually settling into comfortable, quiet lives as well-educated professionals or business owners (Leonard 2003). However, 9/11 has inevitably become a marked turning point in the public identity of the Muslim American individual, as it was at this point in American history—less than two decades ago—that the American public began to seriously consider what it means to be Muslim. Unfortunately, the religious identity came to the fore in the context of one dramatic and tragic event, cementing the idea of Islam as a generally negative one in the consciousness of a population that had, up until then, been largely unconscious of the entire existence of the experience of being Muslim in America. In the past two years, another political event has magnified negative national attention on Muslims: the 2016 presidential elections. Donald Trump began his campaign efforts to become the president of the United States on a platform that encouraged suspicious views of many minority American groups, Muslims included. A clear and sharp parallel can be seen in the rise of Islamohphobic acts in our country and the rise of the GOP candidate and eventual president; in fact, it has been the highest spike in anti-Muslim acts s*ince* 9/11 (Abdelkader 2016), and about three-quarters of the Muslim American population report experiencing discrimination to some degree (Diamant 2017).

Even though awareness of Islam raced to the forefront of American culture after 9/11, the culture itself had been primed over decades—arguably, over centuries—to receive a certain view of the religion; specifically, an Islamophobic one. While the average non-Muslim American may not have an active fear of Muslims or Islam, s/he quite possibly holds a deep-set, though perhaps unconscious, negative view of all things Islamic due to historical layers upon layers of "us" versus "them" conditioning, stretching as far back as the Crusades and as recent as the Gulf War and 9/11 itself. It is perhaps surprising that despite the roughly 6 million Muslims currently living in America and certain positive—and necessary—economic relationships with Islamic nations in the Middle East due to the oil trade, the one-dimensional stereotype of the Muslim still persists so universally across American culture (Barrett, 2007). Islamophobia is a "*social* anxiety toward Islam and Muslim cultures that is largely unexamined by, yet deeply ingrained in, Americans" (Gottschalk and Greenberg 5). Furthermore, it is encouraged by the lack of awareness on the part of the majority of non-Muslim American populations that their views are heavily shaped by "the norms of Christianity and secularism and negatively reflect centuries of religious and political conflict around the world" (Gottschalk and Greenberg 2). This lack of awareness is the most poisonous aspect of American Islamophobia as it allows the most room for subtle but perpetual prejudice.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the term "Muslim American" was argued to be a paradox, as the fundamentalist ideas of the terrorists, ones that desired the destruction of America, came to be interpreted—or misinterpreted, rather—as general Islamic ideas. Furthermore, "Arab and Muslim Americans were effectively de-Americanized after 9/11, positioned as foreigners and then denuded of their civil rights" (Cainkar 232). As the first post- 9/11 generations of Muslim Americans enter adolescence and adulthood, it is challenging to clarify their experiences, as we

are arguably still too chronologically near the pivotal point. Even so, as political tensions with Muslim nations increase and persist alongside everyday prejudice and stereotypes, it is necessary to look at the Muslim American situation with an ever-increasing urgency to document their experiences from the beginning. There is a deep and tangled history between the West and Islam, and Muslims have already been directly participating in the fabric of American life for many decades. The "beginning" I want to examine, though, is 9/11, as this was the date that both non-Muslim Americans and Muslim Americans themselves had to consider the validity of "Muslim American" as an identity. The question hovering quietly in the background throughout the specifics of my exploration will be, "What do we mean when we use a double adjective such as 'American Muslim?' Are we describing an American who is Muslim, a Muslim who lives in America, or someone essentially distinct from the two?" (Khan 2003, 175-6). My work leads me to bet on the last.

Although there has been a plethora of research done on the bifurcated experiences of many minority, immigrant, and multicultural youth populations regarding peer and parental interaction, acculturation, and development during the adolescent years, there is a dearth of research done on American Muslim youth and adults alike. Due to the increased attention the U.S. media has given this population in the decade following 9/11, both non-Muslim and Muslim Americans alike have been forced to grapple with the group's identity. This qualitative study explores the experiences of second-generation Muslim American girls and women and how these experiences might shape their perceptions and development as individuals. It focuses on two age cohorts—adolescence and emerging adulthood—while using a third cohort—adulthood—as a speculative informant for the first two groups. Specifically, topics of peer and parental interaction, beliefs about non-Muslim peers' perceptions, perceptions of self, and perceptions of

life markers (specifically, marriage and career) are delved into through a gender-sensitive lens.

My study was necessarily a gendered study for three main reasons. First, women are often seen as bearers and transmitters of culture from generation to generation, in both American and many immigrant cultures (Zaal, Salah, and Fine 2007; Okin 1999). Because I examine second-generation immigrant experiences, the pressure to maintain home culture on the one hand and assimilate and perpetuate the new host country's culture on the other therefore is theoretically more pronounced for girls than for boys. Furthermore, girls are socialized to be more sensitive to others than boys are, priming the former to be more collective-minded rather than more individuated (Chodorow, 2001). The weight of this type of socialization, seen across many cultures—American included—is doubled when placed in the context of collectivist cultures, as most Muslim cultures are (Platt, 2017; Greif, 1994).

Secondly, the particularities of both the home cultures and host cultures in this case arguably contain more tensions for girls than for boys. To use two well-known cultural tropes, Islamic cultures are known to promote modesty and obedience in women while American culture prides itself on its liberated, unhindered women; this contrast is most obviously highlighted around the image of hijab. Admittedly, this tension was a hypothesized one for the population under consideration and something this study itself aimed to explore. It remains obvious, though, that "veiling has become globally polarizing, a locus for the struggle between Islam and the West and between contemporary and traditional interpretations of Islam" (Heath 2009). Furthermore, as Carol Gilligan emphatically states, "women's psychological development within patriarchal societies and male-voiced cultures is inherently traumatic" (1993; p. 31), and both Islamic and American cultures still maintain deeply entrenched patriarchal schemas (Jaggar, 2008; Badran 2009). This increased vulnerability of girls within macrosystems of patriarchy is a factor this

study has kept in sharp consideration throughout.

Finally, I believe the literature demands a specifically gendered developmental study because the small steps that have been made so far in American Islamic studies tend to focus on generic Muslim American experiences in which it is difficult to filter out specific factors contributing to experiences, gender being one of these factors. Indeed, as Khan (2003) points out, "when we ask how Muslims are becoming American Muslims, we are essentially inquiring how the demands of being American and being Muslim coexist within a singular self" (175). I want to hone this question to see how the demands of being American and being Muslim coexist within the singular woman self, as each culture brings with it its own gender scripts and expects individuals to memorize the lines for the roles. While research studying the experiences of American Muslim boys and men is certainly warranted on the same grounds, I have chosen to begin with girls and women due to the first two reasons listed. Ultimately, the question I aim to answer—or at least begin to answer—with this work is whether young American Muslim women experience developmental risks unique to their social positioning as such and in turn develop specific coping mechanisms and emergent identities that other adolescent and emerging adult groups in the U.S. do not share. Furthermore, I explore whether the vulnerabilities seen in the adolescent age cohort are still present in the emerging adult cohort, and if so, whether coping mechanisms have shifted at all to adapt to new life situations.

Purpose of Study

The research question this dissertation aims to address is whether or not American Muslim women face unique vulnerabilities during the developmental periods of adolescence and emerging adulthood that other American groups do not face and how these vulnerabilities affect their decision making, identities, and, in turn, life trajectories. Specifically, this project will

answer the following questions: Based off the protective factors (coping mechanisms and social support) developed during the adolescent years, what risk factors do American Muslim college-aged women face when making life decisions regarding education, work, and home life? How do these ultimately play into their identities as successfully transitioning adults? Are the life stressors the women are engaging with the same as the stressors other emerging adult population groups in America engage with? How does engagement with their particular stressors potentially shape the trajectory of their adult lives?

To answer these questions, I approach the subject matter through a simultaneously multicultural and gender-sensitive lens. As an inlet into these somewhat ambitious developmental questions, I employed semi-structured interviews coupled with brief questionnaires. The latter were used as a supplement to the former, and the former was chosen as the ideal method to explore the original question not only because of its inherent ability to allow room for creative exploration, but also because it allowed for an incorporation of the voice-centered, relational method of Brown and Gilligan (1992) that focuses on girls' and women's communication styles. The topics of interest mentioned above were specifically asked about, but as other issues organically arose, I was able to follow those threads of experience as well to come to a fuller understanding of each participant's viewpoint. The research was conducted in Chicago and Houston, as these are two cities in which my personal and professional contacts helped me recruit participants, but also because both large cities house diverse populations even within the Muslim American community. I wanted to speak with girls and women from various Islamic traditions and racial backgrounds to see whether there were experiential trends that spanned the young Muslim female population at large.

I argue that the particular vulnerabilities that Muslim American women face in their late

teens and through their twenties channels their individual development trajectories into a pattern that does not follow the usual adolescence-emerging adult-adulthood pattern. Rather, these girls tend to move from adolescence to something that appears to be a murkier stage, at least when compared to the traditional American life stages. During college, while thoughts of majors, jobs, and careers certainly do occupy some brain wavelengths, the thought that tends to override these individual concerns is marriage. This is because the women understand that they are at a culturally ideal (within a Muslim context) age for marriage, and that a suitable proposal from a respected family might arrive at any time without warning. Because these proposals occur through social networks and not usually through direct contact between the potential couple, the groom himself could be residing anywhere—sometimes even outside of the U.S. Not so different from unspoken American marital understandings (Shauman, 2010; Shihadeh, 1991; Gill and Haurin, 2002), the Muslim marital dynamic assumes the woman will move wherever the man resides and become a part of his family rather than vice versa (Esposito and DeLong-Bas, 2001). Accordingly, college-educated Muslim American women sometimes do not necessarily think directly or primarily about obtaining a job after college and potentially finding someone to marry. Rather, they think about where their potential husband might be from, get married, and then apply to graduate schools or get jobs in those cities. Oftentimes, though, if the woman gets pregnant, following through on graduate education or career development becomes much more challenging, as is the norm even within mainstream American culture (Menon, 2013). In some ways, these women actually approach the traditional life stages in a skewed order: adolescence, adulthood, and then emerging adulthood, exploring career options, friendships, and freedom from parental invasiveness only after they have gotten married.

Of course, not all the women in this study married during or immediately after college

(though all have attended college.) Though a minority of the participants, the majority of this unmarried group simply have not found a suitable partner whom they wanted to marry, though this was not for their parents' and relatives' lack of trying. In the meantime, these women have worked well-paying jobs or obtained masters and professional degrees, with some still in graduate school for their doctorate, law, or medical degrees. On the surface, it would seem that they are following the traditional American life path for young, successful individuals. These women often have their own apartments--even if those apartments are within an hour's drive to their families—and because of their private living spaces, they maintain a sense of control and independence over their own whereabouts and daily activities. However, despite their seeming success, they are well aware that within the view of their Muslim worlds, they are not yet successful as Muslim women. "Single Muslim woman" is an epithet that automatically locks one in the adolescent stage of development in the eyes of the Muslim community, even if the woman is in her mid-twenties. While almost none of the unmarried individuals were staunchly anti-marriage, they no longer saw it as a pressing need on their to-do list as they claimed to while they were teenagers entering college. Even so, the desire to maintain connections with both family and religion prevents these women from completely dismissing the Muslim cultural view of marriage as even occasional forays into the masjid or family gatherings immediately gives rise to questions such as, "Why don't you want to get married?" This group of women, then, while successfully navigating usual emerging adult issues that other Americans also face, deal with an undercurrent message of incompleteness from their religious societies that is invisible to their co-workers, professors, and bosses.

Both groups of women, married and unmarried, navigate these personal and professional struggles within the macrosystem of not only a post-9/11 America, but also Trump's America.

Trump has not only often encouraged his supporters to be skeptical of outsiders—specifically oftentimes brown, Muslim outsiders—but has also repeatedly made demeaning and derogatory comments about women that dismiss them as valuable thinkers and contributors to society. His divisive rhetoric successfully elected him leader of the country. While wearing a hijab in high school may have been a challenge a few years ago simply because of an adolescent's need to fit in, appear "normal," and the vague sense that it is something foreign and linked to 9/11, it now might prove to become an even more complicated choice for Muslim American women.

While some literature exists on American Islam, Islamophobia, and gender in Islam within a Western context, little work has been done from a specifically developmental perspective or with a focus on a particular age demographic at all. In fact, to my knowledge, one of the only serious developmental research contributions on American Muslims was done in 2007 in Sirin and Fine's article, "Hyphenated Selves: Muslim American Youth Negotiating Identities on the Fault Lines of Global Conflict." While an important contribution, the quantitative nature of the research precluded in-depth experiential and perceptional insight. Additionally, it focused only on the negative aspects of the Muslim American experience without depicting the full picture of rich cultural and social resources the youth may be using. I foresee my current work as contributing to this large gap in the existing literature.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

I couch my research inquiry within the intellectual framework of Richard Shweder's cultural psychology, holding strongly to the idea that the "nonuniformity of mentalities across time and space" is a testament to various but equal human realities, and that this variety is something to be embraced rather than dismissed (Shweder 2003, p. 27). Borrowing from Shweder (2003), my romantic pluralist sensibilities convince me that ideological cultural

conflicts rarely have a clear winner as players on either side of the fault line hold equally "real" beliefs. If "a genuine culture is a reality-binding product of the human mind that is not dictated by either logic or direct (meaning-free) experience" (Shweder 2003, p. 16), we begin to see how easily both American and Islamic cultures might be seen as "correct" to their respective cultural members. Shweder proposes the solution to potential cultural misunderstandings and judgments between these members to be an active worldview, "seeking out and engaging alternative points of view. . . by staying on the move between different cultural realities" (2003, p. 2).

As much as I agree with Shweder's insightful proposition, it inherently holds an assumption that the starting point of understanding is one side or the other of the cultural fault line. To continue the metaphor, the suggestion seems to be that one build bridges across various abysses to increase the ease of access between the "others'" sides and one's own. For the girls and women in this study, though, the "alternative points of view" have sought them out, requiring rather than encouraging a constant shifting of cultural realities. The girls find themselves on the fault line itself from the beginning, building their bridges outward in either direction rather than across in one direction. To me, the importance of engaging discussions of cultural pluralism almost does not need an explanation; it is crucial, especially in multicultural places like the contemporary U.S. However, equally crucial is engaging questions of "divergent cultural evolution" (Shweder 2002, p. 234) on an individual level. If cultural conflicts between the majority and the minority, between this side and that side can be so tense on a national/social scale when members are firmly convinced which side they are on, it seems likely that this tension only increases when the pressure is concentrated within one person who sees herself as both majority and minority, as both this side and that.

To explore how young Muslim American women deal with this potential fault-line

tension, I take an ecological approach using Margaret Spencer's (2006) PVEST

(Phenomenological Variant of the Ecological Systems Theory; see Appendix A for visual model)

as a lens. I propose American Muslim adolescent development can be more easily understood as

a complex interaction of multiple life factors and meaning-making, including risk factors,

personal coping mechanisms, perceived supports, and subsequent emergent identities. PVEST

posits that "it is not merely the experience but one's perception of experiences in different

cultural contexts that influences how one perceives oneself" (817, Spencer, Dupree, and

Hartmann 1997). An individual's meaning-making of the self and the world is a collaborative

process with her socio-cultural environment in which the level of vulnerability gauges the level

of net stress engagement as a result of particular risk factors. This engagement, in turn,

determines reactive coping mechanisms the individual uses to deal with those risk factors. If

proven successful across various contexts, these reactive coping strategies become stable ones;

so stable, in fact, that they meld with the individual's emerging identity to become a permanent

fixture in it (Spencer, Dupree, and Hartmann 1997).

Within this larger framework of cultural psychology examined through the ecology of

individual lives, my research also speaks to third-wave feminism, branches of which are

intersectional feminism and multicultural feminism. Usha Menon (2013) summarizes the latter as

a feminism that is not necessarily liberal as it includes advocating for the rights of women who

are themselves not liberal; rather, it focuses first and foremost on cultural context.

Where/how/why/when are the women behaving, reacting, and interacting in the ways they are,

and what do the women themselves desire as positive outcomes for their lives? By framing

research on women in this context, Menon and other multicultural feminists—myself included—

give the power of narrative back to the subjects themselves, allowing for more accurate

representations of individuals and cultures.

It is only by bearing this in mind that we can begin to understand the decisions, experiences, and self-identities of the women in this study. Oftentimes, participants made comments that seemed to contradict their own viewpoints, backtracking and undoing what they themselves had claimed. While some, like Susan Okin (1999), might interpret these instances as weaknesses or confusion caused by the women's multicultural settings, in truth, they are moments of illumination, showing how an individual might simultaneously navigate the riches and woes of two cultures. Even though most of the women in my study a*re* liberals in their social and political views, the complexity of their experiences necessitates us leaving behind any notions of "'imperial' liberalism" (Menon, 2013) that might persuade us to think our own world views have the answers for challenges in their world views. That is, despite the women being liberal Americans, they are also second-generation Muslim people of color. Therefore, assuming—or demanding—that the Western moral system of individualism and autonomy is the *only* moral system they should abide by is a naïve and avoidable error. Once we move past this initial block in our understanding, we can more thoroughly and intelligently analyze the women and their identities.

BACKGROUND

To better ground my research in contemporary developmental and cultural psychology discourse, a review of the existing literature on Muslim American adolescents is necessary. Most current literature on the population, though, focuses on either Islamophobia or the general idea that Muslim Americans are a heterogeneous but peaceful and "normal" group. Not only does the focus tend to be exclusively on adult experiences, but it also has a habit of not moving beyond a general idea of heterogeneity within Muslim Americans, if heterogeneity is discussed at all. The

latter shortcoming is certainly understandable from one particular viewpoint, that of anti-Muslim prejudice. Because actors of prejudice do not discriminate in the hatred directed towards individuals who they know to be Muslim or who generally "look" Muslim regardless of race or gender, there might be a shared experience of prejudice across the population at large. Consequently, there is validity to the idea of a collective "Muslim American" identity that is a reflection of sociopolitical interactions rather than religiosity (Sirin and Fine 2007). However, American Muslims do come from various racial and cultural backgrounds, and the frequent homogenization or superficial heterogenization of the group in the literature and discussion ultimately needs to be rectified. Classifying an individual as only "Muslim American" without recognition of factors like gender, race, and particular traditions of Islam overlooks many layers of nuance within the American socio-racial experience.

In addition to bringing clarity to the varied Muslim American experiences, the literature needs to elaborate on age/generational experiences within the population, particularly youth experiences. Exploration in this vein would allow us to better determine what factors these adolescents face that are specific to their experience as Muslims growing up in America. Important work in this realm has been conducted by Sirin and Fine (2007), whose exploratory study finds Muslim American youth creating "hyphenated selves in a sea of contested global relations and representations." While their study presents multifaceted data regarding identity, stereotypes, gender, and discrimination using a large sample (n = 70), it neither explores the experiences of the youth in detail, nor does it emphasize the rich cultural worlds many Muslim American youth experience outside of prejudices. According to my research, these outside realms are often precisely where the youth find the resources for the positive social support they need to deal with the challenges that face them. I conducted my study with the aim of

contributing to this gap in the existing adolescent literature and draw on adolescent development, Islamophobia, and U.S. Muslim immigrant culture literatures.

Developmental literature

Adolescence has long been recognized in the field of American developmental psychology as a period of intense change, growth, and identity development for an individual (Erikson 1959/1980) during which self-identification, group-identification, appearance/attractiveness, and social acceptance are especially important (Qin, Way, and Rana 2008). For girls, though, this period tends to present more psychological risks than boys as they enter into a period of development "where women's psychological health comes into tension with the regeneration of male-voiced societies and cultures" (Gilligan 1993; p.11). American girls tend to experience a crisis of voice, their sensitivities to others' voices and needs coming into conflict with their own. Being socialized to value relationships and not cause conflict, girls often lose the oldest relationships they have had: the ones with themselves (Brown and Gilligan 1992). For the majority of American girls, this persistent internal struggle follows them into adulthood. For minority American girls, this struggle is likely doubled as they not only fight to balance the voices of relationships in mainstream contexts, but also those that are specific to their minority cultural contexts. Young Muslim American women, then, not only have to be "nice" and "polite" at school or at work because that is what young American women are expected to be, but they also have to be "normal" and appear "American" because that's what Muslims living in the U.S. must appear to be. At the same time, as my research shows, Muslim women also deeply value their relationships with other Muslims, particularly their parents, female friends, and spouses. When interacting within a Muslim social context, they then must embrace a different set of internal rules that while still encourages "niceness," now must communicate a

lack of Americanness and being "too American;" they must now present as "normal Muslims" that fit in easily within their respective Muslim immigrant communities. The adolescent challenge of developing authentic voice and authority becomes an even more actively shifting game than usual for the individuals in this study.

As well-documented as the American adolescent experience might be, the recognition of emerging adulthood as the next transitional phase of identity development is relatively new. This is likely because the life phase itself, lasting approximately from 18-25 years, only began to be seen as a distinct period of the life course during the last forty years due to demographic changes in which a larger number of Americans began pursuing higher education and getting married later in life. Going to college, working, and grappling with new worldviews while also preparing for a career and forging potentially life-long relationships all make the period of emerging adulthood one of immense importance regarding self-exploration; the decisions made during this period often have enduring ramifications for the life trajectory (Arnett 2000). Many developmental psychologists have done research examining how this newly created window of identity exploration in industrialized countries affects perceptions of what it means to be an adult, with results consistently showing an emphasis on individualistic character traits, decision-making autonomy, and financial independence (Arnett, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001; Crockett, 2000; Greene, Wheatley, and Aldava, 1992; Scheer and Palkovitz, 1994).

However, as Arnett (2003) notes, the vast majority of this research has been conducted on White samples at elite private universities. While some research has consequently been done on ethnic minority groups in the U.S. (Arnett 2003; Phinney 2006; Syed et al. 2007), the literature remains in need of more nuanced, qualitative work regarding emerging adulthood in minority American groups that recognizes the complexities of multicultural identity development.

Because multicultural individuals likely experience different types of maturation at different points in their lives as compared to White individuals due to different values and world views (Pittman et al 2017), this study uses the alternate lengthened emerging adulthood window from 18-29 years encompassing the entirety of the third decade of life as suggested by multiple scholars (Lane 2015; Lane and Fink 2015; Lee and Gramotnev 2007; Weiss, Freund, and Wiese 2012). I do so to ensure a more thorough examination of factors that might be overlooked by imposing the shorter age bracket of emerging adulthood onto cultural minorities within the U.S.

The current study examines adolescence and emerging adulthood in American Muslim women, a cultural subgroup of the American population that can highlight previously unexplored aspects of the developmental period due to the nested identities of gender, religion, ethnicity, and culture it embodies. While intersectional identity theory recognizes that any person may have "as many selves as groups of persons with which they interact," it also posits that if these selves conflict with one another and "involve high and roughly equivalent commitments and salience, considerable stress is likely to be generated" (Stryker &Burke 2000; 284, 286). This concept of stress within and because of an identity becomes particularly relevant when discussing the PVEST module of net stress engagement (elaborated below.) Thus far, the majority of intersectional identity and emerging adulthood research focusing on minorities has largely been limited to Latinos/Hispanics, African Americans, and Asian Americans in general (Phinney 2006). Though many Muslim Americans fall into the latter two groups, research has shown that their "Muslim" identity overrides their ethnic or racial identity (Khan 2003), potentially making the identity development process even more complex than other minority groups' experiences. In fact, the identity "Muslim American/American Muslim" is arguably even newer than the field of emerging adulthood, one probable reason why such little literature exists in the first place.

Socio-political literature

OUTSIDER IDEAS: ISLAMOPHOBIA AND STEREOTYPES

In addition to grounding the current study in the context of developmental work, noting the scholarly efforts that have been made thus far on Islamophobia and prejudices is also necessary as it draws a larger macrosystem picture of the American cultural and political context within which the young women find themselves. Islamophobia is a "social anxiety toward Islam and Muslim cultures that is largely unexamined by, yet deeply ingrained in, Americans" (Gottschalk and Greenberg 2008, p. 5), with potentially deep roots in the Orientalism of many centuries (Afhsar 2008; Beydoun 2018). Traditionally, Islamophobia has been defined as a fear and suspicion of Muslims and Islam due to the assumption that they are inherently "violent, alien, and unassimilable" (Beydoun 2018).

Islamophobia scholar Khaled A Beydoun (2018) has recently refined the established definition of Islamophobia, breaking it down into three particularities: private, structural, and dialectical. All three dimensions are relevant to my study as they reflect how the microsystem intermingles with the macrosystem and how each can reinforce the other; we will see examples of this interplay amongst all ages of participants in my research. Private Islamophobia occurs when private civilian actors perform acts of islamophobia. These can range from racists slurs thrown out while driving all the way to violently murdering a Muslim neighbor (Chapel Hill). Structural Islamophobia is Islamophobia that is legally enforced. For contemporary times, this began immediately after 9/11 and is built into government agencies such as U.S. Patriot Act or anti-Shari'a legislation using prejudiced language. While Donald Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric has been more directly extreme than the previous two presidents, he is building upon already established biases. Finally, dialectical Islamophobia "is the process by which structural

17

Islamophobia shapes, reshapes and endorses views or attitudes about Islam and Muslim subjects"

(Beydoun 2018). It is the lived consequence of structural Islamophobia, the validation of fear and

hate of Muslims; an obvious example is the correlation of Trump's rhetoric with the immediate

rise of Muslim hate crimes in 2016.

In an age of hyper-connectivity, the population of today is even more susceptible to

dialectical and private Islamophobias due to mass and social media. Forming inaccurate social

stereotypes becomes natural when one constantly sees sensationalized headlines on accredited

news networks, Twitter, Facebook, and the internet at large. Not only do these media sources

propagate the more dramatic, incendiary stories about Muslims and Islamic traditions, they also

seem to display an active and "consistent disinterest in nonviolent Muslim perspectives"

(Gottschalk and Greenberg 2, 2008). Even humor is used to fuel the political fire, as cartoons

play off the public's vague understandings of Islamic culture and use caricatures of patriarchal

terrorists and oppressed women to communicate the zeitgeist in a seemingly lighthearted way

(Gottschalk and Greenberg 2008).

Particularly relevant to my study is the American media's ability to often single-

handedly shape views of the hijab and Muslim women's helplessness. The lack of knowledge

regarding the history and true significance of this sartorial tradition increases the general

Western population's stereotyping of the women who practice it; "covered women are singled

out as the living example of backwardness and fearful subordination" (Afshar 2008, p. 414;

Haddad, et al. 2006; Mishra and Shirazi 2010). The effects of this stereotyping on the recipient

population are less than desirable, as one would imagine. Due to the "repeatedly supported

notions of the collective culpability of Arab and Muslim Americans for the [9/11] attacks," there

was a pervasive sense of "insecurity" among Muslim Americans in the years following the

attacks (Cainkar 2011, p. 1), with many emphasizing their ethnic (i.e., Asian) identities over their religious ones, adopting non-Muslim names, and attempting to hide their religious beliefs in general (Afshar 2008).

Some research has also found that specifically gendered stereotyping exists, with Muslim women reporting harassment at twice the rate of men. The Muslim American "threat" is gendered, with Muslim men presenting a threat of violence on a political scale, but Muslim women presenting a threat of cultural invasion on a local level (Cainkar 2011) Not only are they easy targets for hate crimes because they are "representations of Muslims in American society," but Muslim women are also ironically harassed for supposedly already being "victims of their religion, culture, and Muslim men" (Hammer 2013, p. 110). Before beginning my study, I had surmised that defense against the masculine political threat is likely seen as accounted for through agents such as the TSA and the Patriot Act; the local level, however, is still seen as susceptible to foreign influence. For this reason, private individuals would take it upon themselves to express their disapproval of hijabi women through indirectly and directly prejudiced acts as a way of protecting mainstream American values and culture. While this still could be true, the girls I spoke with also offered another explanation: Women's clothing simply gave them away as Muslims more often than men's clothing.

Thus far, I have emphasized prejudice from non-Muslim Americans because these ideas tend to define Muslim American identities to the general population, occur in mainstream public contexts, and have been shown to be important aspects of being Muslim American even in the scant adolescent-specific studies that have been done to date (Sirin and Fine 2007); the experiences of the girls I spoke with also supported these notions. However, it is important to bring attention to within-group friction as well as the girls also had to navigate tensions in

Muslim-only contexts.

WITHIN-GROUP TENSIONS: RACE, CULTURE, AND GENERATION

First-person narratives and interviews with Muslim Americans show that while they share general tenets of a faith, Muslim Americans are not so similar to one another as might be assumed, differing in ethnicities, world views, life choices, and degrees of religiosity (Suratwala and Ebrahimji 2011; Barrett 2007). In fact, in a 2009 Gallup poll investigating race and religions, Muslim Americans took the lead as "the most racially diverse religious group in the United States" (gallup.com). Not only should this make the urgency of undoing Muslim stereotypes clear, but it also therefore is not surprising that there could be cultural tensions within the mammoth group we call "Muslim American."

Though a sisterly solidarity is certainly the ideal in most Islamic societies, more often than not, American masaajid (mosques) are divided in attendance by race; one of the most blatant divides is between African American Muslims and those of South Asian descent (Karim 2009). This is due to not only certain gender differences in the way each particular religious community is organized, but also because African American Muslims are often seen, both by other Muslims and non-Muslims alike, as first and foremost Black rather than Muslim, a rare supersedence of race over religion. Though this presents a new kind of identity challenge for Black Muslims as we will see in Maleka's case, an African American girl I interviewed, it does potentially reduce much of the anti-Muslim prejudice that has mushroomed post 9/11 (Karim 2009).

Another point of difference within the Muslim American population is the hijab, perhaps a surprising point of contention from the view of Western feminists who might tout that all head coverings are equally oppressive but equally blindly embraced (Afshar 2008). The majority of

Muslim women, American and otherwise, actually choose not to wear a hijab for a plethora of individual reasons (Haddad, et al. 2006.) Within many Muslim American communities, there exists a subculture of hijabi (one who wears hijab) women judging women who do not wear it, the former believing the latter have yet to reach a complete understanding of their own faith (Sirin and Fine 2007; Naber 2010). At the same time, a conversation that acknowledges the discomfort many American women feel wearing a hijab publicly in an Islamophobic context also has a foothold, citing women's safety and peace of mind as important factors in the decision of whether or not to cover. This flexible view of the veil is mostly restricted to the younger generation of Muslims (Abdo 2006), a dissonance that is further highlighted when the hijab is called upon by older women as a literal and symbolic protection against the infatuating evils of the "American way of life" (Naber 2010). Of course, second-generation Muslims are just as American as they are Muslim, and "the psychological pressure to maintain perceived ideals of [Muslim] and American culture [feel] overwhelming and irresolvable" (Naber 2010, p. 5).

However, there has been a recent trend of Western Muslim girls and women embracing the hijab not necessarily out of strong spiritual inclinations but strong political ones, a movement that speaks to the idea that "Muslim American" as an identity marker is more a sociopolitical collective label rather than an individual religious one. That is, there is a counter-cultural movement against Islamophobic attitudes coming from young, second-generation women themselves as they wear the veil to regain ownership over the cultural tradition, speak to issues of race in the U.S., or just to start conversations by being subversive through their contentious clothing choice (Mishra and Shirazi 2010; Gomaa 2014). Just from this brief overview of opinions on the hijab, then, we begin to see the complexity of the cultural situation American Muslim girls face.

The path forward

How do one's identity formation processes respond to these conflicting—even hostile—cultural contexts? Literature on Islamophobia and the general American Muslim experience in combination with adolescent and emerging adulthood research conducted on ethnic minority groups is a starting point for answering this question. This latter body of research introduces the idea that members of minority groups may experience different time frames than those which have been previously established (i.e., 18-25 years) that qualify as emerging adulthood periods in their life trajectories. Additionally, the definition of adulthood itself might vary from the White majority due to the unique social and cultural environments minority groups are members of. While these groups still face many of the same life factors as their White peers, they also face specific challenges and have particular supports that their White peers do not (Arnett 1998, 2003; Arnett & Galambos 2003). Furthermore, it is well-established that minority groups tend to exhibit more interdependent behavioral patterns as compared to the White majority, with a stronger sense of obligation and mindfulness toward family and heritage (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam 1999; Phinney, Ong, & Madden 2000). Although it would be hasty to definitively conclude that Muslim Americans as a minority group also experience these same differences from the White majority, it is plausible that because the majority of Muslims in America are of non-European descent (gallup.com/poll 2009), they do. However, due to the current sociopolitical atmosphere of villainizing or exoticizing Muslims, I hypothesized that the "Muslim" aspect of this group's identity will be the impetus for additional challenges and supports that will alter these individuals' identity development as they move into adulthood in a different direction from other American minority groups.

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation uses the data gathered on adolescent girls as an informed guide to look for developmental consistencies or disparities in the next (i.e., emerging adult) age group. Based loosely on the two divergent methods of coping I found—embracing or dissociation of Muslim identity, at least in public—I hypothesized that women who embraced as teenagers will experience lowered developmental vulnerability during the emerging adult years than those who dissociated. By repeatedly defining their identities publicly by choice, embracers will likely be more settled in their identities as Muslim Americans than dissociaters and will therefore experience less cognitive dissonance regarding their identities when moving forward with their lives.

Secondly, by looking at this next period of life, the current work examines an equally unexplored segment of the life cycle of Muslim Americans. It will be important to note whether or not the risk factors—and even the coping mechanisms in the previous paragraph—carry over into the emerging adult years. I hypothesized that the coping mechanisms will, though, as they would have become integrated into the individual's emerging identity by the end of the adolescent years. If integrated successfully, the risk factors experienced during adolescence should be reduced during emerging adulthood. The question left to be answered, then, is what developmental risks are the women facing as they transition into their version of adulthood.

Finally, a third age cohort of developmentally adult women was added to more effectively examine the sociopolitical effects of 9/11 and subsequent prejudice and Othering on individual development. That is, I interviewed women between the ages of 30-38 years old as this group would have already gone through the adolescent and/or emerging adulthood stages of their lives when 9/11 occurred. Consequently, this group would have faced the outwardly

changed nuances of their Muslim American identities largely as adults. Elder Jr. et al (2003) emphasizes the importance of the sociohistorical context on individual life trajectories and the cohort effect on development events in the macroystem can have on particular birth groups, often changing the worldviews, choices, and entire lives of individuals born just years apart due to the timing in each person's life. Speaking to an age group who purportedly had already completed many or all of their developmental years in 2001 can highlight how 9/11 and its aftermath has actually affected the life course and identity development of this population. I hypothesized that the adult cohort would have a lower vulnerability level overall—that is, fewer atypical risks and coping mechanisms—than the other two cohorts not just because they are older and likely have more stable identities, but specifically because they went through their identity development in a less socio-politically charged environment and were able to create stable selves without high levels of negative interference regarding their Muslim woman identities.

Study Design: Overview

The study design consists of a cross-sectional component with an embedded longitudinal component, though the bulk of the data will be from the former. I employed a largely qualitative mixed methods approach to gather data, using semi-structured interviews paired with short questionnaires. This method was used effectively during my preliminary research, so the same pattern was followed when conducting the research for the current work. The questionnaires were used as a supplement to the data gathered during the interviews, with the focus of the study being on the in-depth interviews. This approach allowed for an emphasis on the experiential aspect of the individual's life stage, leaving space for the organic exploration of topics that arose. While the interview guides directed the conversations into particular areas of the participants' lives, they were flexible enough to accommodate areas that were not directly asked about. This

flexibility was especially important within the context of my research question because while I had hypothesized about the population's developmental stages, the dearth of research directly speaking to the matter required an open-ended inquiry so that unknown factors might be discovered.

A grounded theory approach was used in coding and analyzing the data from the interviews, and a second coder was used for reliability during the coding process. Analysis was done using Spencer, Dupree, and Hartmann's (1997) Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST), using PVEST's definitions of risk, coping mechanism, protective factor, and emergent identity.

The longitudinally embedded component consisted of five participants whom I had originally interviewed as adolescents three years previous to the current study and who now qualified as emerging adults, allowing me to track development on an individual level. By following the case studies of these individuals, the research was better able to observe consistencies and changes from adolescence to emerging adulthood and see how they align with other emerging adults.

Participant Cohorts and Recruitment

The study includes three cohorts based off life course stages: adolescent (11-18 years), emerging adult (18-25 years), and adult (30-36 years). However, the main focus of the study is the emerging adult cohort, with the data gathered from the other two cohorts used to inform the data gathered in the emerging adult cohort. The adolescent cohort included 14 participants from Houston and 10 from Chicago (n = 24); the emerging adult cohort included 11 participants from Houston and 12 from Chicago (n = 23); and the adult cohort included 11 participants from Houston and 10 from Chicago (n = 21). There was an embedded longitudinal sample of five

participants who were first interviewed as part of the adolescent cohort and then the emerging

adult cohort. There were three sets of sisters embedded within the sample as well, with one pair

of sisters in the adolescent cohort, one pair in the emerging adult cohort, and one set of three

sisters that spanned the emerging adult and adult cohort.

Adolescent cohort: I recruited 24 girls from various ethnic backgrounds and Islamic

traditions, including Indian, Pakistani, Tunisian, African American, Egyptian, Algerian,

Bangladeshi, Palestinian, and Vietnamese. The breakdown of participant ethnicity is in the table

below:

Table 1. Participant ethnicities, Adolescence

Ethnicity	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
South Asian (Indian)	6	25%
South Asian (Pakistani)	8	33%
Tunisian	2	8%
African American	1	4%
Egyptian	1	4%
Algerian	2	8%
Bangladeshi	1	4%
Palestinian	1	4%
Vietnamese	1	4%

The majority of the girls (20 out of 24) wear some form of hijab on a daily basis and attend

public schools in their cities. All of the girls were living with two-parent (heterosexual) families

at the time of the study, and initial contact was usually made through a parent (3 girls were

contacted directly.)

I contacted potential participants and parents through three avenues: personal contacts,

professional contacts, and snowballing. Personal contacts included acquaintances who I knew

through my Dawoodi Bohra religious communities in Houston and Chicago, from which I

recruited eleven participants. The professional contacts included two of my former colleagues at

Amaanah Refugee Services in Houston. While one colleague put me directly in touch with a

friend of hers who had a daughter who became a participant, the other colleague pointed me

toward two potential online forums where I could post a call for participants in Houston:

http://houston.ummahnow.org and the Facebook page for Muslim Women Leadership Forum.

From these two online sources, I obtained six participants; the remaining participants were found

through contacts of these six.

A brief description of the project was presented either verbally or through email,

accompanied by a more detailed recruitment letter. If the parent consented and daughter agreed

to participate, the parental permission consent form and minor verbal assent form was sent to the

parent, with instructions to share the information with her daughter. The four participants who

were 18 years of age received a different adult consent form; no parental permission form was

sent to them. All necessary consent forms were signed and returned to me before participation in

the study commenced.

Emerging adult cohort: Similar to the adolescent cohort, the emerging adult cohort also

consisted of women from various ethnic backgrounds and Islamic traditions; however, the

ethnicity variation became notably limited to South Asians (within which Indian and Pakistani

are included). The breakdown of the participants according to ethnic cultural background is as

follows:

Table 2. Participant ethnicities, Emerging Adult

Ethnicity	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
South Asian (unspecified)	10	43%
South Asian (Indian)	3	13%
South Asian (Pakistani)	4	17%
Arab	2	9%
Palestinian	1	4%
Jordanian	1	4%
Eritrean/Ethiopian	1	4%
African American/Puerto Rican	1	4%

I contacted the Muslim Student Associations (MSA) regarding recruitment for my research on various college campuses in Chicago (University of Chicago, University of Illinois at Chicago, Loyola University, and American Islamic College) and Houston (University of Houston). I attended MSA events at these various institutions in order to network and recruit participants. Additionally, I sent out electronic calls for participants through MSA forums. By limiting the recruitment process to enrolled university/college students, the aim was to be able to draw stronger conclusions regarding the life course by limiting cofactors. At the same time, by including a spectrum of schools that vary based on both tuition costs, intellectual competitiveness, and student body demographics, the results are better suited to show potential effects of socioeconomic and cultural stressors.

During the recruitment process, I did not ask for women who specifically wear hijab on a daily basis, just as I had not during the recruitment of the adolescent cohort, and I did not discriminate between women who wear it and do not wear it when gathering data. However, I did record whether or not they wear it for analytical purposes. Again, just as in the call for participants for the adolescent cohort, I simply recruited women who self-identify as second-generation Muslim American women; it was made clear that there was no requirement of outward religiosity involved (e.g., mosque attendance, hijab, prayer, etcetera.) However, I acknowledge that using the MSAs as inlets for recruitment may have limited the type of participant response I received to those students who are not only active on their campuses, but also likely do observe some form of outward religiosity.

When I attended MSA events, I briefly verbally described my work to those present when the opportunity arose, and let the women present know that if they were interested in participating, they could speak to me directly, email me, or call me for more information. I also

took printed handouts of my project description as well as copies of the consent forms to give to interested participants. These same documents were included in the emails to the MSA list servers.

The longitudinal component of the study is embedded within the emerging adult cohort. I contacted the five participants I had previously interviewed as adolescents who were 18 years of age at the time I spoke with them in 2014. Because at least three years had passed by the time I spoke with them again, they now qualified as emerging adults. Despite the notably small sample size, by tracking the case studies of these individuals, the research was better able to observe consistencies and changes from adolescence to emerging adulthood and see how they align with other emerging adults.

Adult cohort: To recruit adult women, I networked with and attended events at masaajid (mosques) that are in the vicinity of the universities/colleges in Chicago (Masjid al-Faatir—Hyde Park, Downtown Islamic Center—The Loop) and Houston (Almeda Masjid and Masjid Mishkah—Third Ward.) I also recruited at mosques that the younger cohorts attended that were not in those specific areas; notably, Masjid al Mohammedi and Mohammed Masjid in Katy, TX. Though this obviously did not guarantee similar socioeconomic and demographic data as the emerging adult cohort, something that would be hoped for in order to draw more conclusive results, it was an effort to maintain some consistency between the cohorts for comparison based on the two factors mentioned earlier (immigrant settlement patterns and generalized discourse around "Muslim American" identity.) The ethnicities of the adult cohort became even more limited to South Asians, an unfortunate but not unpredictable outcome due to the high wave of South Asian immigrants in the early 1970's. The children of these immigrants comprise the largest and oldest group of native-born Muslim American women, thereby increasing their

chance of responding to my call for participants. The ethnic-cultural backgrounds of the adult participants are as follows:

Table 3. Participant ethnicities, Adult

Ethnicity	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
South Asian (unspecified)	10	48%
South Asian (Indian)	2	10%
South Asian (Pakistani)	8	38%
Egyptian	1	5%

I attended two Jumuoa (Friday) prayers at each masaajid throughout 2017, as well as the Ramadan/Eid ul Fitr services in June of 2017. This approach allowed for more varied participant recruitment as only a select number attend weekly prayer but the majority of any Muslim community attends Eid services, as the latter is seen as an important celebration in Islam at large. Eid tends to be a time of family gathering and feasting similar to Christmas, so even those who may not normally be as active in the religious community would likely attend services to see friends and family.

In parallel with the adolescent and emerging adult cohort, no emphasis will be placed on hijab or other forms of religiosity during recruitment, and I will not discriminate who I interview based on ethnicity and racial background. However, due to the often racially segregated nature of masaajid, it is possible that only one or two ethnicities would likely attend any given service. Most masaajid are either predominantly South Asian, African American, or Middle Eastern, with other ethnicities present as minorities (Haddad et al 2006; Karim 2009). The verbal method of introduction and recruitment will be the same as in the MSAs described above.

A note on participant diversity

Because I began my research at a time during which little multi-cultural developmental literature existed on Muslim American women, I cast a large research net in order to obtain the

most multi-faceted and nuanced answers possible. These answers did come at a cost, though, some of which I will address throughout this work; one such issue is the ethnic diversity of the obtained sample as can be seen from the tables above. Though the adolescent sample weighs more heavily towards the South Asian population, it does maintain some level of diversity. The older the participant pool becomes, though, the more South Asian it becomes. The obvious drawback to having a sample that is largely South Asian Muslim American is that it is quite possible that the cultural factors they face are dissimilar from those of Arab Muslim Americans or African Muslim Americans. The conclusions drawn in the research therefore might be most applicable to South Asian Muslim girls and women rather than all Muslim girls and women in America.

However, because a Muslim woman's Muslim-ness often outweighs her ethnicity, especially for hijabi women, this unplanned weakness in the study may not be as problematic as it appears. Furthermore, a recent national demographic survey (Pew Forum, "Demographic Portrait," 2017) shows that while "no single country accounts for more than 15% of adult Muslim immigrants to the United States (15% are from Pakistan)," this South Asian origin-country boasts the highest number of immigrants, with South Asia overall accounting for 20% of U.S.-born Muslims. Middle Eastern and North African immigrants and U.S.-born Muslims—the ethnic groups that might casually be referred to as "Arab"—actually account for a lower percentage of the Muslim American population. The participant pool of the current study, then, does parallel the larger population of Muslim Americans, albeit unintentionally. Still, a closer inspection and further research on non-hijabi women and women from Arab American and African American backgrounds is needed for more definitive conclusions and generalizability of the current findings.

In addition to ethnic categorizations, Muslims also differentiate themselves according to

their beliefs, a factor that will be discussed in the adolescent chapter within the context of inter-Muslim peer relationships. The two largest factions within the faith are Shi'a and Sunni, with the latter being the larger group worldwide. Although this study has a roughly even distribution of Shi'a and Sunni women, almost all the Shi'a are specifically Dawoodi Bohra, a small South Asian sect of Islam that has largely secluded itself from other Muslim communities. Their masaajid only allow Dawoodi Bohras to attend, and the group celebrates a number of events that most other Muslims do not. The Dawoodi Bohras are particularly unique because they have a single spiritual leader who guides members of the sect worldwide, resulting in a global network of faith and, yes, socio-cultural judgements. Because it is often the case that Bohras across the world know each other either directly or through networks, if a Bohra American woman engages in behavior that is less than acceptable, it very well might be the case that she gets chastised or "guided" by someone living in Mumbai whom she has only met briefly a few times in her life. However, within an American Muslim context, Bohra women seem to fall in line with other South Asian Muslim women; there are no significant differences between Shi'a or Sunni South Asian Muslim women when it comes to the developmental sociocultural factors discussed in this work.

Because the goal of this study was to find overall trends in the American Muslim woman experience while also remaining cognizant of specific factors such as sect and ethnicity, the focus remains on common experiences rather than differences. While differences will of course be addressed throughout the study as they arise, they are qualified as differences in protective factors or coping mechanisms, not sect-based or ethnicity-based differences. The data from this study therefore might be a useful starting point for one that looks more specifically at sect and ethnicity differences between Muslim women in America.

Questionnaire and Interview

Each cohort had slightly altered questionnaires and interview guides that speak appropriately to the developmental questions of identity and life course of the stage they are currently in. Consent forms were signed by the participant and/or the participant's guardian before I began recording any data from the participant. The questionnaires, guides, and consent forms can be found in Appendix B. The questionnaire were administered online before the interview using Qualtrics software. The first ten questions use a seven-point Likert scale ("1" being "I agree completely" and "7" being "I disagree completely") and ask participants to rank their disagreement or agreement with statements about themselves and others. These questions explore participants' basic perceptions about the self and others within an American-Islamic context. The second half of the questionnaire includes eight open-ended demographic questions. Questions such as "Where are you from?" and "Where are your parents from?" are included not only for record-keeping purposes, but also as a potential platform to explore ethnic, national, and/or cultural self-identities. I reviewed each participant's questionnaire before the interview to familiarize myself with the participant's general background, but also because I was then able to use the interview as an opportunity to explore potential areas of interest or contradiction seen in the questionnaire responses.

Modeled loosely after Brown and Gilligan's 1993 longitudinal study of adolescent girls that uses the voice-centered relational method of research, the current research's qualitative interview approach emphasized the importance of allowing participants' implicit and explicit responses to define which issues should be asked about by the researcher. Therefore, rather than present exact parallels in the open-ended questions to participants of different age cohorts (e.g., for adolescent girls, "What do you wear to school usually?" and for emerging adults, "What do

33

you wear to work usually?"), the researcher used both the responses from the adolescent cohort and the questionnaires to inform the direction of the questions of the older cohorts.

I developed the adolescent questionnaire and interview guide to specifically explore questions of minority adolescent identity and experience. I drew ideas for the guide from Spencer and Harpalani (2006), Qin, Way, and Rana (2008), and Qin, Way, and Mukherjee (2008) as these all discuss minority adolescent identity through an experiential and/or ecological framework. Topics of school, peers and friends, parental relationships, and appearance were used as starting points in the questions. I developed the emerging adult questionnaire and guide to specifically explore the participants' perceptions of adulthood, major life decisions and goals, and potential/planned life trajectories. The guide is informed both by Arnett (2000; 2003) and my preliminary research. Finally, I developed the adult cohort questionnaire and guide to explore what adult life is like as an American Muslim woman, but also to explore how going through the earlier developmental stages pre-9/11 may have been a different experience from growing up post-9/11. Consequently, this guide required participants to recollect experiences further back in their life histories than the other two cohorts. The questions regarding adolescent and emerging adult experiences within this guide were based on the same research for the previous two guides, and the questions regarding current experiences and potential sociopolitical changes in lived experiences were based on gendered Islamophobia literature. The interviews were conducted in-person or through webcam, whichever was preferred by the participant.

Coding, Analytical Measures, and Hypotheses

Once all the interviews were conducted, I transcribed the audio files and began the coding process. The codes emerged directly from the transcripts themselves based on recurring themes and words the participants use, i.e., an inductive grounded theory approach. A second

coder was carefully recruited and familiarized with and trained to code the interviews for reliability over a four-month period. Dedoose, an online coding software program that can be used remotely, was used for both individual and comparative coding by the two coders.

For my analysis, I used Spencer and Harpalani's (2006) PVEST framework to determine how the codes fit into the larger developmental picture of adolescence, emerging adulthood, and adulthood within the American Muslim population. By informing this approach with Shweder (2002; 2003), Arnett (2000; 2003), Erikson (1959/1980), and Elder Jr. et al (2003), I was able to provide a more complete picture of Muslim American women's life courses.

The primary hypothesis of this study was that Muslim American women experience specific developmental vulnerabilities that affect their life courses and identity trajectories that no other majority or minority cultural groups within the U.S. experience. This hypothesis was supported by my research. However, the research simultaneously acknowledged the many developmental overlaps with other demographic groups as well as a decrease in group-specific vulnerability as the population ages into adulthood.

For each cohort, I focused on particular developmentally appropriate aspects of PVEST based off adolescent and emerging adulthood literatures and used these as the theoretical measures for what I discovered in the data; the hypotheses[1] specific to each measure are listed in the individual sections below.

- Vulnerability: Vulnerability is comprised of risks (sociocultural factors that threaten normative development) and protective factors (sociocultural factors that prevent

---

[1] While I established research hypotheses before the analysis, these were applied only in the secondary phase of coding, i.e., when the organic codes via inductive coding were being organized into PVEST terms. This was to ensure a minimization of researcher bias in the original coding process.

the potentially negative effects of risks.) and is applicable to all three cohorts I examined. Adolescent population-specific risks include international-political stereotypes, Muslim womanhood stereotypes, confusion of religion and ethnicity, divided life spaces, gender roles at home, dating pressure at masjid, and masjid friend alliances, though the latter also serves as a coping mechanism which eventually cycles back to serve as a protective factor against other risks. I hypothesized that the emerging adulthood cohort's vulnerability would have a considerable degree of overlap with the adolescent group, but that the adult cohort would not. This hypothesis was partially supported by the research. While both the adolescent and emerging adult cohort had higher levels of developmental vulnerability than the adult cohort, the basis on which the former two cohorts experienced their vulnerability differed.

- Net stress engagement: Net stress engagement is the degree to which an individual engages with a particular sociocultural factor and how much that factor has an influence on her meaning-making and perceptions. This measure was also applied to all three groups. The adolescent cohort includes high levels of engagement regarding school and masjid peer acceptance and perceptions of peers and self. I hypothesized that the emerging adult and adult cohorts would have lower net stress engagement with peers, but higher levels of engagement with the macrosystem (i.e., political and religious.) This hypothesis was supported in the research.

- Reactive coping strategies: Reactive coping strategies are methods the individual uses to address risks or threats in their immediate context. This measure was initially only applied to the adolescent cohort as it was hypothesized that by the

time the individual reaches emerging adulthood/adulthood, she no longer needs to

create new strategies to cope with recurring challenges she faces as they are already

established; this hypothesis was based on the existing adolescent and emerging

adulthood literature. Adolescent reactive coping strategies in the current research

include "enhancement whatevering" and "minimizing whatevering" (as defined in

Master's work.) The hypothesis regarding the confinement of emergent identities to

adolescence, however, was not supported through the research. The emerging

adulthood cohort did have to invent coping strategies for new challenges they faced

in this phase of their lives, e.g., marriage and higher education, indicating a

potential difference between the established emerging adulthood literature on

majority White populations and minority populations such as Muslim Americans.

- Emergent identities: An emergent identity is the product of repeated reactive coping

  strategies until they eventually become stable responses and part of the individual's

  approach to her environment. This measure was also largely limited to the

  adolescent cohort, though there was minor overlap with the emerging adulthood

  cohort. This is because an emergent identity is one that is still in flux and has not

  necessarily settled on a stable sense of self. However, even though I hypothesized

  that the emerging adult and adult cohorts would have more strongly established

  identities as per PVEST and emerging adulthood literature, I also hypothesized that

  they would express more fluctuations in their self-identities than other American

  groups due to sociopolitical tensions. These hypotheses were supported in the

  research.

- Life stage outcomes: Life stage outcomes are benchmarks in an individual's life that hold long-term impacts for the life course. This measure was only applied to the emerging adult and adult cohorts as all participants in the adolescent cohort attended middle or high school at the time of the interviews and were at a life plateau. The life stage outcomes I examined in the two older cohorts included college education, graduate education, career, marriage, and childbearing. No specific hypotheses were developed regarding life stage outcomes; rather, an open approach was taken in order to discover how and when these life outcomes intertwined with identity development.

Questions of Reliability

A direct comparison between the three age cohorts—and particularly between the two younger ones and the eldest—is virtually impossible due to the cohort effect and is not something this study proposes to do. However, there is validity to the method of sample selection because of two factors: immigrant settlement patterns and the generalized discourse around Muslim Americans. First, immigrants often settle in particular areas of cities due to their proximity to other immigrants from the same cultural background and other cultural resources such as specialty grocery stores or religious spaces; word of mouth is often the strongest communication tool in these cases (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). In the case of Muslim immigrants, for example, being near butchers or restaurants that provide halal meat would be important (Leonard 2003). Sample selection limited to particular areas within two large cities— Houston and Chicago—might seem unreliable at first, but because Muslim immigrant communities flock together for resources, it is often the case that the children of these immigrants have social and religious knowledge that is if not the same, then at least overlaps

38

heavily. These overlaps lead to at least some similar experiences, recurring interactions with the same individuals (e.g., religious school teachers or local imams), and moving through some of the same spaces.

I emphasize the "someness" of these shared experiences to point out that no, being part of a Muslim immigrant community does not automatically mean that one consistently only sees the same people within socio-religious contexts. In fact, it may be at other times be quite the opposite: The wide variety within Muslim Americans—of race and ethnicity, of sect and home nations, of liberalism and conservatism—inevitably creates different Muslim pools not only within a city, but also sometimes within those pools themselves. How does my sample selection then still remain valid, in the face these potential differences? It is because the second factor, the outward universality of the identity "Muslim American." The mainstream media encourages a singular view of Muslims regardless of nation or sect, and it is because of this misinformation that the majority of Americans often have no idea what the difference between a Shi'a and a Sunni is, between a Pakistani Muslim or an Indian Muslim is (Khan 2003). Trump's proposed travel ban—or "Muslim ban" as it soon came to be known—that he attempted to instate at the beginning of his presidency in 2017 made little attempt to parse differences within the religion and likely exacerbated the fears and ignorance of an already agitated crowd. If no difference is perceived by the onlooker—and Muslim Americans are well aware that they are being looked upon—it is, in theory and practice, the same as no difference being present at all (Cainkar 2011). Muslims experience this lack of differentiation not only each time the news announces a mosque being burned (washingtonpost.com) or a veiled woman being harassed in Donald Trump's name (tribune.com), but also when they are inadvertently asked to speak for all Muslims in casual daily interactions (Khan 2003). So while there is some internal consistency within the sample

due to settlement patterns and shared social networks, outward consistency with experiences is extremely high. As a reminder, though, part of this study's aim was to explore any inconsistencies that may crop up between the participants due to their backgrounds; inconsistencies were therefore not viewed as detrimental to the study but as inlets into the research itself.

I am aware that my personal identification as an American Muslim woman may have influenced the interpretation and analysis of the interviews. However, I believe this to be an asset to my research goals rather than a hindrance, as my general identification with the group I studied allowed me a certain insider knowledge that both aided in asking probing questions as well as maintained a sensitivity to cultural issues that someone who does not identify with the group may not have been aware of. In fact, I posit my general outward appearance as "Muslim woman" due to the *rida* I wear (a specific type of Indian hijab) helped the participants feel more comfortable and open in speaking with me as they would be less concerned with propagating stereotypes or being culturally misunderstood. At the same time, despite my general religious identification with the group, I do not share most other facets of identity with the participants, as most differed from me in age and in many cultural, ethnic, and spiritual aspects. I believe this placed me in a helpful insider-outsider research position that potentially allowed for honest (as possible) responses from the participants and an accurate (as possible) analysis from me.

Chapter 2: The Ups, Downs, and Whatevers of Adolescence

Second-generation American Muslim teenage girls are, in many ways, typical American girls. They are concerned with appearances, friends, shopping, and school. However, due to their particular positioning as American Muslim teenage girls, they face particular challenges that no other American adolescent group faces. While the overall picture is one of individuals who are in fact quite socially and academically successful, the girls I interviewed are actively and constantly navigating their socio-cultural environments to reduce frictions between conflicting elements. Often on a daily basis, they must quickly read responses to themselves from school peers and home members alike and provide culturally sensitive reactions that are sometimes practiced, sometimes created on the spot; the girls are living embodiments of Shweder's (2003) call for staying on the move to engage alternative sociocultural points of view. The ultimate result of these quotidian inner migrations is a new amorphous culture that seems to just accept cultural tensions as a reality, but that also has a unique intelligence that provides ways of understanding and potentially resolving these tensions.

Of course, cultural tensions are not unique to Muslim American girls. Any teenager who is a member bi- or multicultural group within the U.S. can attest to grappling with the norms of the mainstream American culture around it. If we look specifically to minority religious groups, though, a tentative difference can be seen between Muslim American girls and others. For example, Hassidic Jewish American girls and women also come of age and make life decisions in a highly gendered religious environment; in fact, "gender influences almost every aspect of life" (Fader 2009). The tensions between secular modern values and traditional conservative religious values results in some Hassidic women creating a new religious modernity, accepting

the norms of American contemporary life but adapting them to encourage religiosity in everyday life (Fader 2009).

While traces of this kind of cultural adaptation—taking the secular and using it to enhance and serve the spiritual—can be seen amongst some of the young women I spoke with, there is a larger picture that looms over Muslim girls that inhibits them from fully flaunting the adaption of the secular to the religious: the taboo of Islam in contemporary America. Judaism has also been villainized, exoticized, and misunderstood in Western history, though: In fact, occasional anti-Semitic acts of violence continue to occur to this day, often concurrently with Islamophobic acts (Larimer 2017), and Donald Trump's defense of neo-Nazi protestors in 2017 was a cause of concern on many grounds. However, in general, the time and space from Jewish ostracization has allowed the faith to become more normalized within American culture. Politically, official U.S. support of Israel over Palestine deepens the cultural meta-message of Judaism being a faith that Americans can support; in this case, a faith more or less at odds with its Islamic neighbor. Furthermore, the American psyche has no memory of Jewish individuals causing harm to Americans or American ideals in the name of Judaism. The same cannot be said of Islam, and the girls and women who adhere to the faith are cognizant of this. Sixty-two percent of Americans "do not see Islam as part of mainstream American society" (Diamant, Pew Research, 2017), and 44% of Americans see Islam and democracy at ideological odds with each other (Pew Forum, "How the U.S. views Muslims," 2017). More on point, amongst minority religious groups, Jewish individuals are felt most warmly about by the average American while Muslim individuals are felt most warily about (Pew Forum, "How the U.S. views Muslims," 2017). Consequently, to varying degrees, the macrosystem of American political views trickles down into the microsystem of each girl's life.

I classify the cultural tensions the Muslim American girls face in their various lived spaces of School (public), Home (private), and Masjid (public and private) as developmental risks using Spencer's (1995; 2006) Phenomenological Variant of the Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) framework. The major School risks the girls face are Islamophobic stereotypes (i.e., affiliations of terrorism), gender-specific stereotypes (i.e., being an oppressed and obedient Muslim girl), and conflation of their religion with their entire identity (i.e., the girl is seen as first and foremost a Muslim girl rather than just a girl.) These risks culminate into a cumulative effect of having an identity imposed upon the girls via their peers' comments and (mis)understandings about them. The girls must then decide how to cope with this invasion of self; most either choose to embrace their deviant social identity, becoming increasingly verbal about their Islamic identities, or dissociate from it as much as possible, choosing not to answer questions about Islam at all and becoming increasingly uncomfortable with their public association with the faith. Concurrently, the major Home risk factors the girls face involve traditional gender roles and control of their behavior by family members, factors that leak into the third and final space of Masjid. Masjid becomes a unique public-private space for the girls, completely separate from their daily worlds at School, but still intensely socially focused; much more than prayer occurs in this space for the girls. Risks of ruined reputation (i.e., not being a "good" Muslim girl) could sabotage chances of snagging the attention of a potential mother-in-law, while being seen as too moderate or too conservative by fellow Muslim girls could ruin chances at creating strong bonds of friendship with them—bonds that, as we will see, are highly useful sources of support in navigating the risk factors of all three spaces.

Drawing from fieldwork, I argue that a girl arrives at the realization at some point in her identity formation process where neither her non-Muslim school peers nor her Muslim home

43

social structure understand her experience entirely, leaving her in a situation where she must forge a new social identity that does not quite conform to either society's expectations. This cusp moment, as I am calling it, can be clear and definite in the girl's consciousness or it can be more ambiguous and hazy. The cusp moment can be as short as an actual moment—a particular comment or conversation the girl experienced—or it can be as long as a period of a few years. Formulating her new middle-world identity is an active, conscious process of navigating two socio-cultural spheres and understanding the norms and stigmas of each. The girls fortuitously discover as a *part* of this process that other American Muslim girls are undergoing the same challenges and devising similar solutions, ultimately creating an almost accidental social support system in like-peers. Furthermore, although this potential cross-cultural dissonance may be something experienced by many American Muslim girls, a further point I explore is whether there is a continuum of dissonance amongst individuals and whether this continuum is affected by the choice of the individual to wear some form of a hijab, a point elaborated below.

The girls under consideration are both those who wear and do not wear a hijab (ranging from just a head scarf to a full *burqa*.) This choice is not only being made to ensure that all sartorial experiences are given full attention, but also due to the aforementioned adolescent sensitivity to physical appearance and my hypothesis that a more pronounced physical difference (i.e., in clothing) would result in a more notable peer reaction. The issue of hijab insists on the importance of gender when studying Muslim Americans, as hijab only defines the social lives of girls (and women), not boys (or men). Louise A. Cainkar's research supports the necessary acknowledgement of this outward Muslim female physicality, as she finds that anti-Muslim prejudice was pointedly directed at women in hijab rather than all Muslim or Arab women (232)**.** Additionally, Geneive Abdo recounts the story of a young Muslim woman who was told by a

man in a supermarket that she would "'be so much more beautiful without that thing on your head. It's demeaning to women'" (31). The simple act of covering her hair ironically exposes a Muslim girl the most; to harassment, to public opinion, to judgment.

<div align="center">AT FIRST GLANCE: INITIAL RESPONSES</div>

The sample size of 24 adolescent participants allowed for a research approach that prioritized depth over breadth, partly due to the nature of the questions themselves. Because I wanted to become familiar with intimate details of the girls' perceptions and quotidian experiences, speaking to a smaller number of participants was more beneficial and relevant than engaging only superficially with a larger number.

The majority of my analysis is heavily weighted towards the content of the interviews themselves, but a brief consideration of the more pronounced questionnaire response trends is merited as they provide an effective overview of the girls as a group. A detailed breakdown of the questionnaire responses, including statistics and graphic representations, can be found in Appendix B. For the Likert-scale component, the girls' responses were most varied in response to the prompt, "I think of myself as an American girl," with only just over half the girls agreeing with the statement to any degree (thirteen responses were a "3" or below.) Although responses to the statement, "My parents think I should think of myself as an American girl" were also varied, they were less so, with a skew towards the higher end of the scale (i.e., "7," or "I do not agree at all," was the most frequently chosen answer.) The most unified responses were to the prompt, "I think of myself as a Muslim girl," with eighteen girls responding "1" (i.e., completely agreeing with the statement) and no response higher than a "3." The response to "My parents think I should think of myself as a Muslim girl" almost matched the previous response pattern exactly, with eighteen girls again choosing "1" and only one participant choosing "4," the highest

response for this question.

      The responses to the open-ended demographic questions (Appendix B) provide a more complex texture to the Likert-scale responses. For example, in *Table 1*, the girls' responses to the questions "Which language do you feel most comfortable speaking to your parents in?" are contrasted against their answers to the questions, "If you have Muslims friends, which language do you usually speak to them in?" While English is the most common language chosen for the latter question, responses to the former question vary much more. If we view "English" as connected with the idea of being an "American girl" and parental home languages as being connected with the idea of being a "Muslim girl," we can see a rough parallel between the Likert parental and self-perception questions and the language responses (assuming the girls view their Muslim friends as like peers.) *Table 2*, which compares responses to the questions, "Where are your parents from?" and "When people ask you where you are from, what do you say?," also highlights similarities and conflicts between the notions of identifying as an "American" girl as opposed to a "Muslim" girl which, in this case, could be interpreted to be an association with the parental home country.

Table 4. Adolescent languages

Parental comfort language	Muslim friend comfort language
English	English
English	English
Lisan ut Dawat/Gujrati	English
Gujrati/Lisaan ud dawat and English about the same	English
Lisan ud Dawat (Gujrati)	English
French or English	English, because they don't speak French, and Egyptian Arabic slang is difficult to understand.
Lisan-u-dawat	Urdu
English	English
Lisan ud Dawat	English

Urdu	English
lisaan u dawat	english
english	english
English	English
english	english
English	Half English Have Arabic
Gujarati, Urdu, Lisan ud Dawat, Arabic	Gujarati, Urdu, Arabic
english,sometimes arabic,mostly mixed though	english and some tmes arabic if like we have a secret or something
English and Urdu	English and Urdu
English	English
Arabic	English
English	English
Equal with Arabic and English	English

Table 5. Adolescent Responses to Origin Questions

Parental countries	"Where are you from?"
India	Born here; grandparents Indian
Palestine	Palestine
India	Born in Texas; grandparents Indian
U.S./Sri Lanka	Chicago
Pakistan/Kenya	Middle East
Pakistan	Pakistan, but born in London
Tanzania/Kenya	USA
Algeria	Algeria or North Africa
Pakistan/Bangladesh	Houston
Vietnam	Texas; parents are from Vietnam
Pakistan	Born here; parents from Pakistan
India/UAE	UAE
Pakistan	Pakistan
Algeria	New York
India/America	Michigan
Egypt	Born in Cairo; moved at 2 months
India	Houston, TX
Pakistan	Houston
Pakistan	From Pakistan; born in America
U.S.--African American	Kansas City, Missouri
Tunisia	Middle East; sometimes America
Tunisia	Born in America; parents Tunisian

Though delving further into the questionnaire responses is beyond the scope of the

current work, the information obtained about language choice, parental home countries, and the

countries the girls choose to identify with as their places of origin is a viable preparation for

discussion of the actual interviews. *Tables 3, 4, and 5* below present a brief overview of the

prevalence of the themes that arose as part of the interview coding process, showing for what

percentage of the girls each theme arose. More detailed coding tables can be found in Appendix

B, with each table documenting how many instances of each theme occurred for each

participant[2]. (These themes were further subdivided during coding, but these tables are not

shared here for the sake of brevity.)

Table 6. RISK FACTORS: Group Overlaps

Appearance ("cute"/"pretty"/ "cool")	School peer acceptance (groups)	Conflict with parental culture	Othered ("weird")
77%	90%	73%	73%

Table 7. RISK FACTORS: Group-Specific

International-political	Muslim womanhood	Religion v. ethnicity	Divided life spaces	Gender roles at Home	Masjid boys/reputation	Masjid friends (hijab judgment/alliances)
64%	95%	90%	82%	73%	73%	68%

Table 8. PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND COPING MECHANISMS

Minimizing whatevering	Enhancement whatevering	Sameness/shared experiences	Smartness
59%	64%	95%	36%

RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Concurrent with the existing literature, the major Muslim girl-specific themes that arose

in the interviews had to do with anti-Muslim prejudice, tension between Islamic/Eastern culture

and American culture, and sense of self as it develops in reaction these factors. However,

exploring beyond the existing literature, my work shows that while Muslim sub-culture itself

presents the girls with additional challenges, it also contains certain tools the girls take advantage

of as protective mechanisms and social support systems during the process of creating and

understanding their identities within their cultural contexts.

To document the cultural navigation and meanings the girls engage in, I have loosely

---

[2] All original names in the study have been replaced with pseudonyms.

organized the major interview themes from the tables above using Spencer's PVEST. Though the girls share certain risk factors with other adolescent groups, they experience their own unique risks and develop protective factors that, to date, no other adolescent group has encountered in the same way. Because each girl's individual experience is inherently unique, I am not positing that this framework applies evenly to all of the girls. Additionally, just as PVEST is a cyclical pattern of development, there are a number of times when the themes mentioned do not interact in the neat ways I outline; however, they do still directly interact. Classifying the girls' experiences as risks, coping mechanisms, and aspects of emergent identities provides a useful organizational tool to map the girls' experiences within their larger cross-cultural contexts and helps elucidate the points at which their experiences are lost in (cultural) translation.

RISK FACTORS: GROUP OVERLAPS

I. The (Muslim) Girl Next Door

To determine which factors of an American Muslim girl's experience are specific to the social positioning of being American, Muslim, and a teenage girl simultaneously, we must first look to which factors of her experience she shares with other populations she is also a member of. Because these overlapping experiences are not my focus, I give only brief outlines of the various shared risks.

The first group overlap occurs with American adolescent girls at large, particularly sharing experiences at school. Though not all risks of this umbrella group are shared by Muslim Americans—as will be true for the sub-group's relationships with the other umbrella-groups— two salient shared risks are an emphasis on appearance and peer acceptance. Many participants in fact used the same language as one another as they described a typical middle and high school atmosphere of judgment based on clothing style/choice. They often communicated the

importance of appearance by recounting the act of receiving and giving compliments on "cute" or "pretty" hair or clothing from and to other (usually non-Muslim) girls and describing "people at school" as being aware of "cool" brands such as Abercrombie and Fitch or The Gap. Peer acceptance and the risk of rejection was communicated in terms of individuals having their own "groups" or having one to three "really close" friends but making an effort to be on good terms with mostly everyone. Even though appearance and peer acceptance play an equivalent role in Muslim American girls' lives as they do in mainstream American girls' lives, these factors are perceived through a lens that is slightly different from the majority experience, as I will elaborate later.

The second umbrella group American Muslim girls fall under is that of second-generation immigrant adolescents, specifically regarding the challenge of navigating a tension between home culture and school culture as manifested through trying parental relationships. Although it is not uncommon for American adolescents to engage in rebellious behavior—in fact, parents have come to culturally expect it—many home cultures of the first-generation immigrant parents of the participants have strong norms of respecting one's elders. Consequently, if a child disagrees with a parent, it is seen as grossly disrespectful, an affront to not only the parent but the entire culture s/he is trying to maintain. The child, on the other hand, is observing her peers at school and is awash in American cultural norms, likely unaware of any real disagreement between her parents' home culture and school culture *until* she attempts to behave in "American" ways at home (Qin, Way, and Mukherjee, 2008; Qin, Way, and Rana, 2008). Ultimately, this leads to a mildly bitter awakening for the second-generation individual that highlights the importance of cultural context for determining what appropriate behavior is. This was most often seen in amongst the participants when they discussed the rules their parents imposed on them,

sometimes specifically because they were daughters rather than sons.

Finally, the third major umbrella group for the girls is that of ethnic minority adolescents, as none of the participants are part of the White majority. Just as African Americans (Boykin, 1986), Chinese Americans (Qin, Way, and Mukherjee, 2008), and Mexican Americans (Bernal, 2002) experience being "othered" and stereotyped due to their ethnicities and the particular cultural traditions they practice—or are assumed to practice, rather—American Muslim girls also share the experience of being labeled "weird" due to their general affiliation with a non-American culture. Even if they do not wear headscarves, as soon as their classmates learned they were Muslim, the girls reported being asked more questions and feeling more uncomfortable as a result, even though they were cognizant that sometimes questions were asked out of a sincere desire to learn. This discomfort likely arose out of the questions' ability to highlight and promote the "weirdness," a trait most adolescent girls do not aspire to due to the obvious conflict with peer acceptance. The role of questions in the girls' lives is a crucial one, as we will see below.

RISK FACTORS: GROUP-SPECIFIC

Although the participants differ in many aspects of their experiences, four overall risk trends emerged from the interviews that cannot be explained by the American, second-generation immigrant, or minority adolescent literatures: international-political stereotyping, stereotyping of Muslim womanhood, the primacy of religion as an identity marker and its confusion with ethnic identity, and divided life spaces that each present sociocultural dialogues particular to those spaces. Indeed, these seemingly floating risks tie directly into the girls' experiences as American Muslim teenagers and lie in the central space between being an American girl, a second-generation immigrant, and a racial minority. It is only here that being Muslim in addition to the

other three categories can be explored.

II.   "Muslim!": International-political Stereotypes

By international-political stereotyping, I mean at the most general level the association of Islam with terrorism in Western eyes and the view that all Muslims are somehow on the "inside" of terrorist activities. This is obviously an extreme view that most non-Muslim Americans do not openly embrace. The Islam-terrorist stereotype is unique in the realm of minority stereotyping as usually, the majority stereotypes minorities due to "evidence" they believe is present in the U.S. itself. The lack of familiarity and, in a way, relatability only serves to more quickly cement the stereotype in this case. Furthermore, the Islam-terrorist stereotype is somewhat colorblind. Whereas racism against racial groups occurs because of an inherent physical characteristic, prejudice against Muslims occurs because of perceptions of the beliefs they hold. In an America steeped in ideas of individual liberalism (Shweder 2002), the idea of a person *choosing* Islam is understandably more angering, given that one believes Islam promotes terrorism. A person cannot choose what race she is born as, but she can certainly choose what to believe (or so it could be argued.) It is likely this sort of unconscious logic that triggers not only the hate speech and acts of violence against Muslims, but also the still-rising negative general public opinion of Islam in the U.S. (Nussbaum 2012). While it is important to note prejudiced verbal and physical acts, in reality, the lived experiences of most of the girls involve little direct hate speech. However, the importance of the sheer presence of the Islam-terrorist stereotype in American cultural consciousness becomes clear when we see how repeated indirect verbal microaggressions can actually imply belief in the veracity of the larger direct stereotype, an implication that is understood by both the speaker and the recipient.

Such was the case with the fourteen girls who had experienced notable microaggressions

either in school or in public spaces such as coffee shops and malls. Instances of non-school microaggressions were usually limited to suspicious looks or noticeably altered behavior on the part of employees; Fatema described it as "seeing extra eyes on me or something." Three girls mentioned times when they had observed either a barista or cashier be gregarious with the (non-Muslim) customer in line in front of them, but when their turn arrived, barely a greeting would be given and no eye contact made:

> Like, we would be standing there and overhearing the conversation in front of us, maybe even laughing along at the jokes—so when we got up there, we were just as friendly and in a good mood, but, like, the person [at the register] sort of suddenly shut off. You almost wouldn't notice it maybe, but the laughter was kind of gone from her face. (Fatema)

While it is possible other factors affected the behavior of the employees, it is significant that all three girls perceived the shift in behavior to be a result of the employee's (mis)association of them with terrorism. (All three girls were wearing hijab during the incidents so it was apparent they were Muslim.) The girls explained away these instances by attributing the employees' prejudice on media influence, saying that "Islam is terrorism is what you always hear" (Lamiyah).

The instances of the Islam-terrorist stereotype that most affected the girls, as seen by their affective, indignant descriptions of the events, were the ones that occurred at school. Strangers drawing conclusions in places that are frequented only once in a while such as a Starbucks or grocery store is a different matter entirely from one's peers making comments about an individual in a context that is visited everyday and in which most people at least know of one another. Microaggressions in this context were manifested specifically through statements and comments made by boys. For example, two of the girls, Maleka and Sarrah, had the word "Muslim" yelled at them. In both instances, the girls were initially taken aback due to the sheer

factual aspect of the "slur," but then quickly realized that it was indeed meant as an accusatory statement due to the tone, context, and delivery of the word. Another participant, Fatema, 17, received a much more specific comment from a male classmate when she was in ninth grade and had just begun to wear a hijab to school: "Oh, I didn't know Halloween came early this year, Mrs. Bin Laden!" Implying the hijab is a costume is a particularly interesting choice as it on the one hand makes it seem like the wearer could become "normal" again just by taking it off, but on the other, exoticizes, caricatures, and removes it from everyday life. Yet another example of the Islam-terrorist trope was experienced by Sarrah, an eighteen-year old when she was in tenth grade. A boy she did not know ran up from behind and attempted to yank off her rida: "I turn around, and he's just running away laughing, saying something like, 'Get away from the terrorists!' I think he was expecting it to fall off." Although this was the only incident of physical harassment I came across in all the participants, it is important to make note of as more instances could be present in the larger population.

Even though the instances of Islam-stereotype aggression could arguably be gender neutral in that either Muslim girls or boys could be subject to it, in the girls' meaning making processes, the aggression occurred specifically because they were wearing hijab and therefore more easily identifiable as Muslim. In a follow-up comment to her harassment story, Sarrah says she is sure she would not have been harassed if she had not been wearing a rida because "they wouldn't have known [I am Muslim] otherwise. It wouldn't have given them anything to make fun of. I wouldn't be different. I'd be wearing jeans and a t-shirt. My hair in a ponytail. They'd have nothing to point out and make fun of. So, no, it definitely wouldn't have happened." In fact, all the girls who wore hijab expressed that it would be easier being a Muslim boy rather than a Muslim girl because it would be easier to fit in as one's Muslimhood would be less

obvious. In this spirit, Farida, another eighteen-year old high school senior from Houston I spoke

with, did a direct comparison between herself and her brother, her junior by two years. Her

brother is also in high school and also bears Muslim "markers:" a beard and a topi[3]. Farida says

even though he receives occasional questions—"'Hey, what's with the hat?'"—it gets forgotten

easily as it is only a small item of clothing. The rida she wears, on the other hand, she feels is

hard to ignore, even after initial questions are asked; the topi "is just less obvious." On a

quotidian high school level, then, girls seem to be more vulnerable to larger international

stereotypes than their male counterparts specifically due to their gendered religious clothing.

III.   The Constantly Questionable: Muslim Womanhood Stereotypes

Another risk the girls tended to face was being subject to stereotypes about Muslim

womanhood. I define Muslim womanhood stereotypes to include the following ideas: that all

Muslim women are oppressed; that all Muslim women tend to dress in the same style of clothing;

and that all Muslim women's bodies are curious and exotic in a (culturally) inaccessible way.

Like the Islam-terrorist stereotype, this stereotype also turned out to be linked to the hijab.

Although there are perceptual overlaps between the two stereotypes, Muslim womanhood

qualifies as a distinct category due to the specific nature of the stereotype's manifestation in the

girls' lives. In the Islam-terrorist category, the majority of risks were *perceived* (and probably

accurately) to be a result of the hijab by the girls; usually there was no direct statement about the

piece of clothing itself. However, stereotypes about Muslim womanhood were much more direct

about the hijab and therefore inevitably gendered. Finally, whereas the Islam-terrorist stereotype

was manifested through statements made by non-Muslim male peers, the Muslim womanhood

stereotype was manifested through questions from non-Muslim peers—both girls and boys—and

---

[3] Although the beard is seen as a requirement for Dawoodi Bohra men, the *topi*, a white rimless hat with golden embroidery, is not.

non-Muslim adult women who were strangers. More than any other theme in the interviews,

Questions[4] and the idea of repeatedly being asked about one's clothing and, consequently, one's

beliefs arose most uniformly across ages, races, cities, and branches of Islam.

Although the Islam-terrorist stereotype certainly affects the girls' lives, it does not affect

it as intensely and thoroughly as the Muslim womanhood stereotype seems to, particularly for

the girls who wear hijab. The implied social positionings created by being the recipients of

constant questioning can ultimately hold emergent identity and life stage outcome consequences

for the girls, as we will see later. The questions asked of the girls range from vague generalities

to intimately personal, with a roughly parallel continuum of perceived asker intent on the part of

the recipient of the question. That is, the intent continuum moves from a genuine curiosity and

desire to learn about a different culture, to borderline rhetorical questions in which the asker's

preconceived notions are apparent, to simply being inappropriate and invasive of the recipient on

a bodily level. As Zahra, 15, said when I asked her what she thought of Questions, "I mean, you

can just tell *why* they're asking. Sometimes they just want to know, you know? Like they want to

learn about the culture. But you can hear it if they mean something else by the question. You can

just tell." All the girls who discussed Questions (21 out of 22) expressed that it was "normal" for

people "here" (i.e., the U.S.) to be curious about clothing that was not mainstream. Many, in fact,

said they, too, would probably ask questions if they themselves were not familiar with a

particular culture or style of garb. About three-quarters (14) of these girls went on to describe

situations in which they were faced with a question that assumed they speak for another Muslim

girl/woman or all sects of Islamic beliefs. Finally, a few girls shared incidents in which people

asked them questions that likely would not only not be asked of a non-hijabi, but in fact would

---

[4] I will refer to the theme of "questions/being asked" by indicating it with a capital "Q" for the remainder of the paper.

be deemed inappropriate or crossing personal boundaries.

The most general questions the girls received were relatively uncharged requests for information from "people you don't know" at school: "So, what religion are you again?" (Naima) or "Why are you wearing it?" (Fatema). To these questions, the majority of girls usually preferred to give the most general, macro-level answers. The religion followed would be declared as "Islam" and the reason for wearing a hijab, "religious." These answers are certainly true, but they may not be the most accurate, even in the girls' own opinions. Even while aware of an accepting and open environment, many girls, like Fatema, still hesitate to provide a fully detailed answer: "But some people do ask, but I don't really like to explain the whole thing; I like to keep it short if somebody does ask. I just say there are different sects." The reasons for "keeping it short" vary from girl to girl but include not wanting to appear "too religious" and be perceived as a "weirdo," not wanting to share details of why they wear a hijab because it is viewed as a personal and intimate choice, and not wanting to confuse their listener who is assumed to not be overly familiar with Islam and its various traditions, with the latter reason having the highest recurrence amongst the participants.

To address this cultural knowledge gap, the girls sometimes turned to Christian-Muslim comparisons to simplify the explanation process. For example, when Sarrah was asked about her absence at school due to the death of her spiritual leader and father figure, a deeply painful event for her, she attempted to explain the importance of his role in her life by comparing him to the Catholic pope. Similarly, Rashida, a twelve-year old from Chicago, compared the holiday Eid ul Adha to Easter. Yet another cross-religious comparison for the perceived benefit of the audience occurred when Zainab was asked what aspect of her religion was responsible for her wearing a rida: "Especially with rida, when people ask me, I try to compare it to Maryam (*Alaihi salaama*)

[the Virgin Mary (peace be upon her)]. So I asked Insiyah Bhensaheb [a respected woman and madrasah teacher within Zainab's religious community] what I was supposed to say if people asked, and she told me, 'Just say Maryam (Alaihi salaama); that's all they'll understand. Their Mary covered, right?"

A number of important (mis)perceptions are potentially revealed in these Christian-Muslim comparisons. The girls use what they assume is familiar to the listener—Western Christian references—to explain what they assume is unfamiliar to the listener—Eastern Islamic ideas. Additionally, it is telling that although the girls do not want to appear "too religious," they at the same time draw on additional (Christian) religious traditions as part of their explanations. Perhaps the pith of the matter, then, is that they do not want to appear too religious in the *wrong* religion. Alternately, it is possible that showing knowledge of a religion besides their own also can communicate to their listeners that they are not trapped within the confines of their own "weird" religion. The ultimate irony of these comparisons, though, lies in the assumptions the girls make about their listeners, a facet that is best highlighted in the reasoning Zainab was offered by her community elder. The Us/Them dichotomy set up in the advice directly parallels the experience of the girls themselves. Insiyah Bhensaheb seems to believe that the only way "they" will understand what a rida is is through the Virgin Mary, clumping presumably all non-Muslims into one enormous Christian group. While Christianity is dominant in the U.S. and it is likely that even non-Christian Americans are familiar with general aspects of Christian culture such as the Virgin Mary, Easter, and even the Catholic pope, the reasoning still strikes me as a mode of closing explanations rather than opening them.

Moving forward on the Question continuum, the girls find themselves having to answer for the life choices of other Muslim girls, even if those other girls follow different Islamic

58

traditions, are from different ethnic backgrounds, and are at times not even acquainted with the participants in any way. Nooriyah, a fifteen-year old Sunni girl from the Houston area, recounts questions she received at her high school shortly before I interviewed her: "'Like, why do you wear it? Other Muslims don't. You know Fatema?—she's not wearing it. So why doesn't she wear it?' So you have to answer for her, you have to answer for yourself, and then they ask you about the Prophet (Peace be upon Him), whether it's a choice or not." It is clear from Nooriyah's statement that she feels the weight of the questions, and justifiably so. Nooriyah says that while she knows Fatema as another Muslim girl who attends her school, she is not friends with her and the two have never even had a conversation; the most involved interaction between them had been an exchange of smiles in the hall once. Nooriyah continued this Question description by saying she explained to the asker that she wears hijab out of a choice to be modest, but at the same time, she felt uncomfortable saying this because she did not want to imply to the listener that Fatema is somehow immodest. Again and again, girls from each of the different sects I interviewed from told me about instances in which their choice to cover in a particular style—or to cover at all—was contrasted with other Muslim girls the Question askers had seen (sometimes even just in the news.) While these Questions were probably not intentionally meant in an aggressive or accusatory manner, it quickly becomes clear that the girls are often being held as representatives of a global population of Muslim women, a population that they themselves are not living members of.

Zainab's experience with the Muslim womanhood stereotype, however, highlights the overlap between the negative prejudices that can arise as a cumulative effect of the Islam-terrorist and Muslim womanhood stereotypes. Early in her junior year of high school, she wore a pin on her rida to school that read, "This is what a feminist looks like," with an arrow pointing

59

up towards her face. Although she was not accused of being a terrorist, she was bluntly held responsible on an international scale for all Muslim women by Richard, a White male classmate of hers. He approached her to let her know what he thought of her choice to be a feminist in a hijab: "'If you wear that pin ever again I'm just going to. . . You're not a feminist, and you can see that clearly because of what you're wearing.'" Richard's words fall into the same declaratory statement pattern of the Islam-terrorist stereotype, and they do not even feign interest in beginning a mutual conversation of understanding different viewpoints, but they also specifically pinpoint Zainab's gendered clothing and identity as a feminist. Zainab said she did not have time to provide as detailed a response to him right then as the bell for class had just rung; however, after our interview, Zainab sent me a link to her Instagram page which included an exchange between herself and Richard that was sparked by a selfie she had posted with a close-up of the feminist pin.

Richard unravels his own argument here. He grounds his reasoning that Zainab could not be a feminist due to her clothing in the idea that some Muslim women in the Middle East are forced to cover themselves therefore making Zainab's choice to cover offensive to those women: "Literally, the garment you were wearing is a sign of female oppression and is offensive to women in the Middle East who are forced to wear similar clothing everyday of their lives." However, Richard's conclusions in regard to Zainab's actual experience are less than convincing—in fact, at times, strongly flawed—for several reasons.

First, Zainab's rida is culturally distinct from Middle Eastern hijabs. The rida is a specifically Indian garment in which some hair is almost always shown near the forehead. Also, each one is designed by individual artisans based on taste and any given woman's specific body shape, so no two in the world are exactly alike. Ridas can be any color or pattern, have any sort

60

of embellishments, and cannot be bought ready-to-wear—each one is tailored to the particular woman who purchases it. Perhaps most importantly, while the Dawoodi Bohras require ridas be worn by women to masjid and wearing ridas on a daily basis is encouraged, they do not force women to wear it. In fact, an important part of their belief system includes a teaching of the Prophet Mohammed that declares there can be no force in faith. By categorizing Zainab's rida within the practice of Middle Eastern forced hijab, Richard fails to recognize culturally distinct meanings of hijab for different Muslims.

Secondly, Richard's argument becomes hollow once it is clear that is removing Zainab from her actual cultural context—the U.S.—and is forcibly placing her in a culture that is foreign to Zainab herself. Zainab's parents are from Pakistan, she herself was born in London, she attended school in the U.S. from pre-school onwards, and she in no way identifies as a Middle Eastern individual. Additionally, the term "Middle East" is inaccurate, as there are several places in the Middle East where women are not forced to wear any particular type of clothing. (Dubai could at times, for example, be mistaken for Las Vegas.)

Finally, Richard's imposition of his definition of a feminist is heavily narrowed by his cultural viewpoint as a White American male. Later in the Instagram interaction, he declares that it is not even necessary for him to "know or speak to anyone who [is] oppressed to know what oppression is." As the written conversation continued, references to the First Amendment were made by him, making salient how Muslim womanhood is seen by some non-Muslim Americans as a manifestation of a larger implicit political threat to American ideals.[5] Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore contemporary transnational and cross-cultural feminisms, Richard's limited interpretation as a privileged male of what a liberated woman should look like

---

[5] See Appendix G for the Instagram interaction between Zainab and Richard.

is sufficient evidence that we need to continue to raise awareness of culturally-sensitive feminism.

As we near the other end of the Question continuum, bodily invasion becomes a theme the girls encounter. In yet another ironic ploy of social interactions, the ten girls who wore the more billowy, looser-fitting of hijab styles—ridas and abayas as opposed to head scarves paired with Western clothing—usually ended up receiving the most questions regarding their bodies. Sarrah and Farida were asked, respectively, "'Are you wearing anything underneath that?'" and "'What are you wearing under that?'" Fatema also has received what she dubs "weird questions," including, "'Do you shower in that?'" and "'Do you have hair?,'" even though her style of wearing a rida allows for two or three inches of hair to be showing around the hairline. When I asked her if she thought these questions were being asked in a mocking manner or if they were in a more serious spirit of curiosity, she confirmed that she believes they were genuine questions based off the context and tone. Nooriyah, however, shared one of the more disturbing instances of invasive Questioning I came across (even though she usually does not wear an abaya and opts for a head scarf/Western clothing combination.) She told me about a woman who accosted her and her younger sister while they were shopping at a local department store:

> ". . . Last week I went to Burlington, and this lady—she's African American—and I'm not sure if she was not okay or maybe a little bit sick? But she was kind of crazy. She just walked up to us and was like, '*So*, why you buying that tank top?' And I was like—I didn't want to answer at first because she doesn't need to know; I just wanted to walk away. But she was like, 'Why are you buying that tank top because you guys are wearing the head scarf and all?' And I'm like, 'We can wear it when we're at home; we don't have to dress like this all the time; we can wear what we want when we're at home.' She was confused and stuff, so I just wanted to make sure she gets it. She was standing there like, 'So how are you gonna get a husband?' And I was like, 'Uh, um, we have a way.' She was kind of confused about that. And I just had to explain *everything*, and it took like 15 minutes. . . Plus, the way she was asking, it felt like she wasn't even curious. It wasn't a good way of asking. . . She was like, 'So you can't do anything with your husband—you can't do anything with anybody before you get married?' And I was like, she can't

ask that. And my sister's standing right next to me, and she's like 13."

Although Nooriyah's shopping story may be on the extreme part of the continuum and a relatively rare occurrence, it is significant nonetheless as the woman seems to feel her assumptions, questions, and abrasiveness are justified due to what Nooriyah and her younger sister are wearing. Furthermore, within this story, we see Nooriyah attempting to juggle a number of factors. Her initial indignation over the Questions conflicts with and then is overridden by her wanting to "make sure [the woman] gets it," echoing the earlier idea of being held as a representative of Islam at large. Additionally, Nooriyah also points out how she perceives the meta-message of the Questions as being something that "wasn't. . .good." It is interesting that Nooriyah, Algerian (or "North African" as she likes to say), specified to me that the woman was "African American," as ethnicity can also be a risk for the girls, although not necessarily in predictable ways as I discuss below.

IV.   Original Origins: "Where are you *really* from?"

As many racial minority Americans are aware, the question "Where are you from?" can often be much more loaded for a person of color than a White individual (Valenzuela 2008; Moffatt 1989). While the experience of being asked this question while being a minority American is certainly not unique to Muslim American girls, this group does experience the question in a particular way that is arguably reserved only for this population. It turns out that there quite often is a confusion of race and religion on the part of the asker; at best, a conflation of the two. Just as with other minority experiences, the question is rarely asked in the spirit of expecting the name of an American city or state as an answer as it might be with a White American, often leading to the infamous double-ask: "No, where are you *really* from?" Again, because the majority of girls I interviewed wear hijab, the experiences I draw from do hold the aspect of a loaded piece of clothing as a major factor. Depending on the style of hijab the girl

wore, the origin question could be intended to refer to either race or religion. If the non-Muslim asker was more familiar with the clothing style—namely, if the girl wore a head scarf with pants and a top—the question usually referred to the girl's ethnicity, as the head scarf seemed to be understood as a symbol of "normal" or less marginal Islam. However, if the girl wore less traditional clothing—or more traditional, depending on which tradition one holds as a lens—such as a rida or an abaya, the question was meant in more of a religious and cultural manner. This was especially clear when the girl actually answered the double-ask by giving her parents' home country as an answer, but then still received a follow-up question if that home country did not house a Muslim population in the asker's knowledge base.

For example, Farida (a rida-wearer) was at dinner at a local restaurant chain in Houston with a couple of her (also rida-clad) friends. She says the waitress initially asked her, "Where are you from?" and she replied "Houston." Cue the double-ask: "'No, really, where are you from?' And I [Farida] was like what, is that not an answer? I mean, I'm from here. And I know she was looking for the answer of India for my cultural background, but I just didn't want to do that right then—I just wanted to eat!" Farida was clearly somewhat frustrated at this point already, but in her opinion, the situation got worse when the woman persisted: "She wouldn't let it go. I kept trying to look at the menu to hint to her we wanted to order, but then she said, 'But so you guys are Muslim . . ?', and I just looked at her, like—and she's like, 'You don't look like what I've seen. . .' So I just told her finally, 'Yeah, we're from India originally,' just to get her to shut up."

Maleka, an African American[6] tenth-grader from Kansas City who recently moved to Houston, also faced issues of cultural pigeonholing, though this time the issue arose from the

---

[6] Maleka is not technically a second-generation immigrant adolescent. However, her parents are converts to Islam and the first-generation within her Christian family to be Muslim. Additionally, I made the conscious choice to interview her despite her parents not being immigrants as my aim was to speak with as diverse a racial sample I could gather.

opposing categorical side. While the waitress's implication to Farida seemed to be that all

Muslim women—the ones she had "seen"—need to look a particular way racially and sartorially,

in Maleka's experience, she is told that all Blacks need to behave in a certain way, i.e., not be

Muslim:

> "Yeah, he [a Black male classmate] said to me, 'You're not Black, you're a Muslim!' I'm
> like, 'What?' I'm like, 'You're not Black, you're a Christian!' And they're like, 'That
> don't make sense.' And I'm like, 'What you just said didn't make sense, so what're you
> talking about? Did you pay attention in sixth grade when they taught you Islam is a
> religion? It's not a race. Christianity doesn't have a race; Islam doesn't have a race.' And
> he was like, '*Oh*, so you're a *Black* Muslim?!' That's how they say it: you're a *Black*
> Muslim."

From Safia, a thirteen-year old eighth-grader, we get a glimpse of yet another approach

the girls use in answering the origin question:

> "If someone asked me, 'Where are you from?,' I would say I was born here. And they'd
> be like, 'No, really, where are you from?' I would say, 'I was born here in The
> Woodlands [Texas suburb near Houston], but my parents are from Vietnam. I'm a little
> bit of everything—my dad is Chinese and Vietnamese, and my mom is Vietnamese and,
> I don't even remember—she said something about Malaysian and Chinese. I'm a little
> bit of everything Asian.' I'd say I was an Americanized Asian Muslim."

Farida, Maleka, and Safia all highlight how a conflation of religion and race can be

confusing not only for the question askers, but more importantly from a developmental

perspective, for the recipients of the questions as well. Early on in their lives, the girls have to be

ready to answer for three sides of themselves: the American, the racial, and the religious/cultural.

On par with minority American adolescent literatures on Asian and Black experiences, the girls

not only have to deal with the risk of being perceived by the racial majority as "perpetual

foreigners" (Qin, D. B., Way, N., and Rana, M. 2008) and navigate racial prejudices, but they

also have to explain themselves in terms of their religious beliefs and how they associate with

Islam. Rather than being able to more organically and privately explore who they are and want to

be, the girls are often faced with questions that force them to have clean answers ready, whether

or not they themselves are entirely confident in them. While self-awareness of identity is not in and of itself a negative phenomenon or vulnerability, being subject to repeated questions that demand justification of that self-identity can be, especially in an adolescent environment that may lack appropriate pre-existing support systems.

Although in some ways it may be obvious how being subject to a stereotype or being repeatedly put on trial for personal choices are risk factors, perhaps the argument could be made that all adolescents experience these phenomena to a certain degree. I do not contend this. The argument I am making, however, is that these experiences are unique to Muslim American girls because in their perceptions, they are subject to them due specifically to the facts of their Muslim girlhood. The point in question is not whether Richard or the Burlington shopper would have said something similar to an Orthodox Jewish girl or a conservative Hindu girl—they may have. The point is that what Zainab, what Farida, what Nooriyah, what Maleka all understood from their experiences is that they had them due the sheer fact of being who they are. The specifics of the actual stereotypes and questions make it difficult to argue that a different population could be subject to these same risks ultimately anyway, but the bottom line becomes the meaning the girls make of these experiences and how these experiences are first internalized as perceptions and then externalized as personality and behavioral traits, identities, and potentially, life choices.

V.   Divided Lives, Divided Selves?: "I lead a double life."

The risks discussed so far all occur in largely non-Muslim spaces, being either school or public areas. However, the girls also face vulnerabilities that arise as a result of the stark divisions they see between their public and/or school lives and their Muslim, non-school, non-public lives. The latter impose some of their own risk factors that I will explore, but the sheer division between spaces, both literal and experienced, is a risk the girls have to learn to cope

66

with and navigate around. Farida succinctly summarized the American Muslim girl experience when she said, "I kind of feel like I lead a double life—school life, masjid life, and a home life— triple life, really." Most of the girls divided their experiences when describing them to me as such: School/Non-Muslim, Home, and Masjid/Muslim.

One of the ways this split-Space experience was made salient in the majority (18) of the girls' experiences was through the way they organized their friends, both in their perceptions and actual interactions with them. During the interviews when I asked the girls to simply tell me about their friends, many of them responded by a pause followed with the question, "Which friends?" It quickly became apparent that the girls viewed their friends in two distinct groups: their "school" or "American" friends and their "Masjid" friends or simply "friends."[7] Just these linguistic classifications reveal much about the way they are organizing their relationship with their peers, even those they trust and love. In addition to the obvious spatial divisions that are highlighted by these categorizations of friends, deeper perceptions the girls hold about their own worlds are also revealed. While the term "school" is understandable when describing friends at school, the term "American"—which arose frequently as a descriptor for non-Muslim friends throughout the interviews—is more confounding, especially since their "Masjid" friends are also Americans. By using "American" as synonymous with "school," the girls equate school as a microcosm of larger American culture, setting it firmly apart from Masjid and home. This process seems to be largely unconscious and come as a surprise to the girls themselves. When I pointed out to each of the girls that she herself was also American and that the Masjid friends she had just described were also Americans, they all expressed varying degrees of surprise at their own systems of classifications, giggling in slightly embarrassed ways and saying, "Yeah, hm. I

---

[7] There was no overlap for any of the girls between the actual individuals who were in the two friend groups. That is, no one from a girl's Masjid friend group attended the same schools as the girl herself.

don't know why I do that. Yeah, I dunno" (Safia). Interestingly, Masjid friends were only described as such when being introduced for the first time by the girls in contrast to School/American friends. Once these initial introductions were over, though, the girls tended to just use the term "friends" rather than "Masjid friends" when describing this group; however, the terms "school" and "American" were maintained throughout. By reserving the descriptor-free term for Masjid friends, the girls, wittingly or not, communicate which group they view as most relatable or "real," a factor that will play an important role in the coping mechanisms the girls come to rely on.

The distinction between School friends and Masjid friends—in fact, quite possibly the distinction between School and Masjid in general—begins at school. In general, the girls enter the School scene feeling largely the same as their non-Muslim peers. They understand (and enjoy) the same pop culture references, they like the same food, and they take the same classes. However, a sense of difference increases proportionally to the instances of recreational activities offered, discussed, or invited to. Co-ed pool parties, dances, and birthday parties in which (surreptitiously served) beer is the main attraction are all social activities that most non-Muslim American adolescents usually find exciting, fun, and perhaps most importantly, socially rewarding. Although the foundations of most adolescent social groups are laid at school, it is often in these socializing events that the roof, so to speak, is raised. Not only are bonds strengthened through shared experiences, but romantic relationships are also often established, a growing interest of all adolescents. (This latter point, incidentally, I will later argue to be an indirect advantage to Muslim girls.) All the girls I spoke with said they did not participate in most large social events their School friends invited them to due to "religious reasons." Occasionally the girls would have liked to—attending an all-girls sleepover, for example—but

their parents did not give them permission. The majority of cases, though, were a matter of the girls themselves feeling uncomfortable due to the "American" culture that would be present at these events. Farida's descriptions of how she interacts with her friends is an ideal example of how friend interactions sharply define the navigation of School, Home, and Masjid for the girls:

> Sometimes religion creates this barrier. It's not a negative thing, but I would have to block myself off from doing certain things they would do. And they would say, 'Why not?' And I would have to say why, and that that's just not the way I roll. But they're understanding, and there's no peer pressure. And that's fine. They're still my school friends. But what's the point of me going to a party to sit on someone's couch where everyone around me's trashed? I'll just have my own party with my ginger ale and Netflix. [laughs]

Farida is quite comfortable with not participating in these "school" social events, but at the same time, she also recognizes how this can lead to divergence in habits and lifestyles at large.

Even though she does not participate in many of the larger events she is invited to, she still does spend time with her School friends outside of school in smaller, more intimate activities such as eating out or shopping. However, these friend activities are exclusive; that is, when she spends time with School friends, she *only* spends time with School friends. In fact, when I asked her—and each of the girls, in turn—if there would ever be a situation in which Masjid friends might spend time with School friends in a single setting, the answer was a definitive "no," usually paired with a sizeable degree of surprise at the confidence of their own answers. The "Why not?" follow-up I presented left the girls with less confidence, as many of them ended up thinking aloud about the issues for the first time, again pointing to the unconscious nature of the division in the girls' perceptions. Many girls guessed that "it was an unspoken rule that you don't mix and mingle?" (Farida). Farida once again most succinctly and insightfully summarized the situation that, in her opinion, "all of us [Muslim American girls] go through:"

> If I were to have a party, I would probably only have my *mumin*[8] friends over or my school friends over, just because I feel like it's easier to hang out with—personality wise I'm the same, but what I *do* is different. With my *mumin* friends, it's, like, you know, we'll hang out at home, we'll just throw on some pajamas, and watch a movie. With my school friends, if I'm more in a mood of going out, I'll go eat with them or something, or to the movies. I do that with my *mumin* friends, too, but it's just different. Like, going into certain environments, it would just be fun and easier with certain people.

Farida's awareness of context and self is notable, and she has impressive insight into the dynamic nature of how one affects the other.

An even more interesting and complex aspect of the School-American/Masjid-friend divide cropped up, though, as Farida continued to talk about her experiences with her friends. Farida has two best friends, one of whom falls into the School category, and the other, Masjid. She recalled a conversation in which she and her Masjid best friend, Munira, were discussing her School best friend, Laura, and wondering why the three of them had yet to spend time together, as each knew about the existence of the other through Farida. At this point, Farida said, "We'd [Farida and Munira] have to be careful to accommodate [Laura]." When I asked her what she meant by this, Farida began thinking in more general terms:

> *Farida*: It would be weirder for my non-*mumin* friends if there was like one of them with a bunch of my *mumin* friends. Because with my *mumin* friends, I'm completely out there. And with my non-*mumin* friends, I'd have to pause for *namaz*[9] so they'd just have to sit there, like, Okaaay, now what. When I go to my friend's house, I take a *masello*[10] and go pray in another room, and she's just left there for five minutes. And I don't know how she feels about that; I've never asked her. So it's more of a dynamic tweak like that.
> *Tasneem*: Isn't the same thing going on when you're hanging out with the non-*mumin* friends? Aren't you the odd one out in some sense?
> *Farida*: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But at the same time, I don't feel it. I don't want them [non-*mumin* friend] to feel like the black sheep; I'm comfortable. I'd rather be the black sheep and just go do my thing and then step back in.

---

[8] The term *mumin* is used by Dawoodi Bohra Muslims to refer to one another. It literally means "person of faith," and is only used when one Dawoodi Bohra speaks to another.
[9] The term *namaz* is a Persian term for the Arabic *salaat*, or prayer, that South Indian Muslims often use.
[10] Prayer mat (Arabic)

Although part of Farida's declaration of being comfortable with being "the black sheep" could be attributed to her personality, many of the girls expressed similar sentiments of not wanting to mix their two groups of friends due to predicted discomfort on the part of their School friends. However, it is not simply an altruistic drive to prevent discomfort for others; it is also a matter of not wanting to appear "like some weird girl" by being "too religious" in the wrong context (Zahra). Even though the girls are largely comfortable with their School friends, they are still aware that if they act in a completely uncensored manner around them, the threat of being perceived as strange outsiders still looms, however faint, in the background.

VI.   The Home Front: "I dunno, it's pretty normal."

The major home risks the girls faced were gendered roles and rules in family life that included differentiated treatment between themselves and their brothers or other Muslim male peers (i.e., cousins) at the hands of their parents. These risks, however, were seen as less challenging and stressful by the girls than the ones they experienced in the other Spaces. While most girls acknowledged some conflicts (gender-based and otherwise) at home between themselves and their parents, these discussions were usually in a more lighthearted tone, with fewer verbal hesitations, and dwelled on for shorter amounts of time. In response to my question of what life at home was like in terms of parental relationships, Zahra succinctly captured the spirit of most of the girls' attitudes: "Like, [my parents and I] might argue about little things. . . but I dunno, it's pretty normal overall." On an immediate level, this comment shows a clear comfort and acceptance of the Home environment which potentially is a positive protective factor for Zahra and other girls. The framing of "normalcy" within this context is especially important, as this further confirms the level of comfort and lack of "weirdness" in the Home environment. The dismissal of the topics of argument as "little things," though, might be more

complex than it seems at first.

The downplaying of conflict could be partially attributable to the fact that all the girls I spoke with came from stable and loving nuclear families with two parents and the girls' own familiarity with and love for their family structures. However, I propose two additional factors also contribute to the lack of criticism communicated by most of the girls. First, many of the cultures the girls' parents come from emphasize respecting one's elders—especially one's parents—and encourage a community-centered way of life (Menon 2002; Zaal, Salah, and Fine 2007). Because these are the ideals the girls were taught from a young age, it would make sense that while they might be quick to acknowledge mistakes and injustices in non-Home environments, they may hesitate to do so when discussing their interactions with their parents. In fact, this respect extended to teachers and School as well, as five girls explicitly criticized their "American" classmates for being disrespectful and talking back to teachers in class. Secondly, it is possible that Home risks may have been perceived as less stressful by the girls because in fact they *were* less stressful. While there were three notable instances of girls feeling angry with their parents due to sexism that was too extreme in their opinions, the gender roles the remainder of the girls discussed were arguably milder, especially in the context of American culture. The two major gender-based differences the girls faced at home had to do with chores and curfews.[11] Specifically, those who had brothers said they usually ended up doing most of the dishes after dinner without even being asked to while their brothers left the table without a second glance from either parent. When going out with friends, girls said their parents always

---

[11] Contrary to what Okin (1999) and Pollitt (1999) might suggest, wearing a hijab was actually not a point of conflict in the Home realm for nearly all the girls—only one said she felt pressured to wear it—and most girls reported they wear it because they chose to. (In fact, Fatema said her father strongly suggested she not wear it due to his fears of her having prejudices enacted against her, thereby making it harder for her to succeed in academia and work environments.)

asked who they were going with, what time they would be back, and what they would be doing, while their brothers would often leave without more than a goodbye. Going out itself could also sometimes be a negotiation, as girls were occasionally criticized by both parents if they thought their daughter was "going out too much," even if it was during the day to see a movie or go shopping with friends. Most girls dealt with a cultural script that expected they be ever-present at home in their free time to help their mothers with housework, even if there was no housework left to be done.

While this gendered script is undeniably sexist, the reason why it may not cause much stress in the girls is because American culture itself has a long history of gender roles, many of which are still ubiquitous, albeit subtly so. Contemporary American feminism continues to grapple with issues of society's gendered expectations of women needing to be both successful with their careers, but also wives and mothers and homemakers (McCann and Kim 2010). Even if gender roles are enacted in a more blunt and blatant way in Muslim homes, they are not entirely dissonant with American culture. Furthermore, rape culture is also an important contemporary issue American society deals with, the "solutions"[12] to which encourage girls and women to not travel alone at night, be aware of their surroundings, and generally take more precautions than boys and men. (Klaw et al. 2005). As members and participants of American culture, the girls have likely been introduced to these ideas through popular media, if not through a feminist lens. Sheer exposure to Hollywood movies, television shows, magazines, and commercials[13] could at least prime the girls for a gender-divided world in which different expectations are placed on women and men. Therefore, although it might occasionally be

---

[12] "Solutions" is in quotation marks because I disagree with the idea that encouraging victims rather than perpetrators to change their behavior is an actual solution to the larger cultural problem of rape and sexism.
[13] The documentary *Miss Representation* points out these effects of popular media on (self-)perceptions of women.

perceived as a nuisance, the girls generally were not upset by their parents' more stringent rules based on their gender. In fact, many said parents were stricter because "obviously, they love me and want me to be safe" (Fatema). The girls also were able to negotiate with their parents, so the stricter rules ended up becoming more expectations rather than requirements. For example, Fatema told me a story about her summer break in which her mother initially did not give her permission to see a movie on Saturday with her friends because she had already gone out twice with them during the week; she now needed to stay home and help with the laundry. Probably not unlike most other American teenagers, Fatema's response had been to say that this was not fair, that she would help with the laundry when she came back, and then to simply plead for a few minutes. It worked.

Despite the Home environment being generally safe with low stress levels, it was not impossible for parental gender expectations to mutate into more harmful forms and become a stronger risk factor for the girl's sense of self. Sarrah's experience, though rare among the girls I spoke with, shows the latent potential for risk embedded within the system of a gendered household. Having just graduated high school, Sarrah was planning on attending a large public university in Houston, the same city her parents live in. Because of the university's distance from their house, Sarrah wanted to rent an apartment downtown, something that could easily be within the family's budget. However, due to the taboo of an unmarried girl living on her own in some Muslim cultures, what normally could be an exciting and straightforward transition to college in an American adolescent's life was turning into a major point of stress for her:

> I really hope that my parents let me get an apartment downtown, when I start going to UH. That really annoyed me, when Jameela said, "Oh, no, the daughters shouldn't go out to college [i.e., move out when going to college]" . . . I really hope I can get one, because my sister went to UH, a lot of my friends went there, and it's just really far to drive. My sister tried doing that [living at home/commuting] when she first got married, and she got into accidents and stuff. And it's really annoying, because Jameela, she came to our

house, she's just like, "You're gonna live at home, your mom's gonna drop you to the Metro, and that's how you're gonna get downtown." . . She asked me, "So where are you planning on going to college?" I said probably UH. And she's like, "Okay, but you're *not* gonna get an apartment down there. And I saw my dad do an *ishaaro* [gesture] to Jameela—because I had talked to him about this—like, Oh, yeah, [make Sarrah understand.] And I mean, what am I gonna say? *Ji, saheb* [yes, ma'am], I'm gonna take the Metro everyday? I'm not comfortable taking the Metro everyday; why can't I get an apartment? If I have a friend like me [as a roommate.] It's not even like I'm going out of state. It's really annoying. And it's not even like I'm going to Austin or something. I'm still *here*. . . And I feel like our parents should at least trust us.

Jameela is a woman within Sarrah's Dawoodi Bohra Shi'a community who holds social stature due to an inherited position—she ranks above Sarrah's father and most men—and who acts as an informal advisor for the community. It would be incredibly difficult for most people in the community to argue openly with Jameela, much less a young woman; even less, a young woman in front of her father who would be closely observing her social etiquette. Not only does Jameela literally and metaphorically invade Sarrah's Home space, she is in alliance with Sarrah's father, aiding his efforts to keep his daughter at home. Seeing a powerful woman complicit in gender-based controls, while ironic, is not uncommon in the community. In Sarrah's view, she is fully within the parameters of correct daughterly decorum by wanting an apartment: She is not going out of state, there is a precedent for her behavior from her older (now married) sister, and she is willing to even live with a roommate who is "like" her, i.e., another Muslim girl who her parents would approve of. Sarrah compares her request against typical American college moving-out experiences, while her parents compare their daughter's request to a Pakistani girl's experiences (their home country.) Pitted against both her parents *and* the social structure as represented by Jameela, Sarrah's sense of helplessness is not surprising.

Even without Jameela in the picture, though, Sarrah struggles with gender expectations at Home, especially in her relationship with her father. More than most of the other girls, Sarrah's household is openly patriarchal; everyone in her family reverts to her father for

permission, including her mother. However, because her mother is both a wife and a mother, she has more social power than Sarrah herself, an unmarried daughter. With her older sister already married, Sarrah is the only girl left in the house, with two younger brothers. The older of the two brothers just received his driving permit, so a new recent struggle had been whose turn it would be to take the car they shared. When both siblings wanted the car one day to drive considerable distances, there was not even a discussion; her brother would get it because she should not be driving so far on her own. When she tried to make the argument that she had been driving for two years more than her brother and therefore had more experience, both her father and brother just laughed at her. She was not offered much of an explanation as to what the joke was, but it did not take much to figure out that they thought her somehow incapable of being out on her own for long. This is quite ironic, as Sarrah spent two years in Karachi, Pakistan at an Islamic boarding school—with her parents' blessing. Now back home, though, her father tells her she is "too independent." Perhaps he holds this view of her simply because of her attempts to communicate with him and ask for his reasoning when he does not allow her the freedom she wishes for. None of her conversations with him have gone well, according to her:

> My brother even tells me, "Don't counteract him; don't ask why." You kind of just have to live with it. That sinking feeling of you just won't ever know *why*. But. . . you always want to know more. I'm always going to be curious. But I've gotten to the point where I'm like, okay, for his respect, I just won't say it. I bite my tongue. Even, like, last night, I asked—I got told not to ask.

Sarrah's brothers also cannot argue openly with their father, but of course, they have less cause to. It is possible that much of Sarrah's experience with her father is based on particularities of his personality, but because he so often uses religion and culture as a crutch in his brief explanations—terms like "respect" are loaded and powerful behavioral controls—the dynamic between father and daughter is defined by orthodox Islamic cultural norms. Being faced with a father figure who undermines one's value by implicitly and explicitly telling her she is not and

76

should not be what she believes she is clearly is a risk factor for identity and self-worth, especially if the girl already faces other risks at School.

Fortunately, Sarrah's case is an exceptional one, and most girls apparently had much healthier, egalitarian relationships with their parents and brothers. However, even these girls said they sensed their parents controlling their whereabouts more than they would boys' "because you know how it is with us. Girls just have to be more careful" (Fatema). When I asked them more careful about what, the conversation leaked into the Masjid realm, as a girl's behavior outside of Masjid determines her reputation within it. If a girl is seen as too extroverted, too flirtatious, and too much of a partygoer, potential future parents-in-law hear about this through the Masjid network, jeopardizing chances of future marriages. The Home space, then, incorporates risks that exist in the Masjid space, and parents enact stricter behavioral codes for their daughters as protective mechanisms against the potentially disastrous risk of a ruined social reputation at Masjid.

VII.   : *Masjid***: "It's like** *really* **real."**

Boys and Reputation

For most of the girls (n = 16), the emphasized language used in describing the risks at Masjid seemed to reflect the highest net stress engagement levels because of the long-term consequences the girls perceived these risks bearing. Fatema summarized the trend well when she said, "Like, school is fun and you go and stuff, but that's just something you do during the day because you kind of have to if you ever want to do anything [i.e., have a career]. But, like, masjid feels more, I don't know. . . It's like *really* real, you know?" While school-related activities and School friends were important to the girls, the School space was seen more as a temporary stepping stone to college rather than a socializing space with investment potential,

especially in terms of romantic partners[14].

Masjid boys completely filled the niche of potential romantic partners, so the girls do not even register boys at school as romantic threats. Perhaps an even more notable fact is that their parents did not, either. When I asked the girls about their friends at school, a number almost proudly described being friends with at least one boy, usually more. When I then asked if their parents knew about these male friends, all of them said yes, though one girl noted it was discouraged by her mother. Fatema told me with a laugh,

> [*Fatema*]: My mom's strict about it: *Chokhra si waat nai karwaani!* [You're not supposed to talk to boys!]
> *Tasneem*: Does that also apply to school?
> *Fatema*: Oh, no, I have a lot of guy friends at school. . . I don't know, because my mom's not that worried about me dating guys in school.

Although it is possible some of the girls harbored crushes for non-Muslim School boys, they did not share this with me and seemed convinced that any romantic engagement with a non-Muslim was not a reality for them, a sentiment that was obviously shared—and shaped—by their parents as well.

The lack of romantic risk at School was more than made up for at Masjid, a context in which gender-based norms dominate. Sarrah told me that when she talks to her Masjid friends, they "talk about this *a lot*. That whole talking-to-boys thing always comes around, when you're talking to your friends. It's always the girl's reputation [at risk]." Home controls on girls' behavior to protect Masjid reputations are perhaps not unwarranted, given the dire importance a girl's reputation is perceived to hold at Masjid. Although open, American-style dating is not engaged in in any of the Muslim communities the girls come from, "talking" is. When a girl "talks" to a boy, it is the equivalent of dating, though it is generally understood that if the couple

---

[14] All the girls expressed themselves to be heterosexual.

hits it off, they will likely get engaged. However, if a girl talks to too many boys, she earns a "bad" reputation as an easy and open flirt, diminishing the possibility of boys wanting to talk to her in a serious fashion for marriage. Instead, they might talk to her *because* they think she is simply a flirt for a quick ego boost, and then move on to a girl who they are actually serious about.

As Zainab explains, "a lot of *badnaami* [gossip about a ruined reputation; literally, "bad name"] happens with girls. With guys, it's like a slap on the back, like, 'Oh, you're talking to this girl, you're talking to *this* girl!'" But if a girl is known to or even suspected of talking to too many boys, it follows her around not just her immediate religious community, but sometimes even the global religious community:

> If it's a girl, everyone around the world is going to find out. 'Cause . . . social media, everyone here knows people in England and stuff. So it's really hard for girls. And . . . guys get their number, and just start harassing—well, messaging, messaging, and then finally you might reply one thing, and it just starts. . . Obviously, I'm generalizing, but everything that happens to girls, even if it . . . isn't her fault—it's really hard for them."

This dynamic is not so different from slut shaming of girls that has recently been occurring with disappointingly more frequency in American high schools and colleges (Armstrong et al. 2014; Ringrose and Renold 2012). The major difference between slut shaming at School and a negative marriage-ability reputation at Masjid, though, is the idea that the girls cannot eventually move on from Masjid due to the nature of the communities. Whereas one might switch high schools, one cannot easily switch Masjids not only due to the relatively smaller number of them, but also because the environment at masjid is a *socio*religious one, not simply religious; family obligations and networks prevent people from easily moving away. Furthermore, students eventually graduate high school; one is never meant to "graduate" Masjid. Understandably, then, girls at Masjid are usually much more secretive about who they are talking

79

to than boys, as "it's always the girl's reputation. If a boy does something bad, it always fades away, or people might not remember it" (Sarrah). According to Sarrah, the sexism exists on a social and interpersonal level. The religious society itself perpetuates the notion of a girl's "bad reputation," and as members of that society, it is likely that boys are aware of their own privilege as males. Some might therefore openly "harass" girls via text or email until they are responded to, but the initiation and balance of the communication is always lost when the story gets out. At the same time, girls are aware that there are potential negative consequences to simply not answering a boy's message or email, as they then might be perceived to be "too religious" or straight-laced, and the boy might lose interest entirely[15]. The girls are acutely aware of the fine line they need to walk, but this awareness is not necessarily an acceptance of the social dynamic. When asked how she felt about the way things stood in the realm of "talking," boys, and marriage, Zainab simply replied, "Angry. *Really* angry." Needless to say, navigating interactions with boys within the Masjid community becomes a hugely stressful part of a girl's life the older she gets and presents a major risk in the Masjid realm.

Best Frenemies: The Cusp Moment and Social Support from within

Because of the obvious reputational risks of interacting with Masjid boys, Masjid friends are restricted to girls. Finding these friends and establishing these relationships, though, is of major importance for the girls' social lives at Masjid. The risk of not having a Masjid friend group is a serious one, as the Masjid space is not just a space for prayer, but socialization and general community gatherings and activities as well. Once friendships form at Masjid, alliances are pretty stable. This means that while a girl might have a reliable set of friends if she is already on the inside of a friend group, if she has failed to become a member of one or is kicked out of

---

[15] An interesting predicament, as appearing "too religious" was exactly one of the concerns some girls had in front of School friends as well.

one for whatever transgression, it is difficult to find a new group. Even though some girls knew of each other since they were as young as five, this did not necessarily guarantee amiable feelings. Farida, an apparently popular girl at Masjid, complained to me about a girl who, in her opinion, is trying a little too hard to be her friend: "I wish I could tell her, 'Get out, go find your own friends,' but that would be extremely rude. I have almost a set group of friends, and people tell me, like, being friends with me is like having a membership card to the most exclusive club in the world." Unfortunately or fortunately, Farida's exclusive club is not the only one. Sarrah, too, notes the heavy competition for friends at her masjid: "I think masjid has more of a clique system than school does." At her masjid, cliques are divided into categories such as *deeni* [religious], non-rida wearers, Pakistanis, and Africans, among others[16].

Arguably, this risk factor of finding friends is not so different from the one found at School. However, I think the competition for friends at Masjid is significantly different for the girls than the competition for friends at School for two reasons. First, as mentioned above, School is seen more as a temporary place than a permanent one, making the friendships associated with that space similarly temporary in the girls' perceptions. Secondly, because the girls already recognize they are somehow different from their non-Muslim peers due to the stereotype and Question risks, they might come to expect that they will not be fully accepted in the School realm anyway. (Whether or not this perception is accurate is irrelevant, as the risk just needs to exist in the meaning-making of the girls' experiences.) Instead, the girls turn to a space where they believe they *might* be fully accepted. Masjid friends ultimately become an incredibly important positive facet of the girls' lives as I will elaborate later.

Although being a member of a stable Masjid friend group is *ultimately* a positive facet, it

---

[16] Sarrah's Dawoodi Bohra masjid is ethnically entirely Indian, but due to migration and immigration, sub-categories develop that embody slightly different accents and habits within the community.

can carry with it an indirect risk regarding the decision to wear a hijab. While the literature

shows some young Muslim women (late teens, early twenties) have increasingly started covering

for political rather than spiritual reasons, for the younger population I worked with, it seems

social rather than political reasons outweighed the religious. Only six of the girls said they

started covering because they felt "it was the right time to" or because "it was the right thing to

do," presumably for religious reasons. For the rest of the girls, the first reason they gave me was

having a group of friends who also wore it and who were encouraging and supportive. Zainab

said,

> Like, I feel like I've always had that friend group—group of friends, like in madresah.
> Like, in madresah, I'd grown up with those kind of friends, who are more, like, that kind
> of side with their families and stuff. . . Sometimes I try and think back about it, like when
> did I start? Why did I start? But I just feel, honestly, it was like *tawfeeq* [religious
> epiphany] and stuff. That's really the thing that really helped me. Otherwise my group of
> friends at masjid all wear it, so I feel more comfortable wearing it. Whereas if I didn't,
> like, I'd feel like something was wrong.

Zainab mentions a religious aspect to her decision, but it is sandwiched between references to her

friends. Her concluding sentences here also imply that there is a definite social aspect within a

Masjid context that can ironically influence the decision to wear a hijab outside of that context.

Because I have argued that the stereotypes and Questions are risks that result from girls wearing

hijab in School/non-Muslim contexts, having friend groups who might make a girl "feel like

something was wrong" if she did not wear it can be interpreted as an indirect risk for the girl. It

seems the girls are in somewhat of a double-bind here: No matter what the girls "choose" to

wear, they can potentially end up feeling somewhat out of place in at least one of their Spaces.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS, COPING STRATEGIES, AND EMERGENT IDENTITIES

So far, I have documented many of the social and cross-cultural challenges Muslim girls

face as American teenagers. However, all of these girls are not only surviving their social,

religious, and academic environments; they are often thriving in them. The girls are generally well-adjusted, goal-oriented (i.e., college), and confident in their own abilities to be productive members of their communities. What is helping them overcome the various risk factors they often face on a daily basis?

I.   **The Art of Whatevering: Navigating on One's Own**

One of the most direct coping strategies I found the girls using when trying to deal with the stereotype and Question risks in School/non-Muslim spaces involved "whatevering" the problem, the results of which could go one of two ways: enhancing the differences between themselves and the majority or minimizing those differences. The girls who embraced the former approach tended to say things like, "Okay, so, but at other times, I don't really care what they think. . . It's what I—it's who I am; they have to deal with it, so whatever" (Maryam.) Enhancement whatevering paired itself with girls who described the key element of being able to wear a hijab at school as "confidence." Fatema believes she has figured out a way to not only deflect negative comments and prevent internalizing them, but maybe even reduce their communication in general: "I was just very confident about [wearing hijab]. I think if you have a high confidence level when you wear it, people can sense that, and it's like whatever—they know they can't hurt you or mess with you or anything." This confidence was not something that the girls necessarily were armed with going into the situation, though. Even in Fatema's comment, we see an awareness of impending risk: others cannot "hurt" her or "mess" with her, but this means she was somehow cognizant that it might happen. The girls who engaged in enhancement whatevering often were vocal about their religion and cultures, sometimes even offering information about themselves without a Question even occurring. Zainab and Fatema both discussed instances of walking into rooms, understanding that others would be looking at

them "with questions," and deciding to start conversations themselves. By providing information to the non-Muslim Questioner before a Question was even asked, the girls found a way to regain control of the identity balance. Rather than wait to have their identities asked about, they declared what they were of their own accord. Again, though, this was a learned response; for example, Zainab mentions she is "*now*. . .[after] three years, . . .overconfident" (my emphasis). Also, the girls' confidence itself often seemed to be tailored so that others would make note of it, leading me to believe that it was indeed a specifically developed coping mechanism in response to the threat of stereotypes and Questions rather than just a personality trait; none of the girls simply described themselves as confident outside of the context of hijab, stereotypes, and Questions. Discussions of "just need[ing] confidence" for hijab (Zainab) were either closely preceded or followed by an enhancement whatevering comment that asserted the girl's authority over her own self by dismissing the negative opinions of others. Enhancement whatevering through exuding confidence, then, is a specific technique some of the girls embrace as a way to maintain their identities and self-esteem in the face of the risks of being stereotyped or having to constantly explain themselves to non-Muslim others.

Minimizing whatevering, perhaps unsurprisingly, led to less assertive behavior. The girls who engaged in this vein of whatevering were more concerned with conflict avoidance, both between themselves and non-Muslim peers, but also Muslim peers at school. Minimizing whatevering usually occurred in response to Questions; stereotyping statements were often not responded to at all outwardly. The typical trajectory of a minimizing whatevering response involved a Question about religion from a non-Muslim person, with the girl responding by downplaying her association with or knowledge of her particular branch of Islam. This was not due to a lack of actual knowledge or association; rather, this sort of response developed once the

girl realized that the Questioner usually lacked enough background knowledge to properly understand a more detailed response on her part. When Sarrah was in sixth grade, for example, her teacher had turned to her in world history class during their discussion of Islam, asking her if she wanted to add anything. After getting over her initial embarrassment at being singled out in class, Sarrah did actually try to explain that what her teacher was saying was partially wrong—or at least, Sarrah believed it was wrong as an eleven-year old Shi'a. What had actually taken place was Sarrah not realizing that her teacher (and the textbook) were assuming she was Sunni; in fact, assuming that all Muslims abided by the same belief systems. After fumbling with an explanation for a few minutes, Sarrah says she decided to conclude her contribution to the class discussion by just finally saying, "I don't know" to the increasing number of follow-up questions from both her teacher and classmates. Now a graduating senior, Sarrah still abides by the lesson she believes this experience six years ago taught her: "Our views are not very out there [publicized]. You know, keeping our stuff—not hidden, but whatever—to yourself, in that classroom setting, because it's really hard to get into differences between different Islamic groups; opens a can of worms."

Yusor, a girl who was actually in sixth grade at the time of the interview, shows how a minimizing approach can develop out of a need to avoid not just conflicts of explanation with non-Muslims, but also conflicts of belief with Muslim peers. Like many of the other girls, Yusor received a Question from a non-Muslim classmate asking why she dressed differently from the other Muslim girl in her grade. This question was asked in the presence of this other girl, though, leading to what Yusor describes as an "extremely awkward" situation for the two Muslims. "It's awkward for both of us 'cause, like, we like each other as friends, but when it comes to our religion, then it's kind of, like, we have differences in what we believe in and who we believe in

85

and so. . ." In her view, the non-Muslim Questioner should not have put Yusor and her Muslim friend in a position in which they would have to explain their relative religious beliefs (as reflected through their clothing choices), as these beliefs clashed strongly with one another. (Yusor is Dawoodi Bohra Shi'a; her friend was Sunni.) Having to verbalize one's strongly held beliefs in public in front of an individual who believed the opposite would have been like asking the girls to call one another's beliefs false. Yusor not only has to deal with the Questioner's lack of background knowledge on Islam in general, but also navigate how to respond to the Question without offending her friend. Ultimately, she answers the Question by saying she is not sure why they dress differently (a lie): "So I just said, um, whatever, I don't know; I think we just kind of believe different things or something."

Although some girls utilized an enhancement whatevering technique and others minimizing, there was not always a clear distinction between the two. The same girl could employ an enhancing mechanism in one context, and a minimizing in another. If it was in an environment she was comfortable in and enthusiastic about—a favorite class, for example—the enhancing technique would be triggered, whereas if she was in an environment where the presence of other risks might be higher—people she did not know or a new school—the minimizing technique might be opted for. Importantly, the girls are aware of the context they employ their strategies in and switch back and forth as necessary, even if they are not consciously aware of the strategies themselves.

II.   Sameness of "Things and Stuff:" Finding Support in Like Peers

Perhaps the most significant protective factor that emerges both directly and indirectly from the social risk factors the girls face at school is the Muslim or "Masjid" friend group mentioned earlier. While the separation of friend groups is in one way a manifestation of the risk

of the divisive nature of the clash of cultures the girls face, the particular friend groups the girls have at their masjids end up becoming a source of social support as well. In fact, these friend circles end up becoming the primary source of social support, as the girls turn to them for not only advice on fashion and boys as many heterosexual adolescent girls might, but also for advice on how to deal with Questions, what the first day at school in a hijab might be like, and how to convince parents that going to a movie after dark should not be considered particularly dangerous or strange behavior for girls. Only one girl out of the twenty-two I spoke with said she felt closer to her school friends than her masjid friends as she saw her school friends more often and felt she had more in common with them. The remaining majority of the girls, however, declared themselves to be closer to their masjid friends, even if they had friends they considered very close at school. The reason for this? "'Cause, like, all of us go through the same thing, you know? We just get each other" (Nooriyah).

In each girl's meaning making process, realizing that other girls at Masjid were experiencing the same situations they were facing both at School and Home was a pivotal moment of being okay with *not* being considered entirely "okay" by the systems they were working under. However, girls grew closer to their Masjid friends (all-girl groups) gradually; it was not a relationship they worked on actively or consciously. In fact, creating friend alliances at Masjid is not entirely different from creating friend alliances in high school—girls judge each others' clothing, reputation matters, and defined cliques are not uncommon. Certainly personalities and common interests are taken into account when choosing friends at Masjid, but there can be another degree of differentiation as well: whether or not the girl wears hijab outside of Masjid. Because common experiences outside of the Masjid context are what initially make the friend groups adhere, a girl who does not wear hijab could potentially have very different

experiences at school. Though knowing their Masjid friends for lengthy periods of time was a factor—many said they at least knew of each other since early childhood—it was sharing stories about School or Home that drew the groups of friends at Masjid together into concentrated social supports.

While Home stories were shared, the girls said they usually talked more about School and Masjid itself. Whether it was because they wanted to show their parents respect or because they actually just were not stressed out much by their Home experiences, the majority of the girls did not use their Masjid friend support system as a protective factor to deal with their Home issues; no perceived risk meant no need to look for a protective factor. It was frustrations with stereotyping or Question episodes that had occurred at School that brought the Masjid friend groups into existence. The girls remembered making casual comments about School issues to other girls at Masjid without expecting any particular response. It was when their comments and stories were greeted by, "'Oh my god; me, *too*!'" that the girls began to realize that their experiences were not as isolated as they had originally believed. These initial comments snowballed into an increasingly intimate detailing of experiences and emotions in non-Muslim contexts between the girls, ultimately leading them to become empathetic listeners and advisors. Additionally, girls often dealt with negative stereotyping or Question experiences by laughing at them together and dismissing the person who may have made the offending remark as unintelligent and ignorant. While this may not be the most active, direct way of dealing with the risks they face, it does provide at least a private opportunity to reverse the Us-Them/Insider-Outsider dynamic. Through commiseration, humor, or both, the girls' Masjid friends provide her with a group of peers who are truly to similar to her and who she can be herself around, whatever "self" that might be.

Even though most of the girls expressed having strong, close relationships with their

School friends, they expressed a certain barrier due to cultural differences and a lack of

understanding that ultimately circled back to the role of Questions. Typically, the girls did not

mind answering Questions that came from School friends, as they understood them to be

genuine. In fact, many were quite proud of the fact that their friends at school now knew the

appropriate term for the particular hijab style they wore instead of just calling it an "outfit" or a

"dress." However, even the most confident, extroverted of the girls seemed to hit a wall at a

certain point with their School friends, casually leaving out details when answering questions

about religion or mildly censoring their own behavior so as not to make others uncomfortable or

be perceived in a negative way; note Farida's earlier self-declared black sheep dynamic. Whether

this wall is necessary to erect with School friends, I cannot say. What I do assert is that as a

result of the risks the girls already experience in the School/non-Muslim environment, the

association of School friends with that environment is enough to cause them to be careful, as

losing the social support *within* the School context would also be a considerable risk. Regardless

of whether or not the self-censoring precautions are necessary, the distance that results from

them between the girls and their School friends is another factor that allows for Muslim friends

to become a more stable support group. Furthermore, because the girls cannot participate in

many of the same socializing activities that School friends often engage in, they are left with

each other to "throw on [their] pajamas" and "watch Netflix."

Eighteen out of the twenty girls who said they were closer to their Masjid friends than

their school friends cited the same, often in uncannily verbatim language: "It's easier to have

Muslim friends because, like, I know she won't be judgmental or, like, I won't have to explain

things to her" (Zainab). The two key words in Zainab's explanation are "judgmental" and

"explain." The former is easy enough to tackle at this point—the stereotype risks coupled with an adolescent environment leaves plenty of opportunities for (mis)judgment. The latter word, though, is significant in a less obvious way. The idea of "explaining things" is directly related to Questions, and the task of doing the explaining was often seen as burdensome and just plain "annoying" (Nemah). Even girls like Maryam, Fatema, and Zainab who embraced enhancement whatevering and actively engaged in discussing their religions at School said they felt closer to their Masjid friends because there was "less explaining" to do and fewer obstacles to maneuver around. Again, while many girls said they liked it when their School friends asked them Questions because it gave them an opportunity to correct misconceptions, the bottom (perhaps unconscious) line remained that School friends *asked* Questions. The beauty of Masjid friends lay in the fact they already knew all the answers.

III.   Little Miss Smarty Hijab: Why Smartness Is Important

Although Masjid boys are a potential threat for the girls in the context of the reputation risk, there might be an indirect advantage built into the differentiation between School and Masjid boys: Because the girls do not view School boys as potential partners, they are not potential threats, either. This results in a reduced net stress for the girls in the School context, providing the indirect advantage and emphasis on "smartness" that became a theme for some of the girls. At a time when a typical American teenage girl might be highly sensitive to her appearance and attractiveness to the opposite sex, the girls I spoke with tended to communicate a relaxed—indifferent, even—attitude toward School boys. Of course, the girls *are* sensitive to their attractiveness to the opposite sex, but the confinement of these potential social interactions to the Masjid sphere frees the girls' cognitive and emotional energies while at school, allowing them to focus more on actual school work. More than being a realm of social activity, School is

interpreted to be literally what it is meant to be—a place reserved for learning. As Safia says with a mix of confusion and gentle mockery, "There are those kids at school who date, break up, date, break up--and then they go and date the best friend. It's kind of weird, but it's kind of entertaining to watch. They make such a big deal out of it." Because dating at school is off the table for the girls, they instead emphasize grades, making sure they are "smart enough," and trying to be the best in their class. Zainab casually mentioned how her magnet school was especially small and competitive, while Fatema self-reflected on how she "wasn't as smart" when she was in elementary school but has since presumably improved her academic performance. Sarrah also spoke of how she "studied all the time" and how her brother could benefit from actually picking up on a few of her habits. The girls see the major purpose and payoff of doing well in middle and high school as pretty straightforward: getting into college.

This emphasis on education and intelligence also moves over into the romantic relationship realm: While all of the girls were sure they wanted to earn at least their undergraduate degrees— many hope to attend graduate and professional schools—only some answered with a matched confidence when I asked them if they saw themselves getting married in the future as well. To push at the issue further, I asked what would happen if they found a person they wanted to marry, but that the potential husband requested she did not complete her degree. Farida said bluntly, "Yeah, I'd drop that guy." Admittedly, my feminist heart grinned secretly upon hearing this.

Battling fictional potential spouses in defense of their education may be easier than battling actual implicit cultural and family rules and norms, though. As we will see with the emerging adult cohort, decisions about where to attend college, what to major in, and how to plan one's professional activities and career goals are rarely defined simply by the question, "What do I

want to do?" for the girls. Parental residence, family and religious community guidance, and, yes, marital status and spousal support all factor into the girls' educational paths, complicating their decisions about their education in ways that they had perhaps not foreseen or wanted to acknowledge when in high school.

IV.   Being, Becoming, and Yet to Be: Emergent Identities

The combined effect of the girls' increasingly strong support systems in Masjid friends and the whatevering approaches lead to emergent identities that enhance threat-specific resilience through a heightened self-awareness. Whether or not a girl engaged mostly in enhancement or miminimizing whatevering, the end result was a sharpened sense of self as a Muslim girl in an American context. I believe this increased self-knowledge of one's place in the various spaces one occupies is a crucial step in the progress toward self-actualization and fulfilling one's potential by arming a person with an accurate sense of both the challenges she must overcome and the advantages she already possesses. The girls begin to realize the nuances of multiple sociocultural spaces, even if it is a forced realization through stereotypes and Questions. One particularly important nuance was a shifting sense of what it means to call one's self a Muslim or a girl. In the school context, all girls usually declared themselves to non-Muslims as "Muslim" out of a pragmatic convenience, regardless of which sect or branch of Islam they were members of. As we saw, this was not always the most convenient approach when two Muslim girls of different particular religions might run into one another in a Question context. However, it is exactly in these latter sorts of moments—when the context becomes predominantly Muslim or Masjid-oriented—that the stronger, more personal identifications with particular sects emerge. When Dawoodi Bohra girls talk to other Dawoodi Bohra girls, they see one another as *mumin*, not Muslim. When a Shi'a girl talks to a Sunni girl, it is the more meaningful particularities that

92

are used as self-descriptors. At School, being "just" Muslim allowed girls to reduce engagement with Questions if so desired, but also helped open the conversation to particularities by using a general label that most non-Muslims had at least heard of. At Masjid, being associated proudly with the particular religious community the girl was a member of allowed her a strengthened sense of community and support and a more thorough understanding of her own traditions of faith.

Another self-processing method the girls engaged in was actually an effort to maintain an identity at School rather than necessarily actively develop a new one when they transitioned into hijabs. This in and of itself was part of a process that began for the girls only around the time they started wearing hijab, though, so it is still arguably part of their emergent identities and understandings of themselves as Muslim teenage girls. The majority of the girls—seventeen of them—mentioned some form of "still [being] the same person" after they started wearing hijab. For some of the girls, this process began by preparing School friends for an upcoming change in appearance. Zainab, who started wearing a hijab in eighth grade, said, "In seventh grade, I had given them an idea, like, I was gonna be looking different and stuff." All girls who transitioned originally wore Western clothing to school, though it was usually long pants and loose tops. By talking to friends about upcoming changes in clothing in their states of pre-hijab "normalcy," the girls engaged in what I see as quite a sophisticated method of helping School friends—and, in turn, themselves—continue to see them as the individuals they are and to view the change in clothing for what it is—a change in clothing. Additionally, this method of preparing School friends helped reduce the number of Questions coming from the girls' inner circles. Even though Zainab's first day in a rida at school was "terrifying" and she felt "*everyone* was looking at [her],. . . all [her] friends came up to [her] and were like, 'Oh, Zainab! You look different, but

you're the same person."

The girls' emergent identities also included a less defined, more unstable aspect regarding dissonance with certain Islamic norms, though for most of them, this was only a vague part of their lives. Clashes with traditional gender norms were most salient with Sarrah as we saw, but the other girls were also aware of them, even if they did not have to deal with them directly. Farida's own positive relationship with her father is certainly an asset to her life, but her acknowledgement that other girls may not be so lucky shows she knows there may be certain gender and relational chasms in other Muslim girls' families. Zainab, too, mentioned in passing that she knows that ultimately she *has* to get married, even though she likely wants to out of choice anyway. Other underhanded comments such as Nooriyah's "I know that's how it is, but. . . " or Fatema's "That's sometimes how it is, but. . ." were included as tags in sentences describing differentiated gender situations (e..g, women being expected to be at home). At this stage in their identity processes, the dissonance the girls experience between their positions as girls in Islamic cultures and girls in American culture (which presumably allows for more individualistic choice than the former) is not severe; in fact, in their daily experiences, it may often be non-existent. At the same time, it is obvious that the girls are aware of certain aspects of Islamic culture that they may be uncomfortable with, and the only reason a higher level of dissonance does not exist is because they are still too young to have seriously experienced gender norms in family and work situations; namely, gender norms in marriage. Like the other facets of emergent identities I discussed above, dissonance could increase or decrease over time depending on what life situations the girls are faced with. For now, the identities the girls consciously and unconsciously form are sufficient tools for them to navigate their Spaces successfully.

Although the girls tended to talk about each space for relatively equal amounts of time, there were definite differences in emphasis between the girls. For some, School was a primary life focus, the goal being getting into a college they wanted to attend and consequently starting the careers they wanted. Home and Masjid in these cases were discussed, but with ties that usually led back to educational goals. For others, School was something they did during the day as an obligation but did not necessarily feel strongly about. For these girls, Home and Masjid often overlapped strongly, with School being a much more distinct life space than for the first group of girls. Finally, for a few, School and Home overlapped as point of focus, with Masjid being seen as an extracurricular space of sorts. The circle of emphasis the girl fell under helped shape the focus of her social support system and coping mechanisms, as they were often linked directly to that space; however, vulnerabilities usually arose out of all spaces. It is unclear whether coping mechanisms arose in particular spaces because those spaces were already the space of emphasis for the individual girl, or whether the girl herself ended up emphasizing a particular life space because she found social supports there and therefore was able to flourish more in that space. Furthermore, coping mechanisms were not always translatable from one space to another, especially since some risks were particular to certain spaces, and so multiple sets of coping methods were often being juggled at the same time. However, it does seem that there was one protective factor (and consequent coping mechanism) that almost all girls shared, despite which life space was emphasized: like-peer social supports from the Masjid space consisting of other Muslim American teenage girls.

Though the girls themselves have a surprisingly advanced understanding for their age of both the conflicts and parallels of the worldviews they are entrenched in, grappling with negative or judgmental reactions from individuals largely entrenched in only one or the other actually

pushed them to develop their emergent identities as definitively American *and* Muslim. In some ways, the stronger the cultural prejudices the girls faced within each respective space, the more defined the judged aspect of their identities became. For example, if a girl was called too independent (i.e., American) at home, this increased the salience of this aspect within herself and therefore made it a stronger part of her identity. The more common occurrence of prejudice, though, was in non-Muslim spaces, leading to an almost forced and much more frequent self-declaration of identity as Muslim through explanation and answering questions. Consequently, even though the girls may identify generally as "Muslim American," I believe the balance is slightly skewed in favor of the first descriptor rather than the second. If their identities are actually *reactive* identities, and there are more events to react to and defend against in non-Muslim/school spaces, the girls have simply had more opportunity to think of themselves as Muslim rather than American, especially if their home environment also encourages a Muslim self-identity. The positive reinforcement at Home coupled with the negative reinforcement at School could explain why only roughly half marked themselves as "American girls" on the questionnaires, why their School friends are their "American" friends, and why at this point, being Muslim is what is "*really* real" in their lives.

Chapter 3: Being While Becoming: Emerging Adulthood

While emerging adulthood is a relatively new field of study as the age group has only recently begun to be studied as a unique development period, there are some established factors regarding this life period that scholars agree on. First, it is a life stage that falls between adolescence, a stage in which the individual is clearly still seen as a child, and adulthood, a stage in which the individual is expected to be entirely self-sufficient and independent. Decisions and life changes made during this time often permanently affect the life trajectory of an individual and finalize their identity development. Secondly, the age cohort tends to fall roughly in their twenties, spanning anywhere between 18-29 years. Finally, emerging adulthood, as of now, is a specifically American (and possibly Western) phenomenon as it focuses on certain life transitions, such as college, that are particular to a mainstream American lifestyle. Additionally, all research that has been conducted on emerging adulthood has only been done within the U.S. (Arnett 2000; 2007).

Some argue that the trend in recent years of emerging adults returning to live with parents after college may not be as harmful to the development of independence as initially thought (Settersten & Ray 2010). Before the developmental focus on emerging adulthood, it was expected that an American individual would somewhat permanently move out of her parental home when she left for college. It was assumed she would get a job and likely get married shortly after college graduation. In short, she was an adult. However, due to economic and social factors, this is no longer the case for most Americans, as marriage is delayed and job opportunities must be waited upon. Traditional societal age brackets are being broken as emerging adults are now taking longer to launch into more permanent life decisions. Overall, this trend has shown no significant negative consequences; in fact, there might be some unexpected

benefits in delaying serious life decisions as it allows an individual more time to establish their own identity and decide what and whom makes them happy.

However, most of this research has been conducted without much consideration of cultural factors, especially factors that affect multicultural or minority Americans. Minority stress complicates "normal" American life transitions as minority adolescents moving into emerging adulthood begin to realize the differences they felt as teenagers from their White peers might be reflective of deeper societal structures that induce acculturative, race, and gender-related stress. For young minority women in America, race and gender stress are doubly amplified (Miller 2008). Not only do minorities have to battle perceptions of themselves the majority holds, but they also face challenges within their minority cultures that might inhibit or stunt their development as individuals. It is not surprising, then, that minority Americans may not cleanly follow what has been presented as typical life stage transitions within developmental literature (Pittman et al 2017); certainly, the women in this study do not. The idea of "leaving" for college is a specifically mainstream American idea, for example, one that most of the participants did not experience. Additionally, the Muslim women in this study are actually encouraged *not* to become too independent by their home cultures, even if they want to be, making the conundrum of living at home and wanting one's own space much more complicated. Finally, the marriage age for Muslim American women remains stunted, maintaining the same early-twenties expectation that mid-century America used to encourage.

As of now, one term that has been used to describe minority development has been "delayed maturation" (Pittman et al 2017); however, this is simply inaccurate. We cannot measure the development of minorities using the measurements of a majority. We cannot even use the development of one minority group to measure another minority group, as the

developmental risks Muslim American women face are specific to their cultural situation at the epicenter of being Muslims, Americans, *and* women. In some ways, Muslim American women must mature faster than the majority of their American peers as they are expected to marry younger. At the same time, they might be considered to mature as individuals more slowly as they are not intentionally permitted time by their minority culture to reflect on who they might want to become, professionally and otherwise. The underlying question becomes one of cultural priorities and definitions of adult success: What does it mean to be a successful adult woman in one's society? Inconveniently for Muslim American women, the definitions differ between their American and Islamic cultures.

AT SECOND GLANCE: AN OVERVIEW

Like the treatment of the adolescent sample, the analysis of the emerging adult sample is also done based heavily on the qualitative aspect of the interviews; the questionnaires were used as a way to organize demographic information about the women as well as serve as an initial introduction to their lives. I also looked for any points of interest between the questionnaires and the interviews; namely, any contradictions, vague answers, or emphasis through consistency, focusing especially on potential moments of attitudinal fallacy (as defined by Jerolmack and Khan 2014). While the interview itself is a verbal account of self-reported behavior, it allows for much more probing than the self-report presented within a questionnaire. Furthermore, because the interview mostly asks about past experiences, the question of erroneously inferring situated behavior from a participant's verbal account is largely eradicated as the behavior has already been performed. While a participant's memory of her behavior in any particular situation might be erroneous in and of itself, this error itself is currently moot as it is precisely the inward experience and perception of the participants that this study is aiming to explore. Accuracy in

this regard is simply what is experientially accurate to the participant.

Many of the questions asked of the adolescent cohort were asked of the emerging adult cohort as well to maintain consistency regarding research themes, but they were altered to fit the life circumstances of emerging adults (e.g., asking about friends on campus or at work versus asking about friends at school.) A notable research difference between the adolescent and emerging adult questionnaires, though, is the Likert scale itself, as the emerging adult cohort responded using a 6-point scale and the adolescents, a 7-point scale. The 6-point scale was used in order to encourage participants to give more directional answers rather than fall in the middle; this method had regrettably not been implemented in the first part of research that had focused on adolescents. For the emerging adult questionnaire, "1" represented "I agree completely" and "6" represented, "I do not agree at all." In addition to the Likert scale questions, the emerging adult cohort also had short answer questions to complete, just as the adolescent cohort. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix D.

When examining the questionnaires as a group, it is most useful to examine which Likert responses were most common and which least unified; the entire body of results can be found in Appendix D. One of the most unilaterally agreed upon statements from the Likert scale questions was, "My religion plays an important role when I am making life decisions," with 16 of the 24 women (67%) choosing "1" or "I completely agree." The only statement that was even less contested between the survey responses was, "I plan or planned on working after college/graduate school." Almost every single participant chose "1;" the one who did not chose "2" instead, an answer that still heavily weighs toward an affirmative response to the statement. Even though the responses were almost evenly split between "5" and "6" on the statement "I do not consider myself an active member of my religious community," when combined, it shows

that nearly 75% of the sample consider themselves extremely or relatively active members of their religious communities.

The disparities between some of the remaining prompt responses reflects the varied perceptions and experiences of the individuals interviewed in this study, a fact of simply talking with a cohort older than the adolescent group. For example, a roughly evenly distributed variation in responses can be found regarding the following statements:

- "I think about my religion frequently when I am at work/on campus."
- "I consider myself very American."
- "I feel comfortable being myself around people from my religious community."
- "Marriage is an important step in becoming an adult."

As a reminder, within the adolescent cohort, responses were most varied in response to the prompt, "I think of myself as an American girl," as only about half of the girls agreed to any degree with the statement. The emerging adult (EA) counterpart to the adolescent statement is "I consider myself very American." However, even though the EA response is also varied to this statement, the variation tends to swing towards the positive, with the majority of women falling into the "3" or below category; only three participants chose either a "4" or a "5." This shift towards viewing one's self as American was also seen in the longitudinal participants. In *Table 6*, we can see how three out of five swing one degree stronger in their identification as "American." (The difference of 1 scale point between the questionnaires should be noted when looking at the longitudinal responses. However, there is only one midpoint "3" and no "6"s or "7"s, making the comparison more viable.)

Table 9. LONGITUDINAL PARTICIPANTS' SELF PERCEPTIONS OF "AMERICANNESS"

	Adolescent questionnaire	Emerging Adult questionnaire
Zainab	2	1
Farida	1	1
Sarrah	2	2
Rashida	3	2
Ayaala	2	1

In my analysis, this self-reported swing towards Americanness will prove to become a point of stress for some of the women as an inevitable tension arises between being "very American" and allowing "religion [to play] an important role when. . . making life decisions." Ultimately, through those life decisions, Muslim-ness gains a perhaps unintentional priority over Americanness.

Because most participants value their religion and religious communities, the differences in response to some of the life experiences mentioned in the questionnaire open up an avenue for analyzing how their religious communities might affect their individual development differently. At the same time, participants' increased presence in adult American spaces due to choice rather than obligation (getting a job one applied for versus going to a high school chosen by parents or district) affects how they view their place in American society. *Tables 7-12* below outlines the major themes that arose from the interviews as a result of these multiple changing life factors. The themes have been organized according to PVEST (see Chapter 1) just as they were with the adolescent cohort, categorizing them as either risks or protective factors and coping mechanisms.

Table 10. RISK FACTORS: Group Overlaps

Sexism/gender bias	Minority woman bias
69%	65%

Table 11. REDUCED RISKS: Group Non-overlaps

No alcohol	Hijab as perceived protection from sexual assault
92%	27%

Table 12. MARRIAGE

As protective factor—freedom, social support	As risk—unmarried/divorced	As risk—homosexual	As risk—marital abuse
88%	35%	3%	12%

Table 13. EDUCATION

As protective factor	As risk
85%	88%

Table 14. ADDITIONAL RISKS: Group-specific

Loss of Muslim social support	Islamophobic harassment
23%	15%

Table 15. ADDITIONAL COPING MECHANISMS/PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Therapy/professional assistance	Goal-oriented focus	Authenticity
12%	50%	54%

Even though a woman might experience a particular risk and its paired coping mechanism, it does not mean the risk has been quashed permanently. Rather, it reflects an ongoing psycho-social process in which she implements what she has found to be the most effective way to deal with the challenge. Because this particular method might have proven to be effective over time, from adolescence into emerging adulthood, it slowly becomes a part of her psyche and identity itself. Additionally, the same woman might implement different coping mechanisms or call on different protective factors in different contexts, or use multiple coping mechanisms to deal with one risk. I emphasize that all participants in this study are individuals with agency, and the human element cannot be disregarded when analyzing their behavior and responses to others' behavior. Accordingly, even though the above tables do reflect a largely accurate picture of the participants within this study, it is possible that contradictions in behavior and statements can be found even within a single participant's interview.

RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

As adolescent Muslim girls enter emerging adulthood, developmental risks and protective factors get progressively muddled; one can increasingly become the other depending on a smaller number of factors. This can both reduce or increase overall vulnerability to a stunted or suppressed identity depending on which direction a factor moves in (risk or protective factor). In

general, a typical American Muslim woman adheres to her expected life path and therefore does have a lowered vulnerability to developmental risks by increasing her protective factors through social support systems. Adherence to Islamic social norms begin to have more serious long-term consequences during emerging adulthood, so the rejection of one social norm might result in a single but heavy socio-cultural lesson. At the same time, observing those social norms allows one more flexibility and privacy to live one's life. These parameters are not so different from most other cultural groups and do not present as risks within monolithic cultures; it is the fact of having to navigate two monolithic cultures simultaneously that creates the friction.

Similar to the adolescent cohort, the emerging adult cohort of Muslim American women share group overlaps, and with those overlaps, shared risks. With age, though, Muslim women seem to move away from other groups and expand into their own specific circle, resulting in fewer overlaps during emerging adulthood than in adolescence. One overlapping risk that is shared with American women in general is sexism and gender bias in the workplace. This risk is exacerbated for women of color, the second group overlap for Muslim women. However, other risks that American emerging adult women face may not be as high for Muslim women due to Islamic cultural circumstances. Alcohol-related risks such as drunk driving, alcohol poisoning, and an increased chance of sexual assault are inevitably reduced as the majority of Muslim women do not drink and avoid places that serve alcohol.

Two main risks that are specific to Muslim American women that can also actively transform into protective factors for American Muslim emerging adult women are education and marriage. If socio-cultural rules are followed in the pursuit of both of these, these risks cum protective factors end up serving as positive buttresses to one's unified identity. If not, they can result in fractured identities and feelings of incompleteness and rejection. However, in general,

the risk of having a permanently fractured identity through divided life spaces is reduced from adolescence to emerging adulthood through the coping mechanism of prioritizing one's own authenticity over socio-cultural contexts and by increasing focus on one's own goals, be they professional, familial, or otherwise. Furthermore, in general, the risk of Islamophobia and the Muslim womanhood stereotype is reduced, though the fewer embodied instances of these risks are much more severe than those found in adolescence (i.e., Islamophobic sexual and physical harassment), leading to higher psychological and emotional vulnerability. An additional risk that a minority of AMEA women face is loss of Muslim social support due to socially unconventional life paths. A coping mechanism that is embraced by some emerging adult women to deal with a variety of risks ranging from harassment to marital dissonance to questions of identity and authenticity is professional therapy. The stigma of obtaining mental help still runs high in Islamic cultures, though, so even therapy must be attended with discretion as it could become a potential risk if family members discovered it.

The general cultural trend from adolescence carries over into emerging adulthood, with Muslim women weighing their Islamic cultures slightly more heavily in importance than their American ones. The cultural pendulum swings even further into Muslim culture through life commitments such as marriage that are made during this period. However, as we will see, this pull is a self-fulfilling prophecy for those who follow the expected life trajectory for a Muslim American woman; those who do not remain in an open state of questioning, wondering which culture they might feel more at home in, testing their resilience in the face of unstable social supports.

I.   The (sort of, kind of) All-American Woman

American Muslim emerging adult women (or AMEA women, henceforth in this chapter)

deal with many of the same developmental risks as most American EA women. They must make

decisions on college, begin to create their own independent daily and weekly schedules, and start

thinking seriously about what direction they want their lives and identities to move in personally

and professionally, all of which occur concurrently with an increased vulnerability to depression,

particular types of risk behaviors including suicide, and other maladaptive coping strategies

(Arnett 2000, 2007; Lane et al 2017). "It is normative for emerging adults in industrialized

nations to graduate high school, attain residential independence, enter and leave college, form

and negotiate intimate relationships, and begin career life" (Lane et al 2017). These new

transitions often hold lasting implications for life trajectories and quality of life, and at the same

time, cause heightened amounts of psychological distress by interrupting life roles (Lane et al

2017). While in some ways these new facets of life are similar for young American men and

women, American women face particular challenges moving into adult spaces that men do not.

Furthermore, AMEA women's positionality as ethnic and religious minorities and as second-

generation Americans further complicate what kind of life transitions they face, how they deal

with them, and when they occur.

Gender biases in academic and professional environments place American women in a more

vulnerable position than American men, often channeling women into particular areas or fields

by default or making it more challenging for women to be successful in certain roles. Women are

often dissuaded or discouraged from pursuing majors and careers in fields dominated by men and

are usually interrupted more when speaking than their male counterparts in both classrooms and

offices despite often having equal amounts of experience as men or outperforming them all together (Berdahl & Moore 2006). The gender bias regarding professional aggression has become common knowledge in feminist circles, with a man being seen as "ambitious" while a woman is seen as "bitchy." Additionally, classroom and workplace harassment, sexual and nonsexual, leaves women more vulnerable than men, causing psychological emotional, and sometimes even physical distress (Berdahl & Moore 2006; Crothers et al 2009). As American women move through their twenties and enter committed relationships, considerations of pregnancy, motherhood, and the stigmatization of flexible work or lack of adequate maternity leave put them at risk for not advancing in their careers; or dropping them altogether (Stone & Hernandez 2013).

Because AMEA women are entrenched in at least two cultural contexts, both with strong expectations about what the next steps in life should be as they enter their twenties, the population does not necessarily respond to the challenges in the same way as the majority of American women do. These challenges, of course, are immediately more pronounced for minority women such as AMEA, with race, ethnicity, and gender overlapping to leave them in professional positions more vulnerable than majority men, majority women, and minority men (Berdahl and Moore 2006). Furthermore, "minority stress models (Meyer, 1995; Meyer, Schwartz, & Frost, 2008; Thoits, 1995) assert that stress stemming from racial group membership and discrimination (i.e., race-related stress) and stress stemming from intercultural contact (i.e., acculturative stress) are uniquely relevant stressors that contribute individually and collectively to the stress experiences of minority populations—above those stresses experienced universally (i.e., general life stress)" (Pittman et al 2017). Unfortunately, many of the same challenges that were present during AMEA women's adolescent years continue to persist into

their emerging adulthood years, with experiences of being othered or seen as a token member of their academic or professional surroundings continuing. The stresses caused by these social interactions are often exacerbated at important life transition points such as going to college. Classifying "going to college" as an important life transition, though, is itself determined by the dominant culture. As we will see, oftentimes college is not that much of a transition for AMEA women as they continue living at home or maintain close contact with their parents.

Alternately, in some cases, AMEA women actually might have lowered vulnerabilities, even when compared to other minority women, to harmful experiences such as sexual assault and risks associated with drinking. The latter occurs simply because of a major tenet of Islam: no alcohol. Research shows that college-going emerging adults between the ages of 18-24 consume more alcohol than any other age group (Pittman et al 2017). This increased risk is partially explained by the stressors of moving away from home and the transition into a more independent lifestyle (Stone & Catalano 2012). (Of course, alcohol only becomes a risk when consumed in excess or because of the behaviors that might follow as a result of consumption.) Because alcohol is forbidden for Muslims, though, AMEA women often do not go to bars, clubs, or parties where risks of alcohol poisoning or consuming illegal or harmful drugs might be present, and they also thereby avoid drunk driving. At the same time, they often do not deal with the stress of moving away from home—even if they want to—and so both do not have the opportunity to consume alcohol nor the stress that might sometimes induce the "need" for a drink.

One major risk specific to American women in college is sexual assault. Although men also are at risk for sexual violence, especially queer or gay men, the proportion of women who report sexual attacks is much higher (nsvrc.org. 2015; womenshealth.gov 2017). Because about half of

attempted rapes and instances of sexual assault begin at college parties where alcohol and drugs are central to the socialization (Abbey 2002), AMEA women automatically have lowered risk for at least these types of assault as all the participants reported avoiding spaces where alcohol was served. Furthermore, within the context of American culture, those participants who observe hijab or modest dress (long-sleeved, long skirts or pants) report non-Muslim American men "just know not to mess with them" (interview). While women's dress should not be responsible for controlling male behavior towards them and in many instances is not—rape, assault, and abuse levels run just as high as the U.S. in conservative Muslim countries where women are constantly covered—there is merit to the idea of modest dressing removing one from the sexual arena. Be it due to the confusion or exoticism of the hijab, or perhaps to the sheer lack of exposure of women's secondary sex characteristics, the exclusion created by the physical differentiation of some AMEA women can reduce their risk of being sexually assaulted; a few women bluntly stated this perception as fact.

Of course, it should be noted that if AMEA women's parameters of self-presentation are measured against entirely different physical exposure levels, they may experience something that might be qualified as a sheer physical assault within an American context—a scarf being pulled off a head—as inherently sexual due to the purpose of the scarf. Because the scarf symbolizes an ethos of privatized sexuality, reserved for the woman herself and the people she chooses to reveal herself in front of, having the garment forcefully removed in public becomes both a physical and sexual trauma (Kahf 2009). Additionally, as we will see below, Islamophobia-based sexual harassment occurs specifically *because* of hijab, so in a few cases hijab encourages sexual assault. Finally, just because AMEA women may not be seen as sexual targets as frequently as the majority of American women within American college and workplace cultures, it does not

109

mean they do not experience sexual assault within their Muslim cultures. Intimate partner violence and abuse affects millions of American women each year (womenshealth.gov), and 8 out of 10 times, the victim knows the perpetrator (Miller et al 1996). Because AMEA women usually only have a single intimate relationship through marriage, they are more susceptible to not being able to escape or recognize it. Sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes in the U.S., and to date, there has been little research specifically documenting how Muslim survivors are navigating experiences of assault. Even if AMEA women recognize their abusive experiences, cultural factors—both American *and* Islamic—encourage them to remain quiet. In addition to the personal repercussions reporting sexual abuse could have, Muslim survivors may also not want to bring additional negative attention to the Muslim community in the midst of pre-existing Islamophobic attention (HEART/MAWPF 2017).

In addition to facing risks that American women in general and minority women face, AMEA women also grapple with developmental risks that are specific to being second-generation bi- or multi-cultural women within the U.S. Similar to the persistence of the ethnic minority risks, the risk seen during adolescence of a rift between home and school or work cultures also persists to a degree into emerging adulthood. Because deference to elders is a perpetual value promoted by many Eastern cultures (Qin, Way, and Mukherjee, 2008; Qin, Way, and Rana, 2008), including the South Asian and Middle Eastern ones most of the participants have backgrounds in, it is not something an individual can outgrow. In a cross-cultural study of American emerging adults from Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White backgrounds, Asian individuals reported the highest levels of acculturative stress (Gomez, Miranda, &Polanco 2011). Just because an individual might go to college or get a job does not mean she automatically has the "right" to her own life decisions in the way mainstream American ideals preach. Rather, the

individual must make sure her decisions are in line with what her parents and community encourage, and she must be careful not to pursue job or educational opportunities that clash with those socio-religious norms. In the case of AMEA women, these often-unspoken norms are much stricter for women than men. In the instance that she does engage in a questionable life choice—for example, moving away from her parents' city and living alone in a different one—she must go to extreme lengths to ensure her parents and religious community know she still is an active member of that community. In short, each degree of freedom an AMEA woman might gain through college or work must be balanced with a heavy effort on her part to communicate a commitment to the socio-religious community—at least until marriage.

RISK/PROTECTIVE FACTORS: GROUP-SPECIFIC

II.   I Do (It All): Decisions to Marry

A. American Islamic Marriage versus American Marriage

> I married my husband right out of college. . . So I got married at 23 and he was 25. So even by today's standard, a pretty young age I would say to get married. And we were both pretty immature. You just kind of get thrown into responsibility and adulthood and then parenthood, and then it eventually takes a toll on you. (Fouzia)

The average marriage age for both women and men has increased steadily over the past few decades in the U.S., from 20 (women) and 22 (men) in 1960, to 23 and 26 in 1990, to finally about 27 and 29 today (Pew Research; pewsocialtrends.org). While research opinions are mixed on whether this is overall beneficial to traditional social structures such as family and parenthood, it is clear one population has benefitted from the delay: college-educated women (Hymowitz et al. 2013; Barkhorn 2013). Their incomes increase and they report more satisfaction and fulfillment in their marriages and careers (Barkhorn 2013). Women of Middle America—high school education completed with possibly some college—do not benefit from the

delayed marriage trend, though, due to a phenomenon called the Great Crossover: While the marriage age has increased for women in this demographic as well, the child-bearing age has not, pushing the latter before the former and resulting in less stable home and work lives (Hymowitz et al. 2013). Because all the women in this current study are (or purportedly will be if in the adolescent cohort) college-educated, though, they can be discussed within the context of those middle to upper class women who potentially benefit from delaying marriage.

Though most middle/upper class Americans expect to attend college, the social role of the institutional experience is notably different for AMEA women than it is for the majority of American women. "For [an] increasing proportion of young people who [attend] college, the college campus [becomes] the setting not only for education but for finding a mate (Arnett 2004);" this is only partially true for AMEA women. Similar to adolescent Muslim girls' relationship with middle and high school, college remains a place reserved largely for education for AMEA rather than romantic or social experimentation. If any experimentation of such sort outside of Muslim circles happens, women tend to protect these experiences with the highest levels of secrecy; certainly, none of the women in my study admitted to engaging in non-Muslim experimental romances. However, the specific settings of college MSAs do serve as a potential coupling ground for AMEA women and men in general. Blatant dating still almost never happens even in these settings, but a mutual friend or family member who knows the other person might be contacted to allow a more romantic—i.e., marital—interaction to officially begin.

While the absence of romance in high school may have served as a protective factor by lowering risk of distraction and emotional distress and increasing focus on academic success, by the time AMEA women are in college, relationship stress does become a part of their lives even

112

if it is not in the same manner as the majority of their American peers. In high school, Muslim girls know that marriage is something they will eventually have to deal with, but for the time being, they can concentrate on school. In college, they are left with no eventualities: they must deal with it in a very immediate sense due to the culturally time-sensitive nature of marriageable age.

The average age of marriage among the American Muslim women in this study is about 22.5 years. While there is no officially ordained age of marriage in Islam, most Islamic sects informally use phrases like "daughters of marriageable age." In religious theory, this could be any time after puberty; however, in reality, the rough window of "marriageable age" currently seems to fall between 20-25 years of age according to the participants. Most of the women I spoke with are getting married later than their own mothers but still not as late as their American peers.

Of course, these women's mothers were immigrants to the U.S. and American culture in general, so maternal marital ages are more appropriately linked to the mothers' home cultures of India, Pakistan, and the Middle East rather than to their daughters' experiences. Even so, because immigrant mothers—and fathers—carry their own cultural norms with them to their new homes and often do their best to instill those same values into their children (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006), young second-generation Muslim women's decisions to marry roughly at the end of their college careers in their early twenties can be seen as a compromise between Muslim and American cultures. Furthermore, although I did not interview the mothers themselves, the AMEA daughters told me there was often a sense of pride amongst "aunties" (i.e., older women within the religious communities) about how little they knew their husbands at the time of their marriages. One might boast to another about how on "Monday [we] met for an hour, and on

Tuesday, [we] married." Having experienced a marriage with blind commitment, these older female role models in the communities then might scold or judge AMEA women for not marrying sooner or "being too picky" if they continue to turn down potential suitors.

AMEA women obtain the coveted college degree—expected not only by normative middle class American culture (Arnett 2004) but also by their immigrant parents who moved to the U.S. usually for better educational and financial opportunities (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006)—but then also the coveted good Muslim husband. Just as they work hard through various courses and institutional hoops to get their undergraduate degrees, the women work hard over time to maintain their reputation as "good" marriageable Muslim women by performing various feminine Muslim acts that orient them toward family obligations, traditional marriage views, and daily engagement with religion. As we saw amongst the adolescent cohort, maintaining this reputation is intrinsically more challenging for young women than men as the former's behavior is judged more carefully and harshly than the latter's. To further this metaphor of "earning" marriage or working towards finding a suitable partner, imagine how a young college student might feel passionately about some aspects of their education—for example, advanced courses that speak to their professional calling—but then find other aspects cumbersome—required introductory literature courses that do not speak to their experiences at all. Similarly, these women find some aspects of the marriage process exciting, but others, simply a matter of jumping through cultural hoops.

I draw this comparison between education and marriage because, as we will see, the two often become intrinsically and quite messily linked. Furthermore, I want to emphasize that marrying young is a choice for the women just as much as going to college and picking a major might be a choice for the average young American. That is, there are often many outside factors

114

involved which arguably may not make it entirely their choice at all, but at the same time, the individual does view it as something they wish to do in order to advance to the next stage of her life. Finally, education and marriage can be compared in this way in the context of Muslim American women because obtaining degrees and spouses are both highly valued in terms of major life accomplishments. In mainstream American culture, "young adults have increasingly come to see marriage as a 'capstone' rather than a 'cornerstone'—that is, something they do after they have all their other ducks in a row, rather than a foundation for launching into adulthood and parenthood" (Hymowitz et al. 2013). This is *not* the case with young Muslim women. Even if they may feel the desire to listen to the tug of American marital delays within themselves, the pull of their Muslim cultures outweighs it. The institutional clout both life benchmarks (college and marriage) have makes it worthwhile for an individual within those institutions—the American college system and workplace, immigrant culture in general, and Muslim culture specifically—to follow through on those expectations for successful socially and culturally integrated lives.

Though marrying young has now become atypical in mainstream America, there are other minority religious groups in America that do possibly follow similar marital paths. There are some branches of conservative Protestant Christianity within the U.S. who observe atypical marriage practices; for example, purity balls where teenage daughters promise their virginities to their fathers until marriage (Frank, huffpost.com 2014). The Amish community maintains distinct gender cultures for its adherents, encouraging large families that are facilitated through young marriages (Hawley 2009). Pockets of support for political hopefuls like Courtland Sykes, a man who is staunchly anti-feminist and promotes traditional domestic wifehood/motherhood ideals, also show that not all of Christian America is on board with twenty-first century marriage

trends (Rosenberg, washingtonpost.com 2018). Finally, the Hassidic Jewish American community also promotes traditional marital gender roles, encouraging young people within the community to marry earlier rather than later (Fader 2009). I have noticed that most American communities that continue to promote younger marriages tend to spend more time discussing women's roles within the marriage rather than men's. This is likely the result of mainstream feminism and liberalism, which both present obvious threats to the traditional gender dynamic of a marriage.

However, even though other minority groups might encourage women to marry young or to make wifehood and motherhood major goals in their lives, a few major differences still exist between them and Muslim American women. First, the extreme views of some Christian groups are arguably not extreme since they do fall under the "Christian" umbrella, a religion the majority of Americans are most familiar with. Consequently, because the religious jargon used to describe their beliefs, as conservative or oppressive to women as they it be, still is not as psychologically shocking to the American psyche as a "foreign" religion's language to describe the same beliefs. For example, although the Amish may have at times been seen as a "curiosity" by mainstream American culture (Hawley 2009), they are certainly not seen as politically or culturally threatening in the contemporary U.S.. Secondly, groups like Amish women and Orthodox Jewish American women do not *wish* to integrate into mainstream American society the way Muslim American women (and men) do (Hawley 2009; Fader 2009). Because Amish and Jewish women are not trying to participate in liberal ideas of work and gender, patriarchal structures and conservative ideas of marriage do not hinder their ambitions in the way it might for a Muslim American woman who is trying to figure out what a modern Muslim woman looks like.

Finally, because the AMEA women in this study are second-generation members of immigrant cultures, the parental emphasis on sacrifice and improving one's life through taking advantage of American educational opportunities is more emphasized than in religious groups that have been in America for multiple generations. Children of immigrant parents are well aware of the advantages they have over their cousins on the opposite side of the globe. Furthermore, these women are members of a politically exoticized immigrant community practicing a religion that has often been criticized for its treatment of women (Kahf 2008). Accordingly, it almost becomes an American Islamic cultural requirement that a Muslim woman go to college to prove to the larger community—and perhaps to the Muslim community itself— that Islam is not against the education of women. Not only do these women become tokens of open-mindedness to mainstream American culture, but they sense they must prove something to their own communities as well. At the same time, the hushed pressures of marriage are definitively being whispered into their increasingly educated ears, pushing them towards a synchronized success of completing graduation and beginning marriage. There is little room for error here: It might be easiest if she had her bridal jewelry on under her graduation robes to seamlessly move from one ceremony to the next.

B. Reasons to Marry

1. Socio-religious acceptance

If it is such a delicate and stressful balance for women, why adhere to the idea of marriage at all? The most obvious answer is one we can all likely relate to: acceptance. Be it social or religious, public or private, the rush of relief committing to a partner has for AMEA women is undeniable. As many of the adolescent participants told me when I asked them why they saw themselves eventually getting married, "it's just something you do." When I pushed further to

ask them why, most often just shrugged and said they did not really know. Although American society also normalizes marriage as a major life step, because the girls seemed to only turn to Muslim society for serious romantic considerations, it is the Muslim norms that likely dominate their views of what, when, how, and why marriage should be.

Marriage in Islam is a communal affair. Not only are parents and family members involved, but the religious community at large. This is because marriage is seen as the only morally appropriate way to have sex, live with a member of the opposite gender, and raise a family; it is the main institution upon which Islamic society is constructed outward from. Sexual strictures are still to this day much harsher for women than men, with the latter being forgiven pre- and extra-marital sexual activity much more easily than the former (Platt 2017). If an AMEA woman therefore wants to experience a prolonged sexual or romantic relationship, the only socially safe and acceptable way to do so is marriage. While privately a Muslim American couple may not adhere to strict gender roles as described romantiby the women I spoke with, publicly, from the beginning of the marriage to the end, they do, placing women in the more traditionally passive, quieter role.

A sharp representative example that highlights the communal nature of Islamic marriage is how American and Muslim cultures conceptualize the idea of a proposal. While AMEA women might also daydream about a private moment on a beach at sunset with a man on his knee in front of them like the typical American woman, in reality, they know how the first step of commitment will proceed: A man or a family member of that man might see an AMEA woman whom they find suitable and attractive. The parents of this woman will then be contacted, who will then talk to the woman herself, asking her if she, too, is interested in the man. If yes, the man and woman might meet in public spaces a number of times to chat. After a short period of

time, the parents will ask their children if the "get-to-know-you" talks are going well. If so, the families reconvene and announce that all parties are willing and happy to proceed with the marriage.

Nadiah's experience through the process of the "talking" stage, as dating is often called, the proposal, and the decision to marry is typical of many of the women I spoke with. Now a pediatrician in Houston at the end of her twenties, she recounts how she and her husband met during her early college years when she was twenty years old:

> So we went to college together, and it was more of an arranged marriage than a love marriage. I'm sure he saw me at MSA. We were in a lot of extracurricular activities together, mostly religious. And so we had the same thing, we would hang out with the same sorts of people who did the same sorts of extracurricular activities. So I guess he came to know enough about my personality where he wanted to propose, so he proposed through a third party; my parents accepted. We really didn't have a courtship. We had one meeting where we got to ask each other a few questions, which looking back, they were super dumb. Looking back, now, if I was to get married now, I wouldn't. [I wouldn't get married now.] The thought is so terrifying; it's such a gamble. But it worked out for me because he was deeper than the answers to those questions [laugh].

When I asked her whether she suspected a proposal would come or whether it was a surprise, she responded:

> There are some very vivid, vivid moments, like when I knew he was going to propose because the third party actually invited us to a dinner. And I thought it was going to be a big dinner with a lot of families, but it ended up being only my family and his, and we didn't know each other, so it was obvious that it was a meet and greet between us. And I was super excited because I really, really liked him. I really admired him as a person. I thought he was just the ideal person I would want to marry, even though I knew very little—like you know very little about a person, right, compared to what I know about him now.

Right away, we see that the Islamic norm of marrying an individual due to their presumed character and upstanding religious devotion takes precedence over the American definitions of love and intimate knowledge of a person. In fact, she openly says she did not love him when she married him ("arranged marriage" versus "love marriage"). The blunt involvement and social

119

knowledge of family members about the background of a potential spouse holds more weight

than an individual's personal knowledge and interactions with that person. However, the

woman's feelings are usually considered as well, even if it is an arranged marriage as Nadiah

says. Similar to some arranged marriages in South Asia, the Middle East, or parts of Africa

(Pande, 2016; Allendorf and Pandian, 2016), in American Muslim arrangements, the woman is

usually clearly asked at some point during the proposal process whether she is happy. Of course,

because an AMEA woman is also taught to weigh parental happiness on an equivalent—or

sometimes greater—footing as her own, she might hesitate to frankly state her desires to her

parents, as Nadiah did:

> I was actually engaged to a cousin in high school, and I remember when my parents asked
> me about the engagement, I did not like that. I didn't want to, but I was shy. . .or almost felt
> like I couldn't say no. So I said yes. And the same was when my husband proposed. I was
> shy and I remember that after that meet and greet, you know, my mom just kind of casually
> said, "Oh, you know, your dad doesn't think it can work out. He doesn't think that our
> families will get along." Which is sort of silly because the real question is will the two young
> people get along? The families are kind of secondary or tertiary. And I remember feeling so
> sad because I liked him so much, but I didn't want to show it, that I was so happy that he
> proposed and I really, really wanted to get married—I don't know why!
>   Obviously, I did not have that informality with my father that I could go up to him and be
> like, Dad, I really like this guy. . . And he would have never, never even asked me, but I
> think later on, they [parents] accepted, and I asked my mom, "How did Abu change his
> mind?" And she said, "Oh, well he asked me, Does [Nadiah] like him?" And I told him,
> "Yes, she likes him a lot." So obviously, he was a caring, loving father, but some men are
> very reserved and formal, that they can't come down to talk to their daughter about these
> types of things. And I fortunately had a great relationship with my mom. She sort of was like
> an intermediary.

While technically getting proposed to by one's parents is admittedly not nearly as "romantic"

as a one-on-one "surprise proposal" after having dated for one or two years (interview), it is, as

most AMEA women told me, less stressful, more direct, and, in fact, actually preferred by some.

Of course, no AMEA woman would openly date in the American sense of the term anyway,

either to avoid *zina* for spiritual reasons or to prevent any rumors or disrespect that might be

accrued by the family. Furthermore, deciding to not date in the American fashion also invariably limits opportunities for potential non-Muslim romances. Not only would non-Muslim romances be disapproved of by family and the religious community, but the women themselves often do not want to engage in romantic non-Muslim relationships because of their own religious beliefs. Farah, a twenty-three year old marketing and communication researcher at a broker's firm in downtown Chicago, hints at the conflict between desire and religious belief, allowing the latter to triumph:

> So there's also this guy in undergrad, that we were super close. And it occurred to me more than once that if I wasn't Muslim, I totally would have dated him. But I didn't, because I was Muslim. And he recognized that I wouldn't have dated him, because I was Muslim. So yeah. I feel like I would have been more of a wild child almost. Like I, I feel like Islam almost tempered me a little bit, gives me a little bit more level headedness. I don't indulge my worst impulses because I'm like no, that's not the right thing to do.

The sentiment of marriage being "the right thing to do" according to Islam surfaced in many AMEA women's descriptions. Farah says that as she has entered her twenties and "gotten more faithful," she "understand[s] that [marriage] is. . . something that God does prescribe for us." Similarly, Alisha, a twenty-eight year old mother of three, says she still believes, as she did when she got married, that "the only form of relationship, what I believe as a Muslim, is to be married." In addition to the outward socio-religious acceptance marriage creates for an AMEA woman, then, there is also an inward religious acceptance the woman herself feels *toward* herself. Because AMEA women feel the desire and need for intimate love like anyone else but because they also adhere to particular religious beliefs about sexuality and social structures, marriage becomes an avenue for self-acceptance and self-love as well. Furthermore, AMEA women also find loopholes to enjoy romantic relationships before living together as husband and wife in ways which they themselves approve of morally, as Alisha describes:

So yeah, and then we got married. Well, we had the *nikah* done, so we weren't living with each other, but we were in a binding contract. So it's like a promise. And so then we actually really got to know each other, and that was a really nice time because it was kind of like, I guess the modern boyfriend-girlfriend relationship. So we were able to connect more before we had the stresses of living together.

As we saw in Nadiah's experience, the communal involvement in the marriage begins even before the marriage, at the very onset of the relationship as the initial meeting itself is orchestrated by third parties. Alisha also had a similar experience when she was twenty-one:

> We were introduced through family friends. It was kind of like a Downton Abbey type of set-up in a way, if you will. We were introduced, our parents exchanged information—we wanted to make sure that our families liked each other. It's kind of like a 50/50 thing, so parents liking him, liking his family, and then also to see if we were compatible. So what we did is we—there's like an online questionnaire of what to ask a potential Muslim spouse. So I literally just printed that [laughs], sent that link to him, and he sent that to me. So we answered these questions over email. And then we spoke on the phone, and it was a very organic conversation. And I had had suitors before, and it wasn't a very organic conversation, so that was kind of a sign. And then we visited his family in Chicago. And we spent some time—basically, there was no reason for me to say no. Everything was very comfortable. So I think it wasn't an arranged marriage, but it was kind of, I don't even know what to call it, but that's what it was. I just call it Downton Abbey-style.

By adhering to a "Downton-Abbey" style introduction, both AMEA women and their parents are on the same page about the "appropriateness" of the potential spouse; there are no surprises. Again, while marrying someone simply because "there [is[no reason to say no" may not be the most exciting approach to romance, it serves as a way to greatly reduce the risk of stress and familial conflict later on, protecting the AMEA woman from being torn between a "wrong" choice and her parents' happiness. And as Alisha emphasizes, from a "religious aspect," "there's a lot of reverence given to obeying. . . parents and just doing what they ask of us, in terms of serving them. And then also culturally, we want to be accepted by our parents. So after serving God, I would say that's the next, I guess, reason—not reason—but purpose, to make sure we're living a life that is acceptable to them."

    2. Gateway to freedom

Almost all the women in this study reported better relationships with their parents after marriage. A minority maintained positive relationships regardless of marital status or age, but those who did report a healthier parental bond inevitably cited the same trend: freedom from needing parental permission. The parental approval that occurs of the marriage seems to be the final emphatic act parents of AMEA women ordain over their daughters. After marriage, the daughter is told she is "starting her life," perhaps a surprising phrase within American culture. Of course, as an American, an AMEA woman has already started living her life as a student, a co-worker, a friend, an employee, or a professional. However, as a Muslim woman, she finally begins her life as an upstanding female member of her husband's family, as a potential mother, and as a dutiful wife. Parents recognize their job as complete, and they meddle less in their daughter's lives, ask fewer questions, and often wait until their daughter contacts them to talk rather than the other way around.

Whereas in American culture parents and children begin to see one another as peers at a particular age, i.e., during emerging adulthood and usually when the child begins college (Arnett 2004), in Muslim culture, peer-hood is determined by marital status for women. For sons, it is an entirely different ball game, as my participants with brothers told me: They "come and go as they please" beginning from their adolescent years, are expected to follow fewer rules, and are forgiven much more easily for any error of their ways. Because of concerns for reputation, chastity and virginity, and protecting the idea of being a "good Muslim girl," though, daughters are universally subjected to tighter rules of conduct that control who they speak to, where they go, and when they are allowed to participate. The most common term the women used to describe their parents' treatment of them was "overprotective." Really, this meant that nearly all

aspects of their lives required parental approval. This aspect of their lives carries forward from adolescence into emerging adulthood—that is, *until* marriage.

Because the majority of the AMEA women I interviewed were actually just on the cusp age of getting engaged or married, they could not necessarily provide the same retroactive insight into the effects and meta-reasons for getting married as the adult cohort could. As an example, two of the participants actually got engaged and married within six months of the interviews to men they met after I spoke with them. Accordingly, it is worthwhile to consider the recollections of Fouzia, 37, and Aarefa, 36, for a helpful and more stable look at why an AMEA woman might want to get married quickly. Furthermore, because the AMEA women in their early twenties are both still quite attached to their parents and are in the midst of their life transitions, they may have hesitated to share details with me that would have painted their parents in a negative light, or they simply may not have had enough distance from the stress of the experience to thoroughly process all the reasons why marriage might be important.

When I asked Fouzia, a native Houstonian and now a mother of three, if she would have liked to pursue an alternate career path to the IT job she recently started, she told me she feels she has "missed [her] calling in life." She somewhat despondently said she would have liked to go to law school, get a graduate degree in journalism, or work for an international non-profit organization. Because motherhood often does slow down American women's careers, I asked Fouzia if this was the case for her; she said,

> Actually, yeah, not so much because I got pregnant. I think it's more so because I got married. And I think that, because I come from a very traditional Pakistani family, it just wasn't. . . I remember asking my parents when I was seventeen if I could go to Egypt to study Arabic, and my dad said, "No, are you kidding? No, you can't do that. Maybe when you get married you can do that." So marriage, for me, was like a gateway, like, "Oh, maybe when I'll get married I'll do that." But then when you get married, other things take priority. It just wasn't in the cards.

Fouzia's path is unfortunately not very different from some of the other women I spoke to. While she had fantasized about her wedding day not because of the groom or the romance but because of the freedom it would have afforded her to explore her opportunities, her career, and herself, what ended up taking precedence was marital responsibilities and obligations to her husband's career. Even though her parents may no longer direct her behavior and now view her as a peer, she immediately had other social factors directing her behavior. While she may have an increased degree of autonomy over her whereabouts and behavior as a wife as opposed to as a daughter, ultimately, her husband's work and family life determined Fouzia's life after marriage; she went from one role to another, with neither one allowing personal space.

Another adult woman I spoke with, Arefa, had a much more positive experience with the promised freedom of marriage. When she was growing up, her parents would warn her that no Muslim husband would tolerate her liberal behavior or the types of things she wanted to do. However, after meeting and talking to her future husband as a young twenty-something woman and hearing him say, "That's silly; of course I would let you [do whatever you wanted]," she realized that marrying another young Muslim person was a potential avenue to becoming her truest self and exploring her maximum potential:

> It was marriage, not because I got married, but that marriage gave me the liberty to do whatever I wanted to do because I was no longer held prisoner to my parents' expectations or my parents' permissions. I was actually able to do whatever. I tell my husband all the time, like, "I'm sorry, if I was allowed to do things as a teenager and in my twenties, I probably would have settled down by now, but you know, I have to get all this stuff out of my system, whether traveling, or having different types of experiences." It's like, if I would have done this as a teenager or as an adolescent or as a twenty-year old. . . maybe I would have matured differently or faster or whatever it is, as opposed to having to wait until I'm married, to be able to do anything.

Arefa insightfully realizes that in a way, her maturation as an individual had been stunted by the systemic parental control of daughters. Now living alone with her husband away from both of

their families, she says, "The whole idea of permission is not even a concept in our relationship. Whereas everything I grew up around, it was like, "Oh, your husband has to let you do this, your husband has to let you do that; and our relationship's never been like that." Even so, Aarefa is acutely aware of how fortunate she is to have such a supportive and "American" partner. This recognition itself seems to be the exception that proves the rule: Marriage is often a gamble for AMEA women. As long as parental approval is present, the man is Muslim, and there is a general familiarity with his personality, they hold their breaths and hope for the best, looking to socio-religious beliefs as proof that they are "doing the right thing."

Marriage "validates" a woman in American Islamic culture in a way a man does not need to be. Socially, an adolescent boy becomes a young man who becomes an adult man—no questions asked. An adolescent girl, on the other hand, becomes a young woman but then socially remains so if she does not marry. She is trapped as someone's daughter rather than as an individual who exists in her own right. Perhaps this is because of the culturally encouraged view—both American and Islamic—of men being naturally prone to experience, sexual and otherwise, than women are (Jaggar 2008; Ilkkaracan, 2002), putting the latter in an "innocent" child state until official consummation of sexuality through marriage. This phenomenon is not a reflection of parental love as sons and daughters are loved equally; rather, parents would argue, it is *because* daughters are loved that they are "protected" until marriage. Because these daughters have come of age within both American and Muslim cultures, though, they are aware of their own mild infantilization but understand that it is temporary if they marry. "The freedom to do whatever the hell I want" (Sarrah, 20) is a sweet and long overdue potential reward for matrimony.

In this sense, marriage is both a risk and a protective factor: If a woman does not marry or engages in *zina* (non-marital sex punishable by stoning according to original Islamic law; original law no longer adhered to in most places), she will at best be looked down upon and pitied and at worst, shunned from the community, unwelcomed from mosque activities, and most painfully, judged by and cut off from her family. In Muslim American communities, all of these things often happen quietly and subtly as opposed to the flashier (and arguably more horrifying) news stories of honor killings in a minority of Islamic cultures in other parts of the world. Still, the psychological stress and emotional pain caused by such treatment—especially when and if the religious world has come to be seen as the primary authority or goal in one's life, over an American lifestyle and culture—can have repercussions that affect one's professional, physical, and spiritual well-being. At the same time, if a woman does marry at the appropriate age to an appropriate (i.e., Muslim) man, she is protected from this potential ostracization and judgement. She will likely always then maintain a grounded sense of connection and comfort with her Muslim community, keeping strong bonds with both individuals and the faith at large. Furthermore, if she "lucks out," as Nadiah says, her husband will be supportive, open-minded, and give her the space for a career if she chooses. If an AMEA woman has children, motherhood will initially offer another rung of acceptance into the community, though this, too, begins to get complicated as we will see in the adult cohort. Overall, however, if her life circumstances align with her life choices and result in a socio-religiously appropriate pairing, an AMEA woman can thrive happily.

III.   Education: From Protective Factor to Risk

As we learned from the adolescent cohort, "smartness" becomes an aspect of many of the young women's emerging identities due to the focus on learning and education at school.

Because most adolescent Muslim girls felt at least some degree of social and cultural distance from their school peers, school became a place to nurture only their minds rather than having an additional focus on relationships. This became a protective factor for the girls by allowing them to feel confident, find fulfilment, and achieve goals that their non-Muslim peers would also understand and relate to. Additionally, it also became a point of pride for their parents and religious circles, as excelling at school was an acceptable way for a young woman to be a part of American culture within the cultural purview of American Islam.

Limiting, controlling, and demanding suppression of any aspect of an individual's identity can cause obvious and considerable psychological distress for the individual. Because young Muslim American girls are taught to follow the rules (academic included), excel at school, and focus on knowledge, "smartness" not only *does* become a part of how they come to know themselves, but it becomes a rare point of identity pride that both their American and Islamic cultures understand and respect. However, as the young women move from adolescence to emerging adulthood to adulthood, what was a socio-religiously innocent protective factor becomes a potential threat to that same socio-religious view, transforming education into a developmental risk for AMEA women because of how Muslim female pursuit of it comes to be viewed. A part of their identity that was previously valued is now questioned and viewed as suspicious. When the women are younger—i.e., within the bracket of a "normal" college-age of 18-22 years—education manifests as a risk due to how parents and socio-religious beliefs limit *where* and occasionally w*hat* to pursue in college. When the individual gets older—around 25-30 years old—the *how much* becomes an issue: how much education is too much for a woman? This latter risk presents itself to both married and unmarried women, albeit for different reasons. If married, cultural eyebrows are raised due to a woman's divided attention, as she cannot fully

devote herself to her husband, family, and childbearing if she is simultaneously pursuing a degree; this is not dissimilar from the judgment American women in general receive for being working mothers (Hilbrecht et al, 2008). If unmarried, an AMEA woman is told a man does not appreciate it if a woman is smarter than him, and that she should perhaps consider educating herself in more domestic matters in order to attract a husband; this was the case with Sakuma.

A. *Graduate education: Issues of marriage, minorities, and mental health*

Currently 25 years old and in the second year of her PhD program at an elite university, Sakuma is a Chicago native who recently moved away from her parents and hometown for graduate school. Although she is only about four hours away by car, because she is unmarried and living on her own for "career" purposes, her values, beliefs, and worth as a South Asian Muslim woman have begun to be questioned by her home community. The metaphor I drew earlier in the chapter between educational success and marital success now both begins to make more sense but also becomes a bit more foreboding:

> Participant: Yeah, I feel like I've reconciled some of the Muslim and American pieces of higher education and getting married later in life, or like doing good for your community—I feel like [the latter] is a value in the Muslim community that I've taken on and want to live by. And in my experience, or my perception of South Asian culture, those three things are harder to reconcile. Of not being married, of pursuing higher education, of doing something good for the community—it's like, but why? It's a little too superficial for me. I feel like I always have to be looked at—I have to look a certain way, I have to act a certain way, I have to be feminine, whatever that means, and I'm just not into it.

> Interviewer: Yeah. And you feel like the South Asian aspect is pretty easily separable from the Muslim aspect?

> Participant: I do and I don't. I think some of the values do overlap, but in my head, I've separated them. I'm like, that's just a South Asian thing. And yeah, ideas about femininity and sexuality do exist in the dominant Muslim community the same way, but—I'm just going to hold on to the Muslim pieces that I like, that I aspire to, that fulfill my vision in life. It's easier for me to downplay some of the stuff that is similar between Muslim and South Asian because—it's just easier for me to hate on the South Asian piece than the

Muslim piece because I have embraced some of the Muslim piece. I'd probably have some sort of existential crisis if I also started questioning the Muslim piece.

Sakuma frankly depicts how she has devised her own psychological coping mechanism in response to the dissonance and rejection she feels from her socio-religious community due to her educational choices. By divorcing religion from culture—an approach other AMEA women also mentioned by portraying parents as "culturally conservative, not religiously conservative" (Aarefa)—Sakuma is able to at least temporarily reconcile her life pursuits with her religious beliefs. Even then, she is very self-aware that she is picking and choosing particular aspects of her religious identity that fit in with her educational identity.

Sakuma's experience in graduate education highlights another facet of how education can become a risk for AMEA women as well: being in a traditional, predominantly White educational setting as a POC woman and a religious minority. She says, "These race relation things that happen at school really do weigh on me. Or like at school, I don't talk about how difficult it is to navigate more than one culture, and how exhausting that is." As individuals progress through the American education system from high school to college to graduate school, they are expected to be more autonomous in the classroom, participate more actively and independently in discussions, question theoretical understandings, and be vocal about their unique insights into the fields they are studying (Bowen, 1996). Because with increased independence comes an increased public reflection and self-reflection of an individual's core identity, classroom interactions can potentially bear even greater weight for long-term identity formation than they did in high school. As adolescents, the girls are able to brush off racial microaggressions through "whatevering" or by focusing on their own "smartness" as part of their active emerging identities. As emerging adults who are closer to establishing finalized adult identities, though, dismissing social mistreatments becomes more difficult as the message of

being an Othered outsider begins to grow more permanent roots within their identities. Sakuma's voice cracked as she described her classmates' avoidance, misunderstanding, and lack of empathy in response to a question she posed about what it meant to be a professional in her field post-9/11 and as a woman of color. It took her courage to be vulnerable and ask such a political and pointed question as a minority within the class, putting herself on the spot in a way her classmates did not have to, and the lack of response felt silencing and invalidating to her experience. She asked me not to quote the details of the story in my research for fear of further sabotaging her position amongst her colleagues.

When her contribution to the discussion was essentially rejected, Sakuma was disheartened, disillusioned, and disturbed. Even though she believes "there is not enough representation" of Muslim/South Asian women's stories at her school and in her field, she no longer wishes to be the one superficial token spokesperson for the experience. "They just live in their own microcosms. . . I'm one person, and I can tell them my story—which is risky, by the way, so I've stopped doing that." The "risk" she refers to is that of overexposing one's identity for the sake of others who likely will not understand and who will receive her explanation as a distanced show rather than an immediate reality; in short, she is not taken seriously as a professional peer.

This lack of meaningful response and understanding is a ripened version of the "not getting it" adolescent Muslim girls referred to in their School friends, but adolescent girls, of course, turned to other Muslim girls for social support and identity confirmations. Sakuma cannot turn to her Muslim circles for social support in the way adolescent girls do because more than her graduate work, her domestic work is what is now socially seen as part of her core identity:

> This has happened to me at a family party: "[Sakuma], how's school going?" And you know, I mentioned this earlier: I have to censor how I respond to these things. I could have just said, "School's fine." And then talked about some domestic thing that will make her feel better about her life. "School's fine! And I'm learning how to cook!" "Oh, that's great,

you're such a good person because you're learning how to cook now." But no, I didn't do that. I stupidly said, "School is a little stressful right now." And then maybe I made a self-depreciating comment, or maybe she made a comment, like, "Oh, I can tell, because you have some acne." Oh, great, thank you. So I'm talking to you, I'm letting you into my life, I'm letting you know that school is stressful, and you're saying, "Yeah, I can tell, because you look like shit." I mean, who wants that?!

As an unmarried AMEA woman in her mid-twenties, not only does Sakuma not have the strong Muslim friendships of high school, but she also now views her interactions in the classroom as part of her professional identity due to the nature of graduate work. Consequently, a social/professional rejection in a graduate classroom becomes a rejection of one's core identity and experiences. Sakuma says, "Like, I could talk about that, but like, what's it really gonna do, right?"

Given this high psychological pressure and absence of solid support from both professional and socio-religious peers, it would not be surprising if an AMEA individual decided to give up on higher education altogether. Two protective factors that AMEA women like Sakuma tap into are reserving emotional and psychological strength for themselves in order to "live as authentically as possible" and an active and selective self-censorship. Recounting how she has spent many years explaining her multicultural experiences only to have them belittled (even before graduate school), Sakuma says, "It just seems very emotionally taxing for me to explain my identity instead of just being as kind and genuine as possible. If people want to go there with me, maybe I'll go there with them." While she remains open to engaging with others on both sides of the fence, she protects her emotional well-being by not revealing too much about herself and her thoughts. Sakuma also protects herself now through a practiced self-censorship, something she learned she had to do for her own peace of mind.

But I do feel like I censor myself a lot, and I censor myself based on the context that I'm in, or I perform based on the context that I'm in. So if I'm with South Asians, at a South Asian party, I have

to talk about my school work in a different way. Or I have to downplay some stuff with my family, who's like super religious because I just don't want to go there with them.

Similarly, she has simply accepted that "there's this big piece of [her] that [her colleagues] will never know," especially since she is "honestly now a little afraid to bring [it] into the room" at all. For now, AMEA women like Sakuma seem to be grinding their teeth and pushing forward with their educational pursuits, trying to keep their own definitions of themselves in mind instead of those given to them by others.

The older the AMEA woman, though, the more apparent and complex the risk these pursuits present become. Laila is a law student with an MPH who was previously in medical school for three years. In addition to the tensions Sakuma faces, Laila describes an additional aspect of her experience as a single, well-educated woman within the Muslim American community:

To be frank, I think most Muslim women in America are smarter than their spouses or partners, their cohorts in general. I think they're better educated, I think they're more critically thinking, I think they have more developed emotional mechanisms. So there's an inherent mismatch in kind of the way that our communities have stewarded the growth of these communities, which means that then when people are trying to look to each to get married, it's just kind of inappropriate, right? So I will look at men who are the same age as me, and they will be incredibly immature. They also adhere to gender norms that I really dislike. They'll be dismissive or they'll adhere to religious interpretations that I feel put women at a lower status or give them less autonomy in a relationship. And so that's been quite difficult for me to find someone who I thought, who I think is intelligent, has a sense of gender equity, and that I would be attracted to and want to spend time with.

Her case makes it apparent how an AMEA woman pursuing higher education is at risk in two ways. First, like Sakuma, Laila's immediate religious community also communicates overt suspicion of her to her parents by making comments that are clearly intended to pressure them

into pressuring *her* into changing her life path. The strong encouragement to get married first and then pursue personal professional goals is "entirely enforced by community. And so what happens for [Laila] is that [her] mother will look at other people who are [her] age, and then come back to [her] and start freaking out about the fact that [she's] not married." Denying an individual autonomy and withholding socio-religious respect until demands are met are obvious communal bullying methods meant to isolate and cause distress. Secondly, Laila highlights how she herself is dissatisfied with potential Muslim husbands because they are simply "not up to par." By becoming more educated than men in her age group, she has a harder time connecting with Muslim men, leaving her further and further away from the social acceptance and freedom that married AMEA women enjoy.

At the same time, Laila also acknowledges that women being more educated than men is a dynamic that "is true of the American population in general;" "*The Atlantic* keeps writing articles about how college-aged women are not finding that men who are their age are truly their peers." However, Muslim American women are in a tighter bind than the majority of American women due to marital restrictions: "It's this new dynamic that is a problem inside and outside of the Muslim community. But it's more difficult in the Muslim community because there's fewer people for us to marry, if you choose to marry within that faith, just by virtue of us being 1% of the population." Ultimately, the two-fold social isolation from her socio-religious community leaves Laila in a strange place, watching and "waiting for the other shoe to drop" as she focuses on law school and her career.

B. *Location, location, location*

AMEA women only get this far in social isolation *if* they push past the first level of risk associated with their education: control over where to pursue their education. While many

American emerging adults do not go out of state for college due to financial reasons, AMEA women most frequently do not go out of state—or even out of city—for socio-religious reasons. This trend holds in line with Dasgupta and DasGupta's (1996) research on the Indian American community, noting how "young men [are] expected to attend faraway competitive colleges, many of their female peers [are] encouraged by their parents to go to the local colleges so that they could live at or close to home" (Espiritu 2001, 431). Since the majority of the women I spoke with were of a South Asian background, their restricted movement for academia is reinforced by both Muslim and South Asian cultural expectations. Like many second generation groups, these women do want to be seen as authentic members of their cultural groups and so do feel pressure to adhere to those groups' rules and restrictions. At first glance, the location of an undergraduate institution may not seem that much of a restriction; however, it quickly becomes apparent that professional opportunities become limited and parental and/or familial involvement remains high due to this proximity (as intended).

Limiting choice of undergraduate institution through restricting movement away from home can end up being a serious developmental risk if the protective factors in place mutate into oppressive factors in the women's experiences. Like Fouzia, it is more likely that one's calling in life could be missed if the full spectrum of opportunity is not made available to an individual. This could cause stress, long-term unhappiness, and general dissatisfaction with not living an authentic life that does not tap into the potential and talents of an individual. Furthermore, if an AMEA woman does not marry, gets divorced, or has to support a family herself, not being able to network in different cities or companies can limit her job opportunities. Perhaps most importantly, because education and "smartness" was already a part of some adolescents' emerging identities oftentimes due explicitly to parental and community encouragement, having

those same sources of support now tell them to reel in their lines and not be everything they see themselves being can come as a confusing identity shock. Other minority cultural groups in the U.S. also share some of these same patterns of expectations from daughters, including the Filipino American community. In a remarkably parallel experience, second generation Filipinas are "push[ed]. . . to achieve academic excellence in high school" by parents who later "'pull the emergency brake' when [their daughters] contemplate college by expecting them to stay at home, even if it [means] going to a less competitive college" (Espiritu 2001, 431).

For AMEA women, because at first this message of controlling education is gentle, they are also able to tentatively adapt by making the best of the situation through religious rationalization that still allows them to fit into the American norm of "going to college." Although parents view keeping their daughters close as a protective factor for the girls that reduces their risk of being harassed, assaulted, or—their deepest fear—absorbed too deeply into the independence of American culture ("too Americanized"), the women themselves often accept their parents' and religious culture's rules as "just the way things are." As long as they still can go to *a* college, even if it is not their dream school, AMEA women usually submit to parental requests of staying at home or in the same city because they are still free and supported to study what they want to at that school. Basically, the mantra is: "You can study whatever you want to study, as long as you are close to us." This freedom I enough to counteract the lack of choice regarding residence and institution in AMEA women's minds.

While a few AMEA women say they wanted to go to the university or college in the same city as their parents, most bluntly say they "didn't really choose" but had the choice made for them as their parents simply were not comfortable with them leaving the city on their own. Bani, a 24-year-old who was ecstatic about snagging a new job in her field after earning her master's

degree in public health when I spoke with her, explains an experience common to many of my participants:

> So basically, my parents wanted me to stay close, in Houston, so I kind of had limited options. So from that, but I did visit the campus and I just honestly fell in love with it. I thought it was beautiful. I liked that it was near the Med Center 'cause I was interested in medicine. So. I mean, more [the university] made the choice when they accepted me. So I applied early decision, and because I was accepted early decision, I thankfully didn't have to apply to any more places.. . That's all the applications I did to apply to colleges. [laughs]

For most Houston girls, there are only three choices: a competitive (though not ivy league) university filled with valedictorians from all over the South, a sprawling public university that has one of the most diverse student bodies in the U.S., and community college. Similarly, women in Chicago describe their tiers of possibility in terms of the few private and public universities and community colleges in the city. Through a combination of her own hard work and the numerous other factors that colleges weigh when accepting students, Bani got a coveted spot at the competitive private university in Houston. Her younger sister, whom I also spoke with, was not as lucky. Waitlisted and then rejected from her first-choice school in Houston that her sister attended, she settled on the large public university that she "didn't really decide on [herself]":

> Participant: The thing is, if hypothetically my parents had let me apply—my parents, just to humor me, they let me apply to UT [Austin], but they definitely didn't let me apply anywhere out of Texas. That would have been laughable if I did that. So if hypothetically they would have been like, "Hey, [name redacted], apply anywhere you want!" I would have loved to try and get into Berkley; they have a great engineering program, and. . . basically Berkley. That was the dream. And also, interestingly, I really like Chicago, 'cause I went there once in my high school years, and I was like, "Oh, this would have been great, to go to school here." And I would have loved to apply to UChicago. But that just wasn't in the realm of possibility. I was like, why would I even set myself up for disappointment.
>
> I: So just to clarify, your parents didn't want you to leave Texas, just more because they wanted you to stay close, not necessarily for financial reasons, right?
>
> P: Yeah, it was more stay close for their peace of mind. My mom has a really big thing about if you're a girl and you're single, then you should either be with your parents, you

either live with your parents (at least in the same city in your parents), or you're married and you live with your husband. So there's no middle ground. There's no middle ground in her mind. So that's one point of major argument that we had at that time, was like, I can't have you living by yourself in another city, even if there's a bunch of other Muslims there, even if there's a bunch of other Muslims in that school, you're not with us, you're not with a husband or something. So that was the thing.

It is not just parental desires and opinions that AMEA women are expected to listen to when deciding where and how to pursue their education, as husbands' cities of residence usually predetermine where the AMEA wives will live as well. This is another reason marriage and education are intricately connected in the life trajectories of most AMEA women. Of the eleven married women who have or are working toward graduate degrees that I spoke with, only one of them moved to a city different from her husband. Even in this one instance, though, the explanation was mediated by a, "But it was [university name redacted]. Who would say no to that?" Although I cannot share the name of the university here, suffice it to say that this participant obtained her graduate degree from a world-renown ivy league that even the most conservative of American Muslim immigrants have a hard time saying no to. In most cases, though, as Bani's sister said, "there's no middle ground." Bani herself married a man in Dallas, so despite her well-respected undergraduate degree that likely would have been a helpful stepping stone to whatever graduate program she would have liked, she "basically just applied to the school that had the Dallas satellite campus" for her MPH. Up in Chicago, another participant, Rashida, 27, also went through a similar process when deciding where to apply for her undergraduate and graduate education, with parental concerns deciding the former and marital, the latter:

So I didn't even actually end up applying elsewhere. I applied early decision to Northwestern. . . So that's how I ended up there. And then the summer after graduation—I graduated from undergrad in 2011—and that summer, I got married. So in terms of my decision for grad school as well, I knew I wanted to get my master's in public policy, but that

138

wasn't really a decision either about whether or not I would be leaving the state. It was more just kind of trying to fit that to our existing location and lifestyle.

C. *Longitudinal participants*

To get an even more realistic sense of how parental and socio-religious considerations determine the life paths of AMEA women, let us turn to three of the longitudinal participants from Houston in the study. We met two of them, Zainab and Sarrah, in Chapter 2; the third, Ayaala, I will introduce below. The first time I spoke with them as adolescents, Zainab was 16 and Sarrah and Ayaala were both 18; none had started college. When I met with them again as emerging adults, Zainab was 19, and Sarrah and Ayaala, 21. All three of them now qualified as juniors at their undergraduate institutions.

As a reminder, Zainab was an outspoken hijabi feminist in high school interested in Middle Eastern issues, a personality that had led to some of her peers openly questioning her identity to her face and online. She had been focused as a student—one of the adolescents who was aware of her "smartness"—and entered her undergraduate institution with enough credits from community college classes that she had taken during her high school years to place her as a sophomore. When I had initially spoken to her, she was not going to let anything get in the way of her dream of becoming a lawyer representing Muslim women's issues; only the best undergraduate and graduate programs would do. Her parents actually were comparatively more flexible than most of the participants' parents, and they were letting her consider options both in London (though this is where her uncle lives) and the East Coast. Even though she visited a few of her first-choice schools, her determination to leave Houston for a school she herself loved was quieted abruptly when a high-ranking religious authority within her community said staying in Houston would be the best choice for her. As a member of a family who is active in the community and as someone whose identity is strongly itself linked to that religious community,

there was little room for debate as it would be considered borderline sacrilegious: Zainab would go to college in Houston. Because the religious advice came at a point in the year when it was too late to apply to the more competitive private university in the city, Zainab applied to the only choice left, the public university. I was curious to hear her feelings on what had transpired regarding her college decisions, and asked her about it during the second interview:

> And now I realize, it really was for the better. Specifically, [university name redacted], right now, what I'm studying, I don't know specifically if they [the other schools she had applied to] have those same courses, but Houston and [this university] itself being so diverse, I know that I would not be able to take Women and Gender and Arabic Literature in Suffolk at Boston. Because even when I went to tour, you could tell that it just wasn't a very diverse, liberal college, and [this university] just is, especially the people I've met here. I'm not sure I would have met them anywhere else. In a way, it worked out. The good thing at least is that since I went to an early college high school, the credits transferred, whereas if I had gone to NYU, I would have probably had to do four years. At first, I was very adamant, like, "Oh, I'll just do four years!" But now I realize it's actually saving a lot of time.

It seems Zainab manages the dissonance she might feel by focusing on the positive qualities of her current university and enhancing the negative aspects of other schools, a not unusual approach to disappointing life circumstances. While this certainly can be a positive coping mechanism, one wonders what her life path will look like moving forward and how far this coping mechanism will stay with her. Notably, within six months of our most recent interview, she became engaged and then broke off the engagement to a local man. In this last interview, she had been speaking quite excitedly about graduate programs in gender studies at American University Cairo in Cairo, Egypt. While she had expressed concern that she may have to fight a bit to gain permission to travel to Egypt to study considering her experience with the

140

undergraduate decision, she reasoned that because Egypt was a Muslim culture with rich historical value, strict gender norms, and an Islamic daily lifestyle, it would be an obviously acceptable choice for any and all religious authorities. However, the man she became committed to had his personal and professional life based in Houston, and she sensed another challenge distantly rising on the horizon. When she delivered the news to me over coffee[17], I asked her if she had shared her dream of studying in Cairo with her fiancé. He had shown resistance to an international education plan, but said he might be open to her studying anywhere in the U.S. as a compromise. Having known Zainab for about four years at this point, I was not sure how her academically goal-oriented and decisively feminist mindset would receive this response from a male partner. Not warmly, as it turned out; she ended the engagement within two months, citing too many constraints on her education and self.

Importantly, Zainab also still has a protective factor in place that reduces her overall vulnerability to a loss of autonomy to Islamic cultural factors: supportive and open parents. While Zainab's parents adhere to their socio-religious community's values, they prioritize their daughters' happiness—Zainab's older sister, Farha, was another AMEA woman I spoke with— over community norms. Although neither daughter has engaged in atypical socio-religious behavior up to this point anyway, both communicated they felt comfortable enough around their parents to express their honest views with them, felt trusted by their parents, and felt free to make their own life choices. This is clear through each daughter's sartorial choices: Zainab wears a hijab while her sister does not; their parents are supportive of both decisions. Accordingly, Zainab did, in a sense, choose to follow her religious authority's edict about her

---

[17] She gave me written consent to include notes from this conversation in my research as part of my original interview with her: "I'm all for sharing my experiences to let other people in this world know that it's okay to choose yourself and your education over a shiny diamond ring."

education herself; there was not open pressure from her parents to follow it. Furthermore, her parents happily financially support her while she lives in an apartment on her own in downtown Houston in order to avoid the daily commute to class.

Sarrah, on the other hand, does not experience similar support from her parents. When I met her during her adolescent years, she was distraught about how to convince her parents to allow her to live in an apartment downtown; she planned on attending the same university Zainab is currently studying at. However, unlike Zainab's parents, Sarrah's parents were explicitly in support of religious edicts that kept daughters close to home; actually, *at* home. Sarrah had been in the midst of trying to convince her parents that she was making a reasonable request, especially since she was not even asking to leave Houston at all. For the first two years of her undergraduate education, her persuasion did not work. Sarrah ended up attending a community college that was much closer to her family home than the university was, allowing her to have a comfortable fifteen-minute commute to class and leaving her no excuse for needing an apartment. At the beginning of her third year of college, though, she transferred to the larger university and finally managed to get an apartment for herself—at least for the time being:

Interviewer: Yeah. So tell me about how you chose [university name redacted].
Participant: It's close to home, so. . . it was kind of chosen for me. I would have liked to go out of state, but I went a couple of years to Jamea [Islamic boarding school in Karachi], so I was already away from home, and I feel like the family wanted me closer. So, getting my own apartment was already a big thing. Cause I'm living by myself.

Sarrah is already bracing herself for re-convincing her parents to let her stay on campus for her remaining year of college, something she really wants to do as she feels it will help her be more active and involved on campus, help her academically and professionally, and make her feel better overall. She acknowledges that "this year's been great, but next semester, [she wants] to live on campus, but that's still a daily conversation that [she's] having with them. We'll see what happens." When I ask her how this "daily conversation" makes her feel, she replies,

142

Frustrated. Definitely. I definitely want to live there, mostly because now I have a definite plan about what my degree will be and what I'm minoring in, and I finally feel very excited about college again. Because after coming back from Jamea, I was very not into school. Like, I was half-heartedly pursuing things, and I didn't really find what I wanted to do. And now I know what I'm doing. And I'm also, right now I'm headed to a job interview at [university name redacted].

It is clear that while Sarrah has followed a less clear-cut academic path than Zainab, she now knows what she wants to pursue and is "finally. . . excited" about her path. Because living on campus would facilitate her pursuits in obvious ways—more time for networking and events, less stress about driving, and more privacy to study and think—her frustration at not knowing what her parents will decide is understandable as it affects her future.

Sarrah's reasoning for parental control has shifted, though, from her adolescent to her emerging adult years. In fact, she had no real explanation when I spoke to her the first time. All she could say to me was that the situation was "unfair" and that while she knew her parents were restricting her out of love and protection, it was still "annoying." Now, she tends to focus on familial relationships more, saying her parents want her back home because "they get pretty lonely and everything" since all her other siblings have moved out. "Apparently I'm like the life of the party," she told me jokingly. Although her initial lack of explanation four years ago could have been due to adolescent egocentrism and not being able to understand her parents' point of view, this seems unlikely as she clearly *did* understand that their overprotectiveness came from their understanding of the world; she just did not agree with it. Sarrah shifting her explanation to more immediate emotional matters likely makes it easier for her to come to terms with the possibility of having to move back home; it gives her living situation a grounded reason, beyond general unfairness. Furthermore, it balances the scales just a bit more in her favor by framing the situation as something she is an active member of. If her parents are lonely, *she* will be the one

who can decide to make them less so. By reframing and specifically defining her parents'

emotions, Sarrah is able to better cope with a potential outcome she does not want.

Ayaala, the third of the longitudinal participants, has the least amount of dissonance to deal

with regarding her educational location and therefore has the lowest vulnerability level. This is

due to no religious or parental authority limiting her choices of institution—she applied and got

accepted to her top three choices in different cities across the country—therefore making her a

rare case of the participant actually choosing her school. Similar to Zainab, Ayaala has her

parents' support and trust which allows her more independence and autonomy than many of her

peers. In Ayaala's case, parental support was similar to mainstream American parental support,

so much so that it was not even mentioned to her that she should consider staying only in

Houston. For reasons she did not specify—perhaps it was luck, perhaps it was simply

disregard—Ayaala also remained free from socio-religious edicts telling her she should not leave

Houston. She explained her choice of school to me when we talked:

> Interviewer: So, tell me about how you chose [the School of Design]. How did you decide to go there?
> Participant: Okay. . . So, I wanted to leave Texas 'cause I was fortunate enough for my parents to allow me to leave, 'cause I know a lot of my friends stayed in Houston especially. I was one of the only ones from my high school and even masjid to leave the city. So that was a big leap for me, and I really wanted to challenge myself and learn to live alone and be independent. So that was first, mainly the reason I went. I applied to a lot of schools out of state. And then I knew I always wanted to do something with design, but I didn't know how to make a career out of it, until I heard of [the School of Design]. And I was like, "Okay." And this major has a lot for me to do; it's not just one thing for me to focus on. And so I applied to [the art and design schools]. I got into all three of them, but in the end, I did choose [the School of Design], mainly because my parents are comfortable knowing that there was family and people we knew in the city, unlike Chicago. And yeah, in the end, I chose [the School of Design] without really knowing what [it] was. But I eventually understood that, wow, I did make the right choice because it's a really good design school, and it's really challenging. And actually, after looking back at the three years so far, I've learned a lot.

Even with Ayaala's strong protective factor of parental support of personal choice, there is still an awareness that parental permission is the first thing to consider; only then is her interest in design considered. Furthermore, family is not entirely out of the picture even in Ayaala's relatively mainstreamed approach to college applications, as she chooses [the School of Design] "without really knowing what [it]" is because her parents are comfortable with it. Still, Ayaala considers herself "fortunate," and from the sound of it, she has a bright and supported career in design ahead of her.

Ultimately, as Ayaala's case shows, education can still be a positive protective factor against other life risks AMEA women might face if, like marriage, it is done appropriately: at the right time, with parental permission, and without upsetting local socio-religious authorities. However, unlike marriage, the American cultural context dominates the education factor as the high schools, colleges, and universities the women attend are all informed by American norms and values, including autonomy and independence. Consequently, when a cross-over denial of these values occurs by Muslim norms in a previously American-only space, the dissonance and invasion the women experience is likely greater, resulting in greater stress.

D. Career—or not

As mentioned, a college education was universally expected by all participants, from adolescent to adult, regardless of the multiple factors that informed when and how it was obtained. It was something nearly all participants said their parents encouraged and expected as well, so the fact of an undergraduate education is not in and of itself part of a cultural war for American Muslim women. What is sometimes at odds, though, is the *why* of education: What is the end goal of college? It is the answer to this question that has sometimes created the dissonance and stress mentioned in the last section. From an American educational cultural

perspective, education is most often seen as a path to a job or career; at the least, it is meant to answer the question, "What do you want to do?" Regardless of gender biases and sexual injustices that persist in the workforce to this day in the U.S., this view of education does not change for different genders. From an American Islamic cultural perspective, it does. Participants told me that men—most closely observed through fraternal experiences in the same household—are usually encouraged to focus more on career-driven education whereas women are given more liberty to explore whatever field they may want to. When I asked how her life would have been different if she had been a male—son rather than daughter, husband rather than wife, father rather than mother—one participant told me it would have been harder because she would have had "way less freedom to explore what [she] wanted to" in college.

While adolescent girls excel at school more than their brothers according to some of my teenage participants, their academic achievements are valued less as successes than their brothers' for two reasons. First, part of high school academic success includes simply respecting authority, be it following rules or adhering to deadlines, qualities that young Muslim women are inherently taught to do more than their male counterparts. (Think back to stricter codes of conduct for adolescent girls, more domestic responsibility, and having to ask permission.) Secondly, while lauded, AMEA women's academic achievements are seen as icing on the cake rather than the cake itself. If men succeed, it is culturally worth more because they are expected to be working towards the end goal of a financially successful career. If women succeed academically, it is a positive quality they possess, but there are no expectations—or even encouragements—of pursuing a career. Says Farheena, 35,

> So, for example, when I worked at banking or certain jobs that would require me to travel a bit more or work overtime. . . I was discouraged. I was always compared to other people [i.e., women] who didn't work as much, and there just wasn't the same type of ambitions, especially in our family, for women. Although women are, like, very, very

146

educated in our family, and a lot of my cousins are doctors and stuff—I have two cousins who have their own practices, one's a doctor, and one's an architect. And when they had kids, one of them became a teacher so that they could stay at home with their kids, and the other one is also no longer practicing. I think women are encouraged to be educated, but they're not encouraged to be ambitious.

She continues to explain how gender further complicates not just an AMEA woman's desire but even ability to have a career, highlighting how her engagement in her mid-twenties created yet another hurdle:

So, during that course, I also got engaged, and it was an arranged situation. And his family was also pushing for me to work less. And he made enough money to support us if I didn't work, and so they couldn't understand why I would still want to continue to work when I didn't have to. So, I think that, for us, as a woman, if I wanted to get seven PhDs, I would never be discouraged, but to use those and be more ambitious was discouraged. Like, even like my sister-in-law, she's an attorney, and I think my family thinks that she should work less. And so it's not the education, it's the ambition, that women shouldn't be as ambitious. So, I think that was one of the reasons why I couldn't pursue certain promotions and certain opportunities, because of how my family would have perceived me and thought about it.

Although Farheena clearly expressed she wanted to work for her own fulfillment and independence even if she got married, a number of AMEA participants actually agree with Farheena's in-laws' belief that the husband should support the wife and children. While this does not mean they themselves do not wish to work, it does mean that their husbands should at least have jobs that can support them if needed, "as required by Islam." A young woman who recently graduated with her master's degree and who is currently working and living alone in downtown Chicago says the man she is currently "talking" to will not propose to her because he has not found a job yet. She agrees with his decision, even though she could technically support them both right now if they were to get married.

This is not to say that no American Muslim women have careers; of course they do. I spoke with physicians, lawyers, and executive researchers, to name a few. However, there were

147

always extenuating circumstances even for these women to get to where they were. Careers were put on hold until a new job could be found based off husbands' locations, or careers were encouraged because marriage was not seen as a possibility for them anyway by their communities due to divorce or abnormal physical traits. Other women were encouraged to simply "stay busy until the right man" came along, accidentally developing serious careers in fields they did not mean to stay in for more than a year. In all cases, though, AMEA women showed resilience and self-determination to continue doing work they valued even if their Islamic communities did not.

Even though freedom to explore majors in foreign languages or literature or public health—or all three—might sound like a good deal for AMEA women, it comes at a cost. Because American culture does emphasize education as a path towards a job and consequently an identity—"What do you do?" becomes an introduction to who you intrinsically are—being dissuaded from actually reaping the fruit of one's educational labor can be jarring. The implicit identity therefore handed to women becomes "supported wife," which once again highlights the love-hate relationship AMEA women must deal with between education and marriage. It seems adolescent "smartness" ultimately is meant to return to just that when they become adults: smartness. Nothing less, nothing more.

IV. Taking back Power by Giving through Choice: The reduced risk of Questions and divided life spaces

Regardless of the specific circumstances of participants' lives, most face a reduced vulnerability to both the invasive Questions of adolescence and the sense of a culturally fragmented life through a combination of changed peer behavior and environment (outside protective factor) and the conscious choice of at least mentally prioritizing and recognizing what

feels natural and normal to one's self rather than the context one is in (inward coping mechanism). The changed peer environment is due to a few factors. First, everyone is simply growing up. Just as AMEA women are experiencing new situations and challenges and having to decide who they are and what to give most weight to in their lives, so are their non-Muslim and male peers. This inevitably gives the latter groups less time to focus on others and question others' identities, a phenomenon that is corroborated by responses to the question "On average, how often would you say people ask you where you are from?" on the questionnaire I distributed to participants. The adolescent cohort's responses largely fell between "once a week" and "once a day," whereas most AMEA women responded with "once a month." AMEA women still do face Questions, though; those seems to be a somewhat permanent fixture of a Muslim woman's life in America regardless of age, as even my oldest participants, 39, mentioned "people asking things" about their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Also, as we recall from the adolescent discussion, it is not always just peers asking Questions, as oftentimes strangers also feel the right to question a Muslim girl's identity. However, in general, fewer Questions are asked by peers, and less attention is paid to them by AMEA women.

Even though blatant Questioning itself might decrease after adolescence, the subtle and indirect micro-aggressions Questions were usually paired with continue. In some sense, the Questions become implicit as it would often become politically incorrect, rude, or institutionally inappropriate to openly question an individual regarding their personal background. To elucidate what I mean by this, let us turn back to Sakuma's experience in her graduate classroom. No peer openly asked her where she was "really" from, but the lack of response and acceptance to her intellectual contribution implied that there was something "off" about her as an equal; she was not the same and therefore not worthy of a response. Other participants also recall instances

where they cannot clearly say why the other party interacted in particularly uncomfortable ways

with them; they just sensed something was awry. These instances include all facets of AMEA

women's experiences, from being a woman to being ethnic minorities to being Muslims. A

Palestinian American law student from Chicago recalled an experience she had in her classroom:

> Yeah. I've had multiple encounters just strictly on the basis of gender-related issues where
> most of my peers are very uncomfortable, both men and women, when I call out things. So
> for example, there were like three guys that completely froze. One of them opened the door,
> and I was like, "Okay"—I tried to say it lightheartedly—I was like, "Okay, guys, no need
> for the benevolent sexism, I can open a door, go ahead, go ahead." Two of them stormed
> away very, very upset that I would label them in some sort of way as sexist. And I walked
> into the classroom and another female classmate was like, "You are incredibly aggressive."

Regardless of the micro-aggressions that continue, though, the general reduction in Questions

does give more space to the AMEA individual to define herself as and when she wishes.

A second reason for the changed peer environment is the transition from high school to

college. In many cases, AMEA women move from the closed, homogenous environment of a

high school into a more open, diverse environment of college. This shift tended to ring more true

for those participants who attended public universities and colleges rather than private ones.

Even so, AMEA women enter into new peer environments where two factors shift their views of

themselves and their peers: First, in general, the student body is more diverse, with people from

different places across the country and, sometimes, the world. This takes the "weirdness" of

adolescent Muslim girls and essentially normalizes it; there are now too many "weirdos" in the

peer environment for them to be qualified as weird anymore. Second, AMEA women discover

organizations that highlight and celebrate their previously "weird" Muslim characteristics;

namely, Muslim Student Associations, or MSAs. Even if an AMEA woman is not personally

active in an MSA, the sheer knowledge that there exists such an organization within her

institution can serve as a positive protective factor against isolation.

Third, the way an AMEA woman interacts with what was previously her School environment during adolescence is different. High school is attended five days a week, for nearly eight hours a day. In college, students have an entirely different experience, with the only requirement being attending a select number of classes. Students often do not know who their classmates are and do not have classes everyday. Combined with the fact that many AMEA women continue to live at or near home during college, this drastically reduced contact within the School environment deflates its power as a separate life space. While it can be isolating for a student to not know many peers on campus, for an AMEA woman, it does serve to reduce the fragmentation of spaces and identity roles that she may have experienced during adolescence. The lack of forced social interaction within the educational environment creates a vacuum of social space in her life that is most easily filled with her Muslim family and friends, a detail that encourages the stable identity she is working towards to lean more towards its Muslim facets.

MSAs—or at least the presence of a higher number of Muslims in an educational space—are the final reason for the shift in peer environment. Although not all participants experienced this, about three-quarters of them reported developing and maintaining female friendships through the MSAs on campus. This is significant not only because of just how important of a protective factor female friendships were during adolescence, but also because a process of merging begins here that can affect an AMEA woman's life trajectory: "School friends" and "Masjid friends" start to become the same. The heavy divide adolescent Muslim girls felt between their life spaces was informed by the two groups of friends they maintained. Once this line is blurred during emerging adulthood, the Muslim/Home/Masjid environment begin to be increasingly welcomed into daily life by the women themselves, strengthening their resolve to, for example, pray in

public, say no to lunch with less self-consciousness during Ramadan, or wear a headscarf as part of a holistic identity rather than a pigeon-holed religious one. One Chicago-based participant said the increased Muslim presence in an experientially non-Muslim space (i.e., School and work) "gave [her] an instant connection to the Muslim community here. It let [her] have Muslim friends, it let [her] keep in touch with [her] faith. . . You're marooned. You're in touch with your own kind of people, with people who get you." "People who get you" was exactly how adolescent girls described their friendships with their Muslim girl peers. The difference now is that this understanding and connection is occurring in traditionally American spaces. In this way, MSAs simultaneously reduce the risk of divided life spaces and increase the protective factor of female Muslim friendships.

The other coping mechanism that becomes most apparent and useful during this time is choice. As discussed in the marriage and education sections, choice is a complex subject for AMEA women as it is rarely an individual activity. However, it seems the one time AMEA women are definitively independent in choosing is when they finally choose to decide when and how to engage their identities with their cultural contexts. While this might seem like a simple and obvious task to mainstream American culture, AMEA women overcome many Islamic and American hurdles to be able to come to this point as both cultures are quite stubborn in telling them who they should be. Sakuma highlights this coping mechanism well when she explains how exhausting and taxing it is to explain herself all the time, and how she has now decided to simply not, or to at least wait until someone genuinely engages with her experience. She is sharply sensitive to and aware of the process of answering Questions as she had done it throughout her adolescence and early twenties. Another participant, Munira, 24, also chooses how much of herself she wishes to reveal, specifically to her religious community. Having

experienced a difficult time with religion during college, she nearly left her religious community after gossip about her reached levels she believed were inappropriate. Details about her personal life at college were publicized, she was accosted by local religious authorities in order to "bring [her] back from the wrong path," and her "parents told [her] not to come home that summer." In short, she felt "betrayed." Now, although she does not believe in many of the tenets of the religion, she still attends community services because so many of her social supports are wrapped up in it:

> So my relationship with the community now is that there are some religious things I agree with, maybe I don't, but because my entire life is that community—like we grew up in it. My closest friends are in it, my sisters are in it, my parents are in it; like they genuinely believe. So I would never do anything to depart from the community eventually.

What she chooses to outwardly admit to that community about her beliefs, though, is "[her] business."

While the reduced risk of a divided identity is a healthy developmental step, it does encourage the deeper swing towards a Muslim identity as opposed to an American one for AMEA women. As other young Muslims also experience similar professional (e.g., first jobs) and personal (e.g., marriage) life events, an increasing number of shared challenges and successes bring this group closer together and help to define an AMEA woman's identity as a member of it. As noted in the adolescent section, there was already a tendency for adolescent girls to associate a bit more strongly with their Muslim selves than their American selves when defining their own identities. The coping mechanisms and protective factors that strengthen and become solidified from adolescence to emerging adulthood do tend to emphasize an individual's Muslimness within an American context. This is not a positive or a negative development; it perhaps is simply a natural result of being a minority within a majority and having to define

153

oneself within that space. In fact, for a typical AMEA woman, marriage itself becomes a way to solidify this Muslim identity, as marital status and a husband's personality, profession, and family determine so much of a woman's life, from the freedom discussed in earlier sections to education to possibilities of a career. Because marriage happens in the Islamic realm, Islamic norms create the foundation upon which their daily American lives are built. Furthermore, because intermarriage is rarely an option, any further assimilation an AMEA woman might be toying with is cut short, intermarriage being a common pathway to assimilation for many immigrant communities (Qian, Lichter, &Tumin). Marrying within the community is such a strong cultural belief that even AMEA women like Munira adhere to it:

> So, for example, my parents say I have no choice but to marry within the community, which sucks. I wish they'd been a little more lenient. But at the same time, I'm at a point now where I also want to marry within the community because I have had relationships outside the community—nothing extreme or long term where I was living with him—but I've had relationships, and it just hasn't been the same cause they couldn't understand—he couldn't understand my background, our roots, our traditions. Why we do certain things, or why I'm a certain way with my parents; whereas any Bohri [Dawoodi Bohra] person I talk to instantly gets. Even if you're from totally different cities, we have the same views. . . um. And that's why I wanna marry within the community.

The need to be understood is a human force that ultimately seems to loom even larger than religious beliefs and personal preferences. AMEA women, like most Americans, gravitate towards those who can understand them easily and make them feel comfortable in their day to day lives.

V.   Islamophobia and the Muslim Womanhood Stereotype

The Muslim womanhood stereotype was one of the most frequently occurring risks I found in the adolescent cohort. As a reminder, I had defined this stereotype to include ideas of Muslim female oppression, the definition of Muslim women through the expectation of specific dress,

and the treatment of Muslim women's bodies as exotic objects of fascination. The Muslim

womanhood stereotype was found to be distinct from the Islam-terrorist stereotype that some

adolescent girls also experienced due to the manner the former was manifested and

communicated to the girls. Although AMEA women sense micro-aggressions and some have

experienced blatant racial and religious profiling and harassment, for the most part, there is a

general reduction of the Muslim womanhood stereotype as a developmental risk. This might be

partially due to fewer blunt Questions being asked by others, as mentioned in the previous

section, or a lack of engagement on the part of AMEA women, where they simply do not allow

psychological and emotional space to this kind of stereotyping thereby letting it affect them less

and cause less stress in their daily lives. Laila, 28, succinctly sums it up: "I'm less self-conscious,

I think. . . I'm older and I don't care what people think as much because I'm just tired of it."

A major and obvious difference that must be addressed between the adolescent and AMEA

cohort, though, is the hijab. Because the hijab was the cause of much of the stereotyping the

teenage girls experienced, it is necessary to also look at the same factor during emerging

adulthood. As we will see, a drastically lower proportion of the AMEA women I spoke with

wore hijab compared to the adolescent sample; 55 percent versus 83 percent, relatively speaking.

However, the general pattern of stereotyping did follow that of adolescence: Blatantly Muslim

hijabi women tended to report more harassment, prejudice, and instances of Islamophobia than

non-hijabi women. Accordingly, when discussing Islamophobia and stereotyping, it is imperative

we first look to AMEA women's relationship with hijab and how clothing practices might affect

the perceived reduction in stereotyping.

A. Hijab

> As a woman, you can do whatever you want to do, but you should be respected for who
> you are; what you look like is nobody's business. . . It's my choice who I give my

physical and emotional and mental intimacy to; it's no one else's choice to take it. And I found those to be very beautiful and liberating concepts. So, to me, hijab is the physical manifestation of that value system. (Fusun, 26)

The fashion and clothing industry within American culture has come to be an avenue for self-expression and individuality. Marketers and brands take advantage of the American sense of individualism when selling their products, letting the consumer know that they can develop and announce their identity through what they wear (Phau and Lau, 2001). AMEA women make the choice of whether or not to practice hijab within this context, and needless to say, it has complex repercussions. Laila describes her journey with covering:

> I put a lot of thought into it. One thing that was very important to me is, like, I had this idea that the society at large—or maybe it was my own personal impression—but that people perceived women who wore headscarves to be not stylish, or not modern, or. . . you know, kind of negative attributes like those. And so that was something I definitely wanted to appear—you have a sense of how you want to project yourself, and so I definitely wanted to project myself as an intelligent, culturally cued-in young person. And so I wanted to make sure that that remained despite the fact that I was wearing a head scarf.

Muslim women are acutely aware that mainstream American society contradictorily might view the hijab as oppressive, but at the same time, indirectly see it as an abstract choice that represents the identity of the person wearing it. That identity, of course, tends to be generalized and stereotyped; essentially, it becomes the identity of The Muslim Woman rather than an individual Muslim woman.

What do the individual Muslim women themselves think? There is no single answer due to the simple fact that they are, after all, *individual* Muslim women, but in general, as Muslim girls become Muslim emerging adult women, hijab comes to increasingly be seen as an actual lived choice based on authenticity rather than a more superficial publicly vocalized choice. What I mean by this is that during adolescence, most of the girls who observed hijab would go out of

their way to emphasize that it was a choice on their part to dress in the manner they did. Only one bluntly told me that she did not really feel it was a choice, and that she did not really want to wear a head scarf, but that the family repercussions of that decision would be too difficult to deal with and so she quietly just followed what her parents told her to do. Mostly, though, adolescent Muslim girls ended up creating an armor of vocalized choice likely due to the intensity of the Questions they would receive. By qualifying hijab as a choice, it maintained their own individuality within American culture and in the face of Muslim womanhood stereotypes. The protective factor of adolescents exuding confidence within the context of hijab also supports this theory.

However, AMEA women have more divided opinions on the subject than their younger participants. As AMEA women develop more stable identities, the decision of whether or not to wear hijab becomes a question of authenticity. Social and peer pressure garner less value in the decision—even if social consequences might be burdensome and stressful to deal with—and "what feels right" to the individual holds more weight. In some ways, this is a natural process of maturation, especially when both the research on adolescent peer influence and specifically Marcia's identity status theory (1966) are considered. Adolescents move from identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement, adjusting and evaluating what they want their identities to be based on what their parents, peers, and larger contexts tell them (Marcia 1966). However, this process of maturation is particularly American/Western and does not account for the heavier weight that gender, parents, and community have for AMEA women. For this population, the foreclosure stage—that in which an identity crisis has not been experienced and the individual conforms to the beliefs of the parents—is seen as an ideal one for a woman. To simply stop her individual development at this harmonious stage serves the immigrant population

best as it enables it to pass on its traditions and values most easily and consistently. Accordingly, when an AMEA woman *does* experience an identity crisis, it is usually well beyond her adolescent years as up until that point, the strong social forces that had strived to contain her straying away and becoming "too American" would have been successful sheerly through the fact of age (i.e., the individual was a minor and easier to control.)

While the four longitudinal participants in the study have all consistently worn hijab and none have chosen to take it off, Farha, the older sister of Zainab, whom I only spoke to as an emerging adult and not as an adolescent, did go through the process of actually choosing whether or not to wear a hijab, and chose not to. Now 21, Farha recalls why she had initially decided to wear hijab for a while as a teenager:

> So, I actually did wear [it] full time for a year and a half. . . I have a good reason not to do it, because I tried it. . . I did it in school full-time. Did it full-time, everywhere, and it was just, for me, personally, it wasn't, it wasn't something I would say was right for me at that time because I was really young. I wasn't really ready. I was doing it for all the wrong reasons, just to show people and try to be accepted into the society that Houston is, you know [referring to religious society]. I think once I kind of grew out of that, I was just like, I'm doing it for all the wrong—it started becoming a drag; it started becoming a burden on me, just to wear it all the time. And my family was never really forceful with it. My dad was never like, Oh, you *have* to wear it. He was like, I don't wear *topi* [male religious cap] everywhere; you don't have to wear it everywhere; whatever, it's your choice. So that was really, really something that helped me take it off, because it wasn't me. It wasn't who I was.

Similar to her sister Zainab's experience, Farha's supportive and open parents serve as a protective factor when faced with potentially weighty decisions about the hijab. When I asked what exactly the "wrong reasons" to wear it were, she described how people—both teachers and classmates—at her weekly religious classes would publicly and randomly ask young women whether or not they wore hijab. This had made her think, "Okay, I'm just gonna start." She clearly experienced both the peer pressure and influence other adolescent girls describe, as well

as pressure from adult religious authorities within her community. Because some of the adolescent participants are members of the same religious community in Houston as Farha and attended the same weekly classes, it is not difficult to surmise that they, too, likely experienced a similar kind of publicized peer pressure. As she thinks back on her experience from only a few years ago, she says, "If I'm ever going to wear it again, it's gonna be for me, not for people or to show people and be accepted to society."

Similar to Farha, both Joumana and Sakuma wore hijab but decided to stop for reasons of authenticity. Joumana stopped wearing it after she graduated from law school, explaining,

> I had realized that my wearing it—and this is just for me personally—was more of a costume. It was like I was putting on, you know, like, I don't know. I guess the best way to relate this is—I think a lot of people go through this phase where they're like, Oh, I'm gonna wear punk clothes, or I'm this type of person or whatever. And it's as if you're wearing this uniform to communicate who you are to the world? And I no longer felt the need to do that. And I wanted more of an unfiltered presentation of myself. And so I took it off.

Joumana's feelings that her hijab was a "uniform" or a "costume" that communicated a binding, one-note role and not her entire self is not singular to her experience, though her focus is more on her presentation to her non-Muslim world rather than her Muslim world. Sakuma, alternately, describes her much longer relationship with hijab as something that was driven by how her Muslim circle viewed her:

> I started wearing hijab when I was eleven. . . back then, I didn't feel like it was a choice. I felt like if I wanted to be good, I would wear hijab. It didn't feel like. . . I'm doing this because I think it's right and I think it's. . . how women should dress and how I should hold space in the world. But because now I don't wear hijab—I stopped wearing hijab two years ago—I wonder was it really a choice or was it more of a social, peer pressure to wear hijab because I wanted to be good? And I wanted to be like my friends who also wore hijab, and were so proud of their Muslim identity and, I mean, I don't know. The way that I dress now, and the way that I choose to dress now, um, some of it is informed by that, of you know wearing longer shirts or looser clothing because that's how I used to dress for ten years of my

life, but a part of the reason that I took off the hijab—or I stopped wearing hijab—was because I felt like it was suffocating my personal identity and I didn't know if I had worth beyond being a good Muslim girl.

Like other adolescent Muslim girls, Sakuma had started wearing hijab for peer and community acceptance. She bluntly says what I suspect many adolescent girls believe but may be too hesitant to say: wearing hijab is not actually a free choice. Girls might superficially be told they have a choice, but they know that if they want to be seen in the right light by their families and Muslim friends, there is only one correct choice they can make. Again, this kind of silent expectation framed as choice might be the reason why such a higher proportion of adolescent girls in this study wear hijab. Although there may be many reasons an AMEA woman eventually decides not to veil, we notably see the idea of clothing as chosen identity and self-expression discussed at the beginning of this section appear in their reasoning as well.

However, the AMEA women who continue to veil into their adult lives or who begin veiling as emerging adults rather than adolescents also choose to do so for reasons of authenticity; specifically, of being true to one's religious beliefs. These women often emphasize that they do believe it is a "religious commandment" or requirement, but that "it is a choice to follow it, just like everything else in religion." As one veteran hijabi told me, "How ever I do it is how ever I do it, and how ever anybody else does it is how ever they do it. It's not my business, it's not anybody else's business." This emphasis on choice that notably tended to crop up more in hijab discussions for hijabi AMEA and adult women than non-hijabis might be an attempt to negate leftover adolescent sentiments of judgment. As emerging adults, those who land in the favor of their socio-religious circles understand that those same circles harshly criticize women who "stray." In fact, these hijabi women are in position to be the next generation of community leaders, and so they often are called upon to judge others themselves. Outwardly confirming that

they do not judge non-hijabi women by allowing them choice seems to be a way of asserting a new socio-religious identity for the community at large. Furthermore, the discussion of choice by AMEA hijabis is not the same one adolescent hijabis have. Whereas the latter focus on choice as something they themselves have, the former focuses on choice as something non-hijabis specifically have. This makes sense because if an individual believes hijab is a "commandment" for herself, there inevitably is no choice in her mind.

Even if an AMEA woman wears a hijab because she religiously believes in it, the decision is not necessarily a less complicated one. By the time she goes to college, enters the workforce, and/or gets married, an AMEA woman has a relatively strong sense of how non-Muslims perceive her due to her experience with Questions as a teenager. Accordingly, she likely realizes that while "it doesn't stop [her]" from doing what she wants, if you wear a hijab,

> it does mean you have to be good at what you do, and that you have to be brave. And that you have to portray yourself—well, maybe you don't have to, but it makes [you] more successful—to be open and trustworthy and approachable and likeable. . . If you make yourself likeable, then people are comfortable with you. Cause a lot of people, not to say they're scared, but they don't want to offend you. And so it sounds so silly, but sometimes, drop a cuss word here and there, and—you can see them relax. 'Cause they're so shocked by it.

Just as non-hijabi women are aware of how "both sides," i.e., non-Muslim and Muslim, might react to their sartorial choices, hijabi women also become frustrated with not only stereotypes non-Muslims hold of them, but also the sensationalizing views of them from within their religious communities. While adolescents struggled with maintaining the integrity of what should be a private and intimate choice because of the deluge of Questions regarding their "outfits" or "headgear," AMEA women struggle with maintaining this privacy to both communities. As one participant told me,

So I've been wearing hijab for the better part of my life. Since sixth grade. . . And I mean, I've gone through a lot of different manifestations of it. But now the way I look at it, which is the way I should have always looked at it, is that it's just an act of worship, and that's all it is. It's a manifestation of my obedience to God, and that's it. . . I am tired of it being sensationalized on both sides, and it being talked about. I sometimes wish people would talk about prayer as much as they talk about hijab. And I am so tired of it becoming a symbol, because it's not a symbol to me. . . I've always looked at it as one small part of me, but at the same time, because it's so visible and stuff, it's always like the first thing that people think about. And I always try to minimize it as much as I can. And that's sort of how I came to the conclusion that to me, it's just a manifestation of my obedience to God, and that's it.

She rejects the idea of the hijab making her a token representative of Islam, even though she is aware that is likely what happens. "It's a burden that is an unnecessary burden that Muslim women who wear hijab are told that they have to bear . . . It's not my problem. I'm *not* a representative of the faith. I only represent myself, and maybe my family, and even then, my family would probably tell you that I don't represent them." The same tokenism that occurs in adolescence might happen during emerging adulthood, but by internally rejecting it and refusing to give it power, some AMEA women are trying to take the hijab back to what it originally was: a politically insignificant style of dress that reflects the private beliefs of the individual wearing it.

Which choice leaves an AMEA woman with a lower vulnerability level? If her expression of authenticity calls for a mainstream Western wardrobe, she might raise eyebrows—and voices—in her religious community, even though there is not always blatant discrimination. However, not wearing a hijab does not always free one from still feeling prejudice or isolation, as we saw in Sakuma's experience in her class. Experientially, there will always be a part of an AMEA woman's life that non-Muslims likely will not understand, and not wearing hijab almost hides this part further. On the other hand, wearing hijab pushes that part of one's life so much to the forefront that it might become an overwhelming part of one's identity, even if she does not want

it to. Still, she can find acceptance, social support, and a feeling of inclusive normalcy within her American Muslim religious community if she follows most social rules, and she can be successful in a career or in her education if she tries just a bit harder than everyone else. Even though AMEA women might take more control of their clothing as they move into their twenties, the question of hijab continues to be an inconveniently loaded one.

B. Harassment: Where Islamophobia and cultural patriarchies meet halfway

While the threat of the Muslim womanhood stereotype might be reduced during emerging adulthood, it is occasionally replaced with something much more direct, serious, and specific: religiously-focused sexual harassment. Although the majority of my participants did not report being sexually harassed, with some even noting how they felt especially safe from it due to their hijab, the three who did all reported their religion and self-presentation as Muslim women as being intrinsically tied up with their harassment. I focus on the stories of Laila, the 28-year-old whom we met earlier through her views on marriage, and Joumana, a 38-year-old who recounts her experiences as an emerging adult shortly after 9/11.

Laila is currently wrapping up her graduate law education in Chicago, nearly a qualified attorney. However, she was also nearly a qualified medical doctor before her time in law school, having completed three of the four years. Additionally, she "did a master's in public health and. . . worked at a public health organization in D.C." When I asked what caused such a sudden and drastic shift in her professional education, she replied calmly,

> I was bad at it, and it was a very discriminatory and hostile environment for me. . . I was sexually harassed within the first two—consistently—during the first two months, and I was going to school at the University of [redacted], and the classmates were openly racist towards people of color. And the administrators and administration were not responsive to any of our complaints.

One wonders if the "and" in her first sentence of explanation might be replaced with a "because" as harassment, especially "consistent" harassment, can result in trauma and depression for an individual, negatively affecting her performance, motivation, and concentration on tasks that she might usually be successful on (Abada, Feng, and Ram, 2008). Laila herself is aware of this, as she told me, "I also think that environment was very detrimental to my ability to learn and perform, so I wasn't even doing top of the—I would have preferred to have done better academically. And I don't feel like that was going to be possible in that environment." When I asked if she was comfortable sharing the specifics of her experience, she explained what happened in more detail:

> Yeah, so. . . I had one classmate who'd consistently say comments to me during class and during anatomy lab like, "I just want to see you in a slutty outfit one day." He would do things like lean his body against mine when I'd be at the Gross anatomy sink washing utensils. He thought it'd be funny to like touch me, like as a joke during those sessions. Then the same classmate, during a small group discussion, when I made a point to contradict something he said in the literature, he said "rawwwwr" [cat snarl noise] at me, to insinuate that I was being aggressive. It's a very gendered put-down. And then I yelled at him, and the administrator told me to stop yelling at him, rather than interceding before I started yelling. . .The hospital staff was very ignorant on how to deal with cultural issues, um. . . then I started looking up empirical studies, and the level of sexual harassment and racial discrimination is very high in medicine. And I was pretty sure that if I were to stay at that University, I would end up practicing in [that environment]. And I no longer wanted to be associated with that kind of environment. So I left.

A Pakistani American, Laila has been practicing hijab since she was a late teen, sporting long sleeves, long pants or skirts, and a head scarf. It was obvious that the male harasser was motivated to "touch" her and tell her he wanted to her to be "slutty" because of the way she presented as a Muslim woman. Furthermore, gender and religion are still just as intrinsically tied as they were during adolescence in Laila's experience, as she is also "put down" using generally gendered insults. Religion and ethnicity are still conflated as well, as Laila felt prejudice and

164

belittlement due to her headscarf despite being "fair-skinned," something she notes as a

privilege. Unfortunately for her ex-medical school, all her White male harassers saw was a

foreign woman who was present for their entertainment.

Joumana, a South Asian American and divorced mother of three, is also a lawyer by training,

though her day job lists her as part of a research team at an elite Chicago university. She was

only able to share some topical details about her sexual harassment due to an ACLU lawsuit

settlement that resulted because of it, but we get a general sense of just how intertwined

Islamophobia and sexual harassment were in her case through other details of her life trajectory.

For example, when I asked her why she had gone into law initially with a focus on violence

against women, she said,

> So, one, I've always tended to consider myself a feminist, and so early on was interested in
> the ways that women and girls are particularly marginalized. And I think violence against
> women is one of those things. And then secondly, being a survivor of that myself—and that
> was actually kind of an Islamophobia related thing, too—that was an experience that, like, if I
> could have added that to my benchmarks in life, that would have been one of them. And so to
> see how particularly women who came from backgrounds like myself didn't have the access
> to services, that was something that was important to me and that's how I originally got into
> that work.

Joumana's own brief description of her government-authorized harassment sums up the multiple

layers of complication at the heart of such mistreatment of AMEA women:

> But essentially what I can say is that there was incident at—this is right after 9/11, 2001, so
> this is before the TSA had been established even. . . And airport security was actually
> conducted by the National Guard and by private security companies that had been contracted
> by the government. I was at O'Hare airport and was, you know, right out of college. I was in
> AmeriCorp at the time. And I wore hijab. And I got profiled at the airport even though I didn't
> set off any radars. And what kind of was a series of events that led to, um, a strip search and
> then more things that happened, and, um, that were, that later it kind of came to me that there
> was kind of what was sexual violence. And so that—when I went through that experience,
> there were two things that really struck me now, kind of in hindsight. The first being that what
> happened to me *was* kind of a layered incident. That it was the violence against me because I

was a woman, and particularly because of that part of my identity, but also because I was Muslim, and that those two things were kind of joined. The fact that it was part of the National Guard and it has all of these associations and all that.

To say this type of sexual-religious harassment is a developmental risk would be stating the obvious, as both Laila and Joumana perceive their Muslim womanhood—two integral parts of their identities—to be under a literal attack. The consequences of harassment and sexual violence have been well-documented as well, including a spectrum that moves from isolation or depression all the way to suicide (Abada, Feng, and Ram, 2008; Becker et al., 1984; Campbell, Dworkin, and Cabral, 2009).

However, sexual harassment within a Muslim American context is a risk in yet another way as well. Given the more conservative norms around sexuality—especially women's sexuality—inherent in almost all Islamic cultures, speaking about sexual harassment or admitting that one is a survivor can in and of itself be a risk. American culture itself is only just beginning to legally hold sexual predators seriously responsible for rape crimes and listen to women who say they have been harassed; it is not surprising that a more sexually conservative culture would publicly avoid the subject altogether. The second "[thing] that really struck" Joumana speaks to this hidden risk, in some ways even more of a developmental threat than the harassment itself as it leaves the victim without a voice and without the social support she thought she could rely on:

> And then the second part that really struck me was the aftermath, and the way that I kind of—the ideas that surrounded me within my community about what I should or should not say publicly. And so I think, there was my mom who told me not to talk about it ever. Just to talk about the part where my hijab was taken off—that was okay. To have an ACLU lawsuit about that, but to not talk about, you know, what might have happened to me. And I shouldn't mention my body or anything like that because I would never get married. And so. . . the response that I saw within the Muslim community itself, in that there was certain kinds of injustices that would be dignified to talk about and that were okay to talk about. But there were other injustices, be it violence against women or domestic violence, that are not acceptable to talk about. That there's something shameful about that.

When I asked who she turned to for help or support during the time, she simply said, "Yeah, I didn't. . . I felt actually completely isolated."

In both Joumana's and Laila's lives, the coping mechanism in response to sexual-religious harassment is pursuing education and careers that can affect change in the world they live in. Laila's success with her MPH and the organization she worked with in D.C. gave her the inlet into law school and policy change she wanted to engage with; Joumana had been undecided about law but her experience at the airport and with her religious community cinched her path for her. In both cases, though, the women come from educated, middle-upper class backgrounds of economic privilege. They are able to cope with the harassment they experienced because they were able to be self-sufficient enough to move away from traumatic situations (Laila), pursue legal action (Joumana), and speak back to their larger communities through their work (both.)

C. Trumping Trump: Complications of non-Muslim allyship

Despite the large number of statistics that show Muslims as one of the most stereotyped and misunderstood religious groups in the U.S.—or likely, because of it—new research is showing that more than ever before in modern history, Muslims have experienced vocal public support and messages of being welcome in the country from their non-Muslim peers. A major cohort effect that must be noted between the adolescent and emerging adult/adult cohorts is that the research conducted on the latter two groups occurred during the Trump era, either during the last month before his election or after he was elected. Consequently, it is unclear whether adolescents also experienced this increase in open support from self-declared allies of Muslims in America, and if they did, how they perceived and internalized it. What can be said with confidence is that AMEA women do experience it, with a particular spike at the end of 2016 immediately following Trump's election. Pew Research reports echo my participants' experiences: "But the

report reveals other layers of Muslim life that complicate a straightforward narrative of victimhood. Almost half of respondents said someone had reached out to express support for their religion within the past year, compared to 37 percent in 2011 and 32 percent in 2007" (Green 2017). The "victimhood" being referred to is the increase in Islamophobic acts within the same year, acts that would include the Muslim womanhood stereotyping that AMEA women might face. Rather than having to silently swallow micro-aggressions and prejudices, Muslim women now feel they at least have some support in the wider home community, a clear protective factor against the risk of stereotyping.

At first glance, having allies and support from non-Muslims seems like a luxurious new comfort for a minority group who has previously been seen largely with suspicion or confusion. However, it is not as simple as it appears. While many AMEA women do feel more comfortable and welcome because of the influx of positive messages from non-Muslim colleagues and friends post-2016 presidential election, "these performances of allyship and optimism can be fraught; Muslims might prefer seamless acceptance to handshakes and earnestness from well-meaning neighbors" (Green 2017). Laila confirms this latter hypothesis:

> Yeah, I mean, like, all these people are like reaching out right now to me, as an American Muslim woman, which is nice and is kind of the point. . . They were like calling me 5:00 AM on the morning of the election results to be like, "Oh my god, I can't believe it!" And I have two responses. The first is like, I'm very grateful for that emotional support because I very much needed it at the time. I felt incredibly hurt and vulnerable and scared and angry. But the long-term reaction that I'm having to it is that there's a sense of mostly White guilt that's fueling this reach out. Like, I am literally their only Muslim friend or the only Muslim person that they've interacted with. And they want to demonstrate, one, solidarity with affected communities and, two, that they "get" it. You know, they understand that there's like people that are being affected. But it's frustrating to me because part of it's like, where have you guys been for fifteen years? Like, I've been saying Muslims are discriminated against for the last fifteen years! Black people have been discriminated against since they were treated as property in this country. Latinx communities have been, have had their land stolen away from them to establish this country. And it's like, you guys are just now—mostly White

communities—are just now realizing like the bitterness of being an American for any of these marginalized identities? It's like so frustrating. It's like, "You know who these people are; they're in *your* family. I don't know what you have to do to get through to them, but like, this is on *you* guys to fix your need to be a supremacist identity group in this country.

Her appreciation of the "reach-out" from non-Muslim, non-POC peers quickly reveals a deeper anger and frustration that speaks to something more than just wanting a "seamless acceptance." She calls on her White privileged peers to rectify the root issue that causes Islamophobia—and racism and prejudice against all people of color—in the country at large, identifying White supremacy as a "need" that has been enmeshed in America's history and politics since its inception. Rather than serving as a protective factor, White allyship for Laila almost seems to be just another layered frustration that pushes her away from not just American culture, but America itself:

I've done my work, I've done my share. Like, my initial reaction was like I've given America enough of my time and my efforts. Like, I've literally done more than 99% of the population in most things like as a responsible citizen. And America as a country deserves no more from me. Which is why I was like, screw this, I'm gonna go become a corporate lawyer in another country. . . [But] I can't say that. I can't actually do that because in my identity, I'm a very privileged—I'm a fair-skinned, well-educated, American, English-speaking citizen. I have too many benefits from the system to turn my back on people who are far more vulnerable than I. So even though America doesn't deserve any more work from me, those people do, and they need like—people who don't have the option to just get up and leave the country, they deserve every single resource and every single defender that's available for them. It's just a question of whether or not I can—like, as a Muslim woman, I'm going to be allowed to be an effective defender. Like, professors are talking, questioning whether or not Muslim students should just take a bar in another country, the legal bar, in another country and leave, in case there's like some obstacles that are placed on us just doing our jobs.

Even though Trump's election may have uncovered allyship for minority groups such as AMEA women, the final sentence of Laila's quote above points to the bottom-line reality of having a president who encourages and might even support Islamophobic views. There are real fears that hopeful professionals like Laila face in terms of prejudice being manifested through legal

169

executive means, making it that much more important for people like her to persevere and fight on the same turf as the policy makers themselves.

D. Just get on with it: Goal-oriented focus as a coping mechanism

We clearly see how professional and academic focus help Joumana and Laila cope with their traumatic Islamophobic experiences. Even those AMEA women who did not experience such extreme sexual harassment, though, use focus as a coping mechanism against stereotyping risks spanning from daily political anti-Muslim news from the macrosystem all the way to micro-aggressions they might encounter in their microsystems at their local grocery stores. One AMEA woman said, "It kind of sucks, all the stuff that happens. . . I know what it's like to have your hijab pulled. I know what it's like to be called a terrorist just because you're wearing something on your head, and things like that, but I got over it more easily, I think, and just keep my eye on the prize." This focus might be seen as a maturation of the "whatevering" we see during adolescence, taking the dismissal of outside negative forces but now pairing it with a positive inward force that allows the individual to move forward and not get distracted from their goals.

The source of the focus might stem from being second-generation immigrants, children of parents who had to have strong work ethics and professional focus in order to be successful in a new culture and country. It might also stem from American Islamic culture specifically, as "Muslims are more likely than other Americans to believe that people who work hard can get ahead and succeed; 70 percent said they believe this is true" (Green 2017). While American Muslims tend to be one of the more socio-economically successful immigrant groups in America (Pew Forum, "Demographic Portrait," 2017), a fact that could make their belief in hard work and focus leading to success a self-fulfilling prophecy, they nevertheless pass this belief on to the next generation. Accordingly, a number of the AMEA women noted how "minding your own

business" and "just getting on with your stuff" was the best way to deal with any aggressions, micro or otherwise. As they grew up, AMEA women—like most individuals who are bullied or experience harassment—come to realize that if one outwardly shows one is offended or flustered by stereotyping or prejudice, it usually only serves to encourage the other party more. Focusing on one's own goals, be they professional, academic, or marital, becomes a way of positively channeling emotional and psychological energy into productivity.

VI.   The Misfits: An Unwelcome Extended Adolescence

Although AMEA women whose lives follow untraditional trajectories have already been discussed individually in the marriage and education sections, it bears merit to consider them as a group due to an additional risk they all share: the potential loss of Muslim social support due to non-traditional life choices and paths. From choosing to no longer wear a hijab or realizing one is attracted to women rather than men to openly pursuing a career that discusses sexuality, these outlier women face the potential loss of what had been, in adolescence, one of the most imperative and defining aspects of their lives. Because most AMEA women get married and obtain the "freedom" that comes with a husband, they can escape the extended adolescence that is thrust upon these AMEA women.

What I mean by "extended adolescence" is two things: First, socially, they are left in the state of isolation adolescent Muslim girls had found themselves in *before* they discovered their female Muslim friendships, towards the beginning of their identity development spectrum as "Muslim American girl." Because discovering the community support is one of the major imperative steps in helping a Muslim girl gain confidence, reduce social isolation, and be understood as an individual, not having this open support can stunt identity development and leave an individual wondering where exactly she fits in. The atypical AMEA women I spoke with may have had

171

adolescent friendships, but because of their unique life developments, these fall apart as a *result* of who they see themselves to be. In essence, the extended adolescence happens because there is a regression to social isolation and confusion, at least within Muslim contexts. Secondly, there is an extended adolescence because these women are somehow still seen as children by their socio-religious communities. As mentioned, a woman usually shifts from role to role during emerging adulthood, moving from being a daughter to a wife. If she does not marry, she gets trapped in the role of "daughter" no matter how accomplished she might be. Alternately, even if she is married but is following a professional path that makes people uncomfortable, she is seen as "silly," "naïve," or even "ignorant," much like an unthinking teenager. These types of women are treated with a simultaneous pity and wariness, with community and family members often continuously trying to discipline and "teach" them about the right way to live life.

Like most of American society, AMEA women begin to pay less direct attention to peers as they grow up. Accordingly, the protective factor of specifically female Muslim friendship does shift from adolescence to emerging adulthood within this population. Rather than turning to a larger group of friends at Masjid, AMEA women now tend to find their Muslim social support in more specifically chosen individuals. When I asked whom they turn to with their daily problems or who they might consider their close friends, many AMEA women answered their husbands, "a few friends from undergrad," or family members such as sisters, mothers, or sisters-in-law. In nearly all cases, though, these chosen individuals were Muslims.

However, atypical AMEA women may not have access to some of these socially acceptable forms of support. If a woman is unmarried, she obviously does not have an acceptable partner to turn to for the intimate social, psychological, and emotional support a healthy adult needs since "American" dating is not permitted as an option. If a woman has engaged in socially taboo

behavior that her mother disagrees with or her whole family believes has shamed them, she risks losing the built-in support of family like we saw with Munira and Joumana. Even though legally these women are no longer under the constraint of their parents, developmentally, they are, at least from a Muslim perspective. This can leave them in angry or dishonest relationships with their parents, not unlike a teenager's rebellion. Finally, since common experience are usually the foundations of friendships, those women who remain single or are divorced often feel pushed out of conversations by other Muslim women that revolve around husbands, children, or similar aspects of family life. Even though there may be no blatant exclusion of single or divorced women, because the majority of AMEA women tend to be married by the end of their twenties, married life and all the experiences therein simply becomes the mainstream experience of this minority population. Because "interpersonal resources (i.e., attachment security and social support) are protective factors for well-being during. . . life transitions (Lane and Fink 2015)," atypical AMEA women have a higher vulnerability to depression and isolation as they move through their twenties.

Soraiya is 28, has a master's degree in accounting, works to help get state funding for mental health services for those who are financially struggling, and is a lesbian. Mainstream American society itself has only recently become more accepting of the LGBTQ community, with the federal legalization of gay marriage under the Obama administration; however, there is still much room for progress both politically and socially. If American culture continues to struggle with openly accepting gay individuals as "normal," it should be no surprise that Muslim culture has little tolerance for any kind of sexuality that strays from hetero, since even heterosexuality is only approved of within the context of marriage. Soraiya decided to marry a man in her early twenties, viewing it as her "only chance to have a normal life," but due to

marital abuse and drug use, she divorced. Even as an adolescent, though, she recalls not enjoying the female camaraderie that most other adolescent girls did:

> Um. I've just always been very different from all my friends, so it's kind of like, I'm always like the odd ball. Like, a lot of people will be my friend and all that, but it's like, I always feel like whoever is my best friend is always changing up. I'm notorious for having drama in my life, and just. . . Yeah, you know. It was always a struggle to be understood by—like as a 16-year-old by other 16 year old girls.

A notable developmental sign of being stuck in an extended adolescence is a continued attention to peer opinion. Although in general most emerging adults tend to care less about peer opinion as mentioned, those who continue to be ostracized or feel out of place are inevitably more sensitive to what their peers might think of them because they never found their social home. When I asked Soraiya whether she had ever experienced any sort of prejudice or judgment in a Muslim context, she laughed, as the answer seemed obvious to her:

> Participant: There's prejudice, like, regarding—you know, I don't feel weird when I dress differently from non-Muslims. I feel weird when I dress differently from my Muslim peers. I'm more self-conscious about what I do, what my level of education is, how I look, what my family's like, what sort of people I hang around, etcetera—it's like, when it comes to my Muslim peers, that's when all the anxiety kind of hits usually.
>
> Interviewer: Yeah, and what has conditioned you to have anxiety in that context?
>
> Participant: Um, just always knowing and feeling like I don't fit in with my Muslim peers.

This lack of fitting in was due to the secret of her sexuality that she carried with her since she was a teenager, even though she herself struggled to admit it even inwardly. She experienced a circuitous path to self-knowledge, dictated by what was expected and "normal:"

> I changed a lot—I think, like most of my personality changes happened a lot—some of it happened during my marriage, and the rest happened after my divorce. Because I had to find myself again. But, actually I realized that I had never found myself, so I was really finding myself for the first time ever. So I kind of learned what I like and what I don't like. . . so it's like I finally was kind of figuring out myself.

When I pushed the subject further, asking how she had become so sharply self-aware of *not*

knowing herself and not feeling comfortable about certain things, she confided:

> One thing is that I'm attracted to women and not to men. So that's always been like an
> inside thing. Like I always knew that that was something weird about me, so if everyone is
> talking about boys, I just fake it. and to this day, I fake it, about anything, any time women
> are talking about men stuff, I just fake it all. And so just to live a life where you're
> constantly faking in some way, it's. . . it's very draining. And by the time I get home, it's
> like, I'm just dead tired. You know? Cause it's like, it's very rare that I get to be just who I
> am. Which is also why I've very much been confused about who am I actually? And that's
> why I had to go through such a process of finding myself. But even when I did find myself,
> I still feel like I don't know—it's hard to find yourself, but then to also find people around
> you who you *can* be yourself with.

Soraiya's struggle to "find" herself fits in to the idea of an extended adolescence and how an

adolescent might go through Marcia's (1966) stages of identity. Typical AMEA women do not

have to face this risk of a secondary or tertiary identity re-development as the emerging identities

that they develop during adolescence are never challenged as deeply as women like Soraiya's

are. While Soraiya struggles with the added complication of homosexuality, divorce itself is

often a moment of re-identification in even a heterosexual Muslim woman's life as she has

experienced life as a Muslim adult but now must once again technically revert to parental

authority like a Muslim teenager. The crossed wires of society's views of her and her own views

of herself usually lead to an imperfect outcome, with the woman being comfortable in her own

life and work but only by removing herself from her socio-religious community and leaving that

aspect of her life incomplete.

The forced rawness of Soraiya's experience is clearly challenging for her, and intimate

Muslim social support is a scarce resource. She has not come out to her parents and likely never

will, as "they are disgusted by this realm of sexuality and everything having to do with same-sex

marriage and things like that." But this reticence to reveal her sexuality is not out of a concern

for herself; rather, it is because "it would just be very hurtful for them to hear something like that." Soraiya continues, "They're also like upset that I'm not getting re-married and different things. So I cannot throw that on them as well. So. I would never do that." Even though she is experiencing a violently isolating existential crisis, her respect and love for her parents as a Muslim daughter holds strong, even if her parents cannot truly reciprocate that love and respect for her.

The few hand-chosen friends she has come out to—all Muslim—did not give her any "negative reactions." While these relationships might hold the potential to become stronger sources of social support, as of now, they do not seem to provide Soraiya with too much hope:

> Usually it was pretty supportive, 'cause, I mean, I really made sure I knew exactly who I was coming out to. And, so, like a lot of feeling bad for me and a lot of "That just sucks, man" and I'm like, yeah, it sucks. And what else. . . just, yeah, just a lot of like you know, "Sorry, I can't do anything to help you with that; that just sucks." And I'm like, yeah, I don't expect you to do anything either.

It is this lack of progress towards one's identity completion that is perhaps most disheartening and the biggest developmental risk Soraiya faces. The result of her social isolation and unresolved identity crisis has been clinical depression, therapy, and medication, all of which she again must do her best to hide from her parents as their knowledge of it would only lead to more questions and worrying. At the time of the interview, she had decided to stop therapy but continue with her medication, although she did not sound hopeful about either really addressing the situation, and understandably so. Soraiya clearly sees what the social challenges are, but now is at a seeming dead-end as it is an impossible task to change the religious views of an entire group of people; in fact, her depression does not leave her much energy to even try. She has "found herself;" that self is simply not acceptable to her socio-religious community.

VII.   Help: Turning to assisted coping mechanisms as a coping mechanism

A. Therapy

Even though Soraiya's situation may seem like a dead-end to her, as she sees herself "being alone forever," she has actively embraced a coping mechanism that an increasing number of American Muslim women seem to be turning to: professional mental help. Therapy has become more common as a cultural phenomenon in the U.S. only in roughly the past thirty years, as an increasing number of individuals turn to professional counseling not only for serious mental disorders, but also general self-improvement and guidance. Previously, pursuing any kind of mental help would imply one was irrevocably mentally weak, unstable, or ill, a sign of someone abnormal who could not function in society. Unfortunately, mental help is still heavily stigmatized in some cultures, including the South Asian and Middle Eastern ones many AMEA women have backgrounds in (Mantovani, Pizzolati, and Edge, 2017; Zieger et al., 2016). Not only is therapy seen as taboo in and of itself, but it is also frowned upon within Islamic circles as it is seen to clash with the ultimate mental help: prayer. If one pursues therapy, it is a negative reflection of the strength of one's soul and her relationship with Allah as she is not displaying gratitude for what she has, patience for what might come, and faith in Allah's will.

It is not surprising then, that the AMEA women who do pursue therapy pursue it in private and usually do not share their choice with their family, making it, like so many other aspects of their lives, both a coping mechanism but also a potential risk. About 13% of both the emerging adult and adult cohort have sought therapy, with the adult cohort usually having pursued it when they were emerging adults themselves. The reasons for seeking therapy vary, from needing individual support as one struggles with daily identity issues, to struggling with new marital roles, to dealing with sexual or Islamophobic trauma, to facing severe clinical depression like

Soraiya. If we turn back to Bani, the young woman who attended the respected private university in Houston, got married immediately after she graduated college, earned her master's degree, and then just landed a job that is a perfect fit for her, we might be surprised to learn that she also has repeatedly sought out therapy. At first glance, her life trajectory seems to fit seamlessly into the expectations that both American and Islamic cultures have for her, as she has been both academically/professionally and socially successful (i.e., married). However, it is clear that her success has not come without a cost. A few minutes after our interview was over, she asked me to turn my recorder back on as she needed to add something about her experience. Here is what she said:

> Yeah, basically, like, I have been to therapy. I have had mental health issues. Because it has been hard. . . Like being engaged and trying to decide what to do in college—yeah, I needed help. And I didn't have anyone who was telling me like, Yeah, this is an option, this is good, or this is gonna help you. I just did it because I knew I needed it. And you know, now I'm becoming more of an advocate because it's just like, I wish someone had told me it was okay. . . 'Cause it's not easy. Especially navigating all the cultural stuff on top of if you have a tendency towards depression or anxiety or whatever it is. It can be hard to compound that on top of living in Trump's America. So yeah, I think that's something that—that taboo against going to therapy, especially in our culture, where it's like, Oh, I don't need to talk to someone else about; we can figure it out, we can go to masjid and pray on it. And sometimes that's just—you need a professional. And you need someone objective.

Even though Bani may have outwardly cleanly hit certain life benchmarks an AMEA woman is expected to, it is clear she struggled with many of the risk factors previously discussed, from implied Islamophobia to not knowing where her professional life was heading due to knowing her life would soon be informed by her husband's whereabouts, not her own. I surmise women like Bani particularly struggle with this latter issue more than other AMEA women because of the adolescent factor of "smartness." Bani clearly falls into the category of women who (rightfully) pride themselves on their academic success, and for whom academic success becomes part of their identity. While other participants in my study followed similar life

178

trajectories as Bani, getting married soon after college, moving to their husbands' cities, and getting well-paying jobs there, they did not express the same struggles as Bani. This is because Bani likely imagined a much larger professional future for herself than has yet come to fruition, and her awareness of this only becomes sharper when other people point out that she has, up until now, been so "smart:"

> Participant: So I continued and finished all my pre-med requirements, but I dropped out of the program that was basically going to give me guaranteed admission to a Texas med school. So, I was kind of on that path hardcore. But yeah, I kind of had to make the difficult decision. And that's something that I've only come to accept recently. And so getting this job kind of is a reality for me, that you don't *have* to be a doctor to be successful or to help people or something like that. . . So I was considering, even grappling with it, in terms of like, What will people think? And will they think I'm not smart enough or something? Or will they realize it really was my choice? And I decided to do that, or not do it right now.

> Interviewer: What "people" are you referring to specifically?

> Participant: There have been a lot of people, even at masjid, who are like, "Oh, you know, you went to [university name redacted], why don't you—you can do something more, you know? Just your MPH, what are you gonna do with that?" Like, before, I knew what I was gonna do with it. I just had a vague idea that I was interested in public health so I did my master's. So every chance people would bring it up and make me wonder about it more, and question myself.

Bani had found herself in a strange circuitous position where she had adhered appropriately to Muslim social norms by choosing a local university and marrying at the right time, but then had that same Muslim society also questioning whether she was being as professionally successful as she could be. The answer seems to be an obvious "no," as she likely would have become a doctor had she not been weighing her move to Dallas and the idea of starting a new life as a wife in a new family as part of the equation, and I suspect she also knows it; hence the initial self-questioning and discomfort with her new life.

Bani first sought out therapy in undergrad after getting engaged and realizing her plan for her future may not work out as she had envisioned even as she continued with her leadership

179

positions and coursework on campus. She took advantage of the counseling included in her student services, giving her the freedom to see a therapist without having to inform her parents or rely on them financially: "I was just under a lot of pressure. And I wasn't having good thoughts about myself. So it was something that I just needed to cope. And I did it again in graduate school. And I did it again when I was unemployed. And it was one of the best decisions I ever made." Even though she was initially hesitant to admit she went to therapy out of fear it would "make her [look] weak," Bani is now a strong proponent of it, especially for other AMEA women: "It's probably something a lot of women in our community face, but we just don't talk about it."

Bani's words ring true. Another participant, six years Bani's senior and someone who did not follow the same socially successful life trajectory as Bani, also confessed a mental health struggle after the official interview had concluded. However, this participant did not seek out mental help due to a combination of fearing cultural stigma and not knowing where exactly to turn for help regarding her particular struggles, believing them to be too culturally specific for an American therapist to really understand. She let me know she had been suicidal twice in her life because of the ways she had been spoken to about marriage. The message had been driven home that she needed to be married not just according to her religion, but *for* the religion itself. She would be considered an incomplete follower of the faith if she remained single. At the same time, beauty norms—and men—told her that she was not attractive enough to marry, and so she might want to consider getting a job or being serious about learning to live on her own. Even though she now loves her single life and the financial independence she has worked hard to achieve over the course of nearly a decade, she understandably has difficulty forgetting the emotional trauma of being told not just by her parents but by her entire religious culture that she

was not complete as a person and lacked worth unless she was married.

Since she was not in contact with a mental help professional, I asked what brought her back from the edge of suicide; the participant says she is not sure. Whether it was because she has not yet completely processed her feelings or because the trauma of that time in her life has blocked her memory is unclear. Unfortunately, this suicidal experience may not be unique to her, even though she was in the minority within my sample. In fact, acculturative stress and perceived discrimination have been found to increase suicide attempts in minority emerging adult populations, with Asian Americans reporting the highest levels of acculturative stress amongst the participants (Gomez, Miranda, & Polanco 2011). Since second generation AMEA women are usually from Asian cultural backgrounds, it would not be surprising if other women also secretly harbored harmful thoughts against themselves.

Although Muslim culture encourages women—and men—to remain quiet about psychological issues, an added risk for AMEA women coming forward with trauma in order to seek help is the macrosystem within which they would be doing it. That is, Muslim women often do not speak out about trauma or social problems found within their American Muslim communities because they do not want to risk bringing further negative attention from mainstream America to their home communities (HEART/MAWPF). The political macrosystem intimately affects American Muslim women to the point where a personal decision about revealing abuse or suicide attempts might mutate into a sensationalized "Muslim abuse" or "Muslim suicide attempt." In addition to the difficulties of finding coping resources and social support within their Muslim communities—the communities that should most understand their experiences—AMEA women grapple with the fear that their private trauma will become public news and so often suffer in silence.

The confidentiality of American therapy services serves as a buffer against this fear, though, making the benefits of choosing it as a coping mechanism outweigh the risks of individual and community exposure. Marjaan, an adult participant who is now 38 and a working professional, recalls how she eventually sought professional help after a number of Islamophobic assaults she experienced as an emerging adult in the months after 9/11. One major incident she recalls is being "yelled at on a plane." It was a red-eye flight, so she, like most of the other passengers, was exhausted. As she was waiting in line to take her seat, she heard some yelling behind her which she ignored at first. As she began paying attention to the words, she realized they were Muslim slurs like "sand nigger" and "towelhead," references to the hijab she had been wearing:

> Nobody said a word. And I remember being super, at first, scared, and then I got humiliated, and then I got *mad*. Because I wasn't doing a thing, and here was this guy yelling at me and threatening me. So I have a black belt in karate, and I just wanted to punch him in the face, but then I knew that all people would see was the little brown girl with the scarf on hitting some 75-year-old man in the face, and then I'd get taken off the plane. And so, I just kept my mouth shut.

The man even attempted to get up and physically shove her, but the line happened to move forward at that exact moment so the contact was averted. Still, Marjaan remembers she was on the verge of tears for the entire flight, the awareness that not one person around her had shown concern for her weighing heavily upon her.

Although she experienced other "hurtful" macro and micro-aggressions, what finally drove Marjaan to seek therapy was yet another physical Islamophobic assault, this time in broad daylight on a sidewalk. A man lunged at her with a knife when she was out window shopping with a friend. Fortunately, her friend pushed her out of the way and tackled the assailant:

> I don't remember what happened, honestly, because I think I went into shock. And then I

think I had a little bit of an emotional breakdown, and I had to take medical leave from work and go see a therapist, because I think I quit functioning at that point. I didn't know what to do. I was scared all the time. I didn't know how to handle anything. And so going to see that therapist was important because I think in my head, I define myself as strong, so I couldn't admit that I was scared. But if you can't admit the problem, then you can't fix it. So for me, it was actually learning how to strengthen vulnerability. It's okay to be vulnerable, and it's okay to hurt, and you have to have space for that, to be able to process and move.

B. *AMEA women-driven support groups*

Even though within-group resources are scarce for AMEA women, they are not non-existent. There has been an active, focused effort on the part of a few AMEA women who are rising community leaders for their own groups to create the space Marjaan is talking about. HEART Women and Girls, a non-profit organization based in Chicago founded in 2011, focuses on sex education and sexual abuse recovery within faith-based communities. Although their ultimate aim is to reach beyond Muslim American communities, right now, the focus is mainly on these as the founder and executive director of the organization is a Muslim American woman herself. HEART has published written resources that offer discrete help to survivors of abuse but also speak to everyday situations about maintaining healthy sexuality. The organization also hosts free talks and events around the city, hoping to increase awareness and reduce abuse within the community. However, because sexuality and abuse are inherently intimate topics, cultural taboos aside, the work is difficult and responses can be tepid. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that a Muslim woman is speaking openly about these topics, as the founder tells me:

> If I was a guy making the same claims, people would not challenge me as much. If I was a guy making the same claims, people would not . . . comment about my work and my team, that, you know, these are Muslim women who are. . . promoting these secular ideas under the guise of being Muslim. And, you know, under the guise of hijab. . . We have never, to this day, endorsed any of the things that Islam doesn't endorse, like premarital sex and things like that. But simply because we talk about those issues, it's conflated with, "Oh, these women just want everyone to have sex.

Carving out the space in which to speak safely about sex, sexual abuse, and marital abuse might be difficult, but HEART is not planning to stop speaking any time soon. The highest impact the organization usually has is through one-on-one interactions or email interactions, where privacy is more likely to be maintained. Ultimately, the aim is to create a safe space for Muslim Americans to discuss sexuality, cope with sexual trauma within a familiar context, and move on to develop healthier lives, even if this happens one life at a time.

Masjid al Rabia, also in Chicago, offers a more spiritually-aimed safe space, their motto being, "Spiritual care for marginalized Muslims." Founded at the beginning of 2017, it is a young organization that focuses on offering an exclusion-free place of worship with women-centered services and spaces. Al Rabia has established its own "Pillars of Inclusivity," a clear spin off Islam's well-known pillars of faith that followers must adhere to, and promotes the following philosophy: "All Muslims deserve an environment in which we can practice our faith without fear of exclusion or violence. We don't believe it is asking too much to be uncompromisingly ourselves - as women, as queer and trans people, as 'minority Muslims' - and still have a faith community we can come home to" (masjidalrabia.org.) Because the organization is run by AMEA women who are themselves quite young and financially constrained, there is no single place the al Rabia community meets for prayer; rather, the location shifts weekly depending on which spaces can be made available to them.

Initiatives like HEART and Masjid al Rabia are promising shifts in the socio-religious landscape of American Islam. Still, they face many challenges on grounds of acceptance, leading to unstable funding and risking their permanence. Even if the organizations themselves might prove ephemeral with time, though, the women behind them signal a deeper change in the AMEA population. Also, while HEART and al Rabia are certainly welcome resources within the

community, they are still minorities within the minority. Normalizing therapy, mental help, and social resources within the community is a necessary next step to help bring the entire community forward into healthier, less fragmented lives.

VIII.   Settling into Selfhood: From Becoming to Being

In general, AMEA women experience less identity shifting and reduced questioning of their identities, both from within and without, as they move forward in their twenties. Like most healthy American adults, they become more self-confident and less impressionable and gain a resilience against the threats they faced during adolescence. However, AMEA women do remain a distinct population both within the larger context of the mainstream American population, but also within their socio-religious populations. This is because they do continue to face certain risks that are specific to them as a group. For example, they must deal with gender-selective Muslim pressures regarding education and marriage while at the same time performing damage control for the Muslim womanhood stereotype in the American cultural sphere. While some women choose to disregard others' opinions entirely, dubbing them as issues that are "not [their] problem," ultimately, it seems the strongest force on AMEA women's identities is their Muslim background. No matter how disillusioned an AMEA woman might be by her socio-religious group, because of the importance her Home and Masjid cultures usually held for her as an adolescent, dismissing them entirely when forming her stable adult identity is difficult. For those who are not disappointed in their faith communities as emerging adults, the influence is much more openly—and proudly—embraced. Increasingly, AMEA women identify as Muslims who also are Americans rather than as Americans who have Muslim backgrounds. The heavier emphasis on a Muslim identity simplifies life decision-making and stabilizes identity questions, erasing the lines of a "divided self" an adolescent Muslim girl struggles with.

Success is tricky for an AMEA woman, but not impossible. Within the American realm, her expectations and desires of going to college, landing internships, and getting jobs are mediated by her awareness of both Islamic cultural restrictions and American perceptions of herself as a Muslim woman. Accordingly, she incorporates her American side *into* the Muslim side by only applying to places located in the appropriate city and that are friendly to diversity. The confidence and self-assurance of my fourth longitudinal participant, Farida, now 21, is infectious. Her positive and supportive relationship with her parents, especially her father, and her move away to Austin from Houston for college sets her slightly apart from her other Houston AMEA peers and likely reinforces her positivity about her life path. Even she, though, is cognizant of the reality of being a young Muslim woman in America and says she only pursues academic and professional opportunities that she "know[s] will not cause her too much trouble." A journalism major on a pre-med track, Farida currently works for a small publication in Austin that she describes as "not the mainstream media" and a place that "automatically attracts a lot more diversity." Similarly, a few other AMEA women noted how they have "always applied to places that looked like they would accept racially, ethnically, religiously diverse people, you know?" Following this approach leads to AMEA women being "pretty successful:" "Like, I got into the medical school I wanted, I got the transfer I wanted, I got the residency I wanted, I got the first job I wanted. So, I can't ever say that hijab or being Muslim has prevented me from getting the things I want, you know?"

Professional success is arguably secondary to marital success for an AMEA woman, at least from an Islamic socio-religious perspective, as the former is often subject to the whims of the latter. From a cultural perspective, marital success for an AMEA woman focuses on age; she should get married as soon as possible after—or during—her college years. From an individual

perspective, marital success involves marrying a man who is open to having more flexible

gender roles than her immigrant parents and finding a freedom to finally behave as an individual

adult. Because AMEA women usually marry fellow Muslim American men, even if they do not

intimately know them, the simple fact of the men also being American shortens the distance

between them and often implies many shared ideas regarding women working or maintaining a

degree of independence. Out of all my married participants, only two women married non-

American Muslim men. Even these men, though, have or will move to the U.S., allowing

second-generation American Islamic culture to still reign over the marriage.

The AMEA women whose identities and development are most difficult to qualify and

categorize are those whom I have called the Misfits. For this group of women, neither their

socio-religious communities nor their secular American communities can really offer a unified

simple answer to the challenges they face. While some challenges might be resolved with an

introduction—for example, Laila might serendipitously meet a man who satisfies her

intellectually and emotionally and also happens to be Muslim—others, like Soraiya's, will surely

take more time as the acceptance of homosexuality requires public cultural effort. The extended

adolescence the Misfits are trapped in is not a reflection of their individual levels of maturity;

rather, it is a comment on the limited social views of their religious communities and the

inflexibility of immigrant religion. The psychological stress and isolation that these women must

compartmentalize, ignore, or accept on a daily basis is an obvious developmental risk as it

engages important mental energy that could otherwise be committed to professional and personal

endeavors. Even so, it is this group of women who has the highest potential of showing just how

resilient an AMEA woman can be, as each one of the individuals who might qualify as Misfits

continue to endure in their daily lives despite their socio-religious challenges. As simplistic as it

might sound, perhaps the only real answer is that change will come with the next generation.

Chapter 4: Adulthood: The Final Chapter?

For the sake of this study, adulthood was limited to women in their thirties, individuals who were the oldest of the second-generation Muslim American women due to parental/first generation immigration patterns of the 1970's. Women in the adult cohort purportedly experienced 9/11 *after* their formative developmental years (i.e., adolescence), so examining their experiences, perceptions, and self-perceptions relative to the American political macrosystem will prove helpful in opening a conversation regarding just how much political stigma against Muslims affects individual development, resilience, and life trajectories. In addition to highlighting how vulnerability might or might not be affected if a large-scale political upheaval targeting one's socio-religious group occurs during adolescence, the adult cohort provides insight into the trends of their own age group, independent of the emerging adult and adolescent cohorts. Even though originally adult women were interviewed mainly to examine how outside non-Muslim influences might shape identity, within-group identity challenges were also serendipitously discovered during the research process. New life experiences such as motherhood and stabilized living situations cement the adult Muslim women's identities, making them more comfortable and self-perceptive and less self-conscious. It might be argued that any influence from the macro- or microsystems at this stage would be most dependent on the woman's personality and self-perceived identity, as by now, all major developmental stages have been either completed or internalized in such a way that they have become part of the woman herself, a movement toward self-actualization that is not different from any American individual's development.

What does remain different, though, is the memory of having to had create an identity and a space of home from scratch. Even though Muslim American adult women (MAAW from

189

hereon) may have had an advantage over the adolescent and emerging adult cohorts regarding not having a political spotlight on them as they went through their daily high school lives, they still recall almost implacable feelings of "just not fitting in" and "something being just a bit off." "Islamophobia" only became a media and academic term after 9/11; in some ways, the younger cohorts have an advantage over the MAAW, as at least they had a term for what they were experiencing. Certainly, the Islamophobic run-off from Trump's campaign and election was met with blatant verbal non-Muslim allyship for Muslims.

Even so, MAAW as a group realize the advantage they had in coming of age in the privacy of their individual lives before their identities became politicized and the acceptability of their faith questioned. Overall, this did serve as a developmental protective factor, allowing MAAW a degree more of American "normalcy" during their teenage years than their younger cohorts. While MAAW lives are by no means entirely free from prejudice then or now, they were ironically protected as adolescents by being ignored by American culture. The un-acknowledgement of the American population regarding Islam and Islamic culture, while certainly potentially isolating and stressful, also allowed an innocent freedom of expression that AMEA women and adolescent Muslim girls no longer have.

THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM: ANOTHER OVERIVEW

Following the research pattern from the adolescent and emerging adult cohorts, the questionnaire again was only used as a supplement to the interviews for the adult cohort. The structure of the adult questionnaire most closely parallels the emerging adult cohort, particularly regarding the 6-point Likert scale. Just as caution was used when comparing questionnaire responses between the adolescent and emerging adult cohorts due to the 7-point Likert scale on the adolescent questionnaire, caution will be exercised when comparing the adolescent and adult

cohorts for the same reason. As before, the questionnaire responses both record demographic data but also provide clean responses to defining statements that were explored in the interviews but also used to enhance data analysis. The adult interview guide, questionnaire, questionnaire responses, and code tables can all be found in Appendix E.

The most unified response out of the Likert scale questions was to the prompt, "I have not always thought of myself as Muslim." Ninety percent of the participants chose "6," disagreeing entirely with the statement, while the remaining 10% chose a "5." At the same time, the trend towards a confirmation of an American identity also continued. The adult cohort responded even more confidently in response to "I consider myself very American," with the vast majority—65%--choosing "1" in response to the prompt, and another 30% landing between a "2" and a "3." This increased open embracing of one's American identity is clearly not a reflection of moving away from one's Muslim identity; rather, it supports the notion of a more unified single identity, one that does not shy away from either its American or Islamic aspects.

Some of the more disparately spread responses were recorded in response to the following prompts, with each Likert scale point receiving between 5%-25%:

- I have not encountered many challenges as a result of being a Muslim woman.

- My religion does not affect the way most people interact with me.

- Being a Muslim has not affected the opportunities I have had to pursue my goals.

I attribute these mixed responses to the same factors that were present in the AMEA cohort: a simple fact of individual lives, unique experiences, and personal factors. Part of the "individual life" aspect does include choices such as what to major in and consequently which career to go into. As a number of both AMEA and MAAW participants said, "The doctor thing—you know how it is with South Asian parents." Even though Muslim daughters may not be encouraged as

much as Muslim sons to develop a career, there is a known bias within the South Asian Muslim community towards pursuing medical degrees, a fact that could provide less resistance and fewer challenges for a woman who did want to become a doctor. This could potentially result in a more positive response to the prompt, "I have not encountered many challenges as a result of being a Muslim woman" for a MAAW who is a doctor as opposed to a MAAW who chose to pursue a different career.

Although adolescents were asked about what they thought of marriage in the interviews, only the emerging adult and adult questionnaires included a direct prompt about it due to it being more age appropriate. The prompt, "Marriage is an important step to becoming an adult" was given to both, and an interesting shift in opinion is recorded between the cohorts: While nearly one-third of the AMEA women agreed completely with the statement ("1"), not a single adult woman agreed with it to this degree. Thirty percent of the adult cohort did choose "2," but the majority of the adult cohort *disagreed* with the statement, with 65% of the participants falling between a "4" and a "6." Because marriage, education, and career are closely linked in Muslim American women's experiences, let us also consider the prompt about work within this same context. The vast majority of AMEA women (95%) reported affirmatively ("1") when asked whether they plan or planned on working after their education was complete. The paired prompt in the adulthood cohort was, "Holding a job is an important part of adulthood." Half of the participants agreed completely ("1"), and the remaining majority (45%) marked either a "2" or a "3." This comparison might tentatively point to a shift in priorities as Muslim women settle into their identities as adults. While the majority of adult women are married, an even higher proportion are well-educated (graduate education). If we view education as an avenue to a career as American college culture encourages, this decreased emphasis on marriage and maintained

emphasis on career signals a shift in socio-cultural views as women grow up, perhaps allowing for more of the "American" aspect of the independent individual to leak into the "Muslim" aspect of personal life.

Another significant overlap between the AMEA and MAAW questionnaire responses occurs in the short answer section. Like the AMEA cohort, the adult cohort also usually only receives the question, "Where are you from?" typically once a month. It appears that the frequency of this question plateaus here after a Muslim woman enters her twenties. Presumably other related identity-invasive questions also lose momentum and frequency as the origin question usually serves as the inlet to questions about hijab, Islam, and ethnicity. This reduction in questioning aids in stabilizing Muslim women's identities by allowing them private space to establish who they are. However, they do carry their experiences of Questions from adolescence with them, a facet that is factored into identity formation. (There is a difference in the types of Questions the adolescent/AMEA cohorts face and the ones the adult cohort faced when they were younger; this will be discussed in a later section.)

While the main research question fueling the interviews of the adult cohort centered around identity development pre-9/11, other facets of their experiences were also discovered during data analysis. These can be found in *Tables 13-15* below, organized according to PVEST's (Spencer) risks and coping mechanisms/protective factors; percentages reflect the proportion of participants affected by any given factor:

Table 16. RISKS: GROUP OVERLAPS

Motherhood vs. Career
52%

Table 17. RISKS: GROUP-SPECIFIC

Unmosqued	Islamophobia: 9/11 (retroactive)	Islamophobia: Donald Trump	Marriage (abuse; divorce; single)	Education (retroactive: during EA)
38%	81%	43%	38%	81%

Table 18. COPING MECHANISMS/PROTECTIVE FACTORS: GROUP-SPECIFIC

Established identity with age	Third space	Marriage	Education	Positive life factors (children/career)
95%	38%	62%	81%	95%

As with the analysis of each cohort, the percentages found within each category are recorded according to how many participants reported instances of any given risk or protective factor. Furthermore, one participant could simultaneously experience a single life factor as both a risk and a protective factor at different points in her life, e.g., marriage. The tables above give a general sense of the women interviewed, but because there are always exceptions and subtleties, a more nuanced discussion is needed to truly understand the population.

RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Delving into group overlaps regarding risks, coping mechanisms, and protective factors with the MAAW cohort proves to be a bit unsurprising and dry. Even more than the AMEA cohort, the risks of the adult cohort tend to blend into the typical American adult woman's experiences. Of course, the risks AMEA women face as minority women persist, as well as group-specific risks regarding mosque spaces and Islamophobia. While I certainly do not dismiss the importance of the group-specific risks, overall, MAAW women seem to have become stable, average American women, likely due to the identities they crafted over a period of twenty years. They have learned to become part of the mainstream while still balancing Islam, prejudice (from both within and without their religious communities), and work and/or family life.

RISK FACTORS: GROUP OVERLAPS

I. **A Struggle with the Juggle: Motherhood versus Career**

The main risk that the interviews gave light to that MAAW women share with the social groups they overlap with—second generation American women, minority American women, and middle class White American women—is motherhood and how it tends to adversely affect career

development. Although middle class American women have made significant progress within the workforce, moving throughout the twentieth century from only staying at home to becoming secretaries to becoming CEO's, the gender bias and subtle sexism that AMEA women discuss stubbornly maintains itself in most professions in the U.S. today. Even if an American woman establishes a civil contract with her spouse that she will have gainful employment outside of the home—a surprisingly persistent challenge even in contemporary America—she faces other challenges once she actually enters the workforce. Women are often disregarded or overlooked for high-demand positions due to a fear of pregnancy and consequent maternity leave; pregnant women even more so (Houston 2005).

The past twenty years has seen increased attempts to rectify the prejudice against working pregnant women or mothers in the West through the introduction of "genderblind" terms in organizations. This means that more companies are including clauses that do not financially punish new mothers for maternity leave, that allow paternity leave, and that do not automatically assume that the primary caregiver of a family is the woman. However, researchers have found that this new genderblind system actually encourages a maintenance of old views as it allows subtle sexism to casually exist under the guise of not officially condoning it (Smithson and Stockoe 2005). It is still only women that are asked the question of how they maintain a "work-life balance," implying that the male counterpart in a family is allowed to focus only on work.

American women themselves might unconsciously prioritize a man's work over a woman's as they, too, have been acculturated within the same cultural system. Some women who might choose to work from home claim it is to maximize time and be more productive; however, "the different temporal demands of employment and motherhood [result] in little

opportunity for personal leisure" (Hilbrecht et al 2008). Any time saved from commuting is given directly back in caregiving, with the mother's work schedule revolving around the children's, based on the ideology of "intensive mothering" (Hilbrecht et al 2008). The mother often still feels as if it is a privilege to work rather than a right and so consequently attempts to be both a productive member of the larger community while also still being the primary caregiver at home. Even in the most egalitarian marriages in the U.S. today, women on average tend to perform more domestic duties than men (Houston 2005).

The high-demand hustle that working mothers perform is a silent one. Again, because they often consider themselves lucky to be working at all, women do not want to bring attention to how difficult the implied positioning of a working mother is, especially within the workplace itself. Even if maternity or child-related leave might be warranted, women hesitate to ask for it for fear of appearing as if they are not committed to their jobs. When asked how they view their work-life balance, female academics had one of four replies: a personal management task, an impossible ideal, detrimental to their careers, or unmentionable at work (Toffoletti and Starr 2016). By not being able to speak openly about an integral aspect of their lives, American working women risk missing opportunities, increasing stress and dividing attention, and not fulfilling their maximum potential.

Note that I have been stressing that the working mother paradigm is one that is specific to the middle—and possibly upper—classes. Lower class women often do not have the choice of working; they simply have to. They also often work multiple jobs as minimum wage workers must in order to support a family. Mothers in the lower classes in the U.S. therefore have a strikingly different relationship with work, one that merits thorough attention for its own sake. Additionally, research on the work-life balance has largely focused on heterosexual child-rearing

couples. However, as the married women in this dissertation all fall into the middle or middle-upper socio-economic status bracket and are all heterosexual, I forego a more detailed SES and sexual orientation discussion here.

The current demographic of MAAW who are mothers within my sample consists of highly-qualified, under-experienced individuals. If an AMEA woman follows a life path typical for her, she gets married shortly after (or even during) her undergraduate education. While she might pursue a graduate education, it is likely that by the time she completes it, she will have had her first baby as a MAAW. If pregnancy and motherhood inhibit working, the population is left with intelligent, educated women who know little about the quotidian realities of the fields they have mastered in theory. While this trend may not be diametrically opposed to the trend in the general American female population as many academically high-achieving women are "reevaluating domesticity" and choosing motherhood over immediate careers after college or graduate school (Menon, 2013, p. 3), the difference lies in the perception of choice. Muslim American women often feel they have no choice but to step away from their careers as within their socio-cultural contexts, there is no *re*evaluation of domesticity happening; it remains valued as the priority in a woman's life.

Of the eleven mothers in the adult cohort, less than half were working at the time of the interview. Of these five, only one held a full-time position that required her to leave the home for the day. The remaining four had orchestrated flexible or part-time positions that allowed them either to only be absent from home for a maximum of a few hours three days a week (e.g., teaching at a community college) or to work for a few hours a day from home. The reasoning across the board followed the "intensive mothering" ideology, with participants explaining that flexible work schedules allowed more time to be given to children and household maintenance.

The one participant who was working full-time, Joumana, is a single divorced mother of three who holds a research position at an elite university in Chicago. Even though she finds her work gratifying and enjoyable, it likely is also the case that she *has* to work full-time in order to support her elementary-aged school children. The remaining four working mothers had the freedom to work only a few days a week as their spouses were the main breadwinners in their households.

As we may recall from the discussion of the AMEA cohort, Islamic ideology at the least encourages and at worst demands men to be the primary earners for their families; Muslim women often, in theory, agree with this view of family life. In their interviews, nearly all adolescent and AMEA women said they probably would like to work after college, though they would expect their spouses to have stable jobs regardless of what they themselves were doing. In the questionnaires, one hundred percent of the women responded affirmatively when asked if they planned to work after college or graduate school. It is apparent that there is a value conflict present in how Muslim American women view their own careers, created and then exacerbated by the differing value systems of Islamic and American work/income ideologies. This value conflict also can be seen in the discrepancy between what MAAW agree "is an important part of adulthood" on the questionnaire—"holding a job"—and how their lived experiences actually pan out. While other minority religious groups might also encourage only men to work outside the home, the same difference arises as we saw in the AMEA cohort between Muslim women and their minority religion counterparts: The former actually wish to be part of mainstream society in a way the latter do not (Fader 2009; Hawley 2009). Accordingly, as an individual, a MAA woman might be passionate about her career, but that same woman in the role of wife comes to see her relationship with her work differently. Motherhood entering the picture only complicates

the scales even more.

The MAAW who were not working at the time I spoke with them had all halted—or in some ideal cases, paused—their careers or jobs due to pregnancy. One 33-year-old participant from Houston, Razina, had actually been accepted to dental school when her life path suddenly changed: She got pregnant and never went. While she acknowledges that a baby in and of itself would not have stopped her from dentistry, it was the amalgamation of her living situation, personal stress levels, and responsibilities at home that made her decide she could not handle becoming a mother and becoming a dentist at the same time. In fact, she and her new husband had both applied to dental school and both gotten accepted; only her husband went on to pursue his degree., though. When I asked her if she would ever consider re-applying and going back now that her two young children attend school, the answer was a resounding no. Razina does not regret her decision, though at the same time, she wonders how different her life would have been had she not gotten pregnant.

Many women, Muslim and otherwise, do attempt to work after their children are old enough to be left with another caretaker. However, even then the stress of balancing home and work is often overwhelming. Afreen, a Houston native, explains:

> Participant: I was working through college and when I got married, I was still working. And then, when I had my first child, I took some time off. And then around when he turned one, I was like, Okay, I'll go back to work. And it was a nightmare. So.

> Interviewer: Why was it a nightmare?

> P: Because. . . there was a lot of pressure points. And as a mother, I ended up having to deal with a lot of those pressure points. Do you want me to define that? Like, pressure point, meaning like there are certain things that has to be done at a certain time with respect to at home, with respect to my son, with respect to my job, and a lot of the work, I also had to bring home. And it was just getting to be too much. And I also noticed what was happening at the time, that I was still responsible for a lot of the household chores, and my husband wouldn't be. And that felt like that was just too much, so then I decided to quit. Or not quit, but I basically taught one year, and then I was like, you know, when he's in pre-school, then I'll go back to work, but then I got pregnant with my second one, and then my third one, so

I'm like, okay. It's just the amount of energy and attention it takes to properly raise three kids—at least for myself, I cannot multitask it. For me, I was in survival mode, and I didn't want to be in survival mode. So, here I am. But at the same time, now, it's like, you know, we went to school and college, and we intellectually challenged ourselves, or at least I did, so that is a bit challenging because I do miss the adult interactions and all of that, so. It's always in the back of my mind, like, okay, what am I gonna do? Or how am I gonna be happy in that sense?

Afreen ends her thought with the deeper question of happiness and fulfillment, the main reason why most MAAW choose to work. It was clear during the interview that she felt as if she was wasting her education to a certain degree, as she has little non-family adult contact on a daily basis. Again, although there is no way of accurately confirming this as Afreen has obviously moved past her adolescence, she would have made a likely candidate for a teenage girl who valued her own "smartness" and used it as a way to navigate her various contexts, ultimately inviting it in as part of her stable identity. Because she feels she is not implementing her education through a career or job, her wistfulness towards the idea is understandable. In fact, she bluntly states, "And there are days where I am, like, really sad about that, but at the same time, I mean, I wanted children."

This latter sentiment is important to recognize: Like many MAAW, Afreen wanted children herself; motherhood was not forced upon her. Another participant from Houston whose career never took off because it simply never began also says that not being able to "pursue [her] career in public relations" was "something natural," as her "whole path shifted" after getting married and having the children she wanted. MAAW women are not victims of cultural factors, although they are forced to make difficult decisions and, like many American women, have to pick one or the other when it comes to children or a career. However, the situation is arguably slightly more complex for MAAW than the average American woman due to the way her identity has developed from adolescence through adulthood. Even though not having to work for money *is* a

luxury, at the same time, not being able to work when one wants to can be detrimental to one's happiness. If being productive and intellectually active has become part of one's stable identity, as it has for Afreen, not being able to exercise that part of one's self can be disheartening. "Until they become the human beings [she] want[s] them to be," though, Afreen's children "are her full-time job."

Even those MAAW who had done much of the groundwork for a successful career before they got pregnant now struggle with seriously entering the workforce after absences of up to a decade. We met Fouzia, 37, in the emerging adult section as she recalled how she had seen marriage as a door to freedom from parental control. Interestingly, she notes specifically that it was *not* getting pregnant that made her feel she "missed her calling in life," but getting married in general. However, if we look to how she describes her life path, pregnancy and motherhood do seem to play a determining role:

> So, I just started working about seven months ago. I took a hiatus when my first child was born, so I've been out of the work force for ten years. I graduated undergrad with a degree in English and a minor in—at that time it was MIS, which was management information systems. . . So then I worked for two years right after I got married, and then I got pregnant. And then once my daughter was born, I stopped. And I went back [to] square one, I guess, with a small IT company close to home. Maybe twenty-five minutes from home.

Fouzia emphasizes that her new job is "close to home" without me having asked, the reason for which became more apparent as we continued talking:

Interviewer: So how has that been, being back in the work force?

Participant: It was really daunting at first because, like I said, I'm 37, and a lot of people who are my age are now in management positions just because they've worked up that ladder and stayed within corporate America, whereas I took a very long break to raise my kids. So, I'm going back, and people who are my age are doing a lot more. They're a lot more well off and more successful than I am, and I'm just kind of starting in the beginning.

I'm figuring it out. Especially with technology, things have changed so much, and I'm still taking my time learning the odds and ends of how things work. And also, I think, from a more personal perspective, it's been hard juggling everything at home, too, as far as—my kids are still very little. I have a son, he's nine, and my daughter's eleven. So still have to take care of home stuff, like cooking, cleaning, things like that. So, it's hard juggling everything, I would say.

It seems no matter how old the children become, whether just a toddler or entering their teens, MAA mothers continue to struggle with the "juggling [of] everything."

Attempting to develop a career while being a mother does have an additional specific cultural risk for MAAW. Within the professional realm, a working MAA mother must negotiate the usual prejudice against minority women, stereotypical views of Muslims, and sexism. However, within the Islamic socio-cultural realm, she might face additional prejudice for being a working mother. While negative views of working mothers were pervasive until recently even in mainstream U.S. culture (Houston 2005), the communal nature of Islamic communities makes any social judgments pointed and personal; a MAAW will always know when she is being talked about. Consequently, if her child makes any socio-cultural mistake that reflects a lack of Islamic knowledge, the verdict usually claims that a working mother will never have time to appropriately do her most important job: making her children into good Muslims. While passing on the faith and imbuing particular morals in their children is certainly on the agenda for most MAA mothers, as we see, that is not the only thing they "wanted." However, the judgement experienced by MAAW seems to have a much lower impact than social judgments passed on adolescents and AMEA women. Again, this is likely because adult Muslim women simply do not have the time nor the emotional wavelength to engage with these negative opinions; they have learned to prioritize what is most important to themselves. Additionally, though, the judgement is felt less because it actually *is* less. While a few conservative members of the community might

be upset that a MAAW is not at home and attentive to her family all her waking hours, for the most part, she is actually now free to do what she wishes as she has hit two integral life points: marriage and motherhood. To most people in her socio-religious circle, this cinches her place within a Muslim community as she has not only married a Muslim, but has produced more now to carry the community into the future. There is little genuine fear that she will wander and become "too independent" or "too Americanized."

The weak risk that communal judgment presents is actually outweighed by the benefit of a communal system for a MAAW who might want to go back to work after having had a child. Although it still remains challenging, re-entering the workforce can be facilitated for a MAAW if she has close communal support. Family members such as mothers-in-law or mothers often take care of a child if the mother needs to step out for a few hours, an arrangement that is possible only because of the "not moving away from home" concept AMEA women faced during their college years. Close family friends can also step in if family members are not present. However, although there is an awareness of this communal support system on the part of MAAW, it is invoked sparingly and only in case of emergencies. It is rarer still for a Muslim husband himself to stay home to be the caregiver while his wife goes back to work; this is perhaps one of the last lived strongholds of the first adult generation on the second.

RISK/PROTECTIVE FACTORS: GROUP-SPECIFIC

II.   Motherhood versus Masjid: Unmosqued

A. *The risk of isolation and loss of tradition*

While AMEA women tended not to focus on masjid as a particular space like the adolescents, there is a return to the Masjid space in adulthood, but in a drastically different way than how they first experienced it. While for adolescents the Masjid space is a realm of

203

socialization and discovery of identity, for adults, the Masjid space is more literal, a place for reflection in the midst of responsibilities and the stresses of daily life. After having lived her life in accordance with most of the norms propagated by Masjid, a typical MAAW expects to feel at home and be comfortable in her Masjid space. However, the combination of being a mother and a second-generation Muslim woman proves to be trickier than expected. As an American, she has been acculturated into at least one socio-cultural system that encourages a belief in the equality of all individuals. MAAW might easily dismiss daily inequalities in marriage, chores, and child rearing as simply a part of the logistics of life, but prayer enters another realm altogether. In front of Allah, all must inevitably be equal as humans; this is where ultimate worth and success are decided. In fact, Islamic morals such as patience and self-sacrifice, qualities that MAA mothers certainly display by giving up their own dreams to serve their families, should make one particularly valued within the spiritual realm.

Instead, some MAAW face an increasing discomfort with that traditional patriarchal structuring of masjid spaces, with men and women being divided and the former usually having priority seating. Men typically have more space in masjids across the world and sit closer to the male imam who gives the sermon, allowing them to hear more clearly and even interact through questions when appropriate. Women's second classness becomes apparent sometimes even before they enter the building. They often have to enter a masjid through a side door that is not the main entrance, that door being reserved for male attendees. This side door could be a utility entrance or a public entrance to the bathrooms in the building, as was the case with one participant. In rare cases, a masjid will have a door specifically designed for women to enter through. The separation of sexes becomes more complicated when children enter the picture. As children of both sexes (until puberty) usually accompany their mothers rather than their fathers to

prayer services, the smaller space allotted to women becomes even more cramped. Muslim

prayer services are often longer and happen later in the day (or night) than typical American

Christian services, especially during Ramadaan and other holy nights, so keeping young children

calm past their bedtimes in a public space is an added challenge. Despite encouraging women to

get married and have children, the Masjid space does not prove welcoming once those life goals

are actually enacted. Mothers are often quietly shamed, told to "control their children," or

sometimes even simply told not to come to masjid if they have children under the age of five.

For a Muslim American mother, being snubbed in the Masjid space, the rules of which

dominated so much of her life growing up, feels deeply personal. Not only has she had to bow

out of the professional realm, but she now also is being shouldered out of the one space she

thought would always be open to her due to her social investment within it. A new experience of

isolation results, what MAAW themselves term as "unmosqued," presenting a risk unique to the

MAAW cohort.

The main reason MAA mothers remain in contact with their Masjid spaces is for their

children. Despite any social judgments from the first-generation pool towards American Muslim

mothers for not raising children properly, the truth is that MAA mothers do wish to pass on their

traditions and faith to the next generation. When I asked Fouzia if she attended a masjid

regularly, she said,

> Not really. I don't want to use the term "unmosqued," but—my kids go to Sunday school, and it's the same Sunday school that my dad's been part-time teaching at. It's the same Sunday school my sisters all graduated from. So, we go there mainly because of tradition, or it's expected of them. But I don't necessarily feel connected to that mosque. Like, it's not like I go there and there's this sense of serene spirituality. I just go because I have to go. I go because I want my kids to go to Sunday school. That's really it. And now it's Ramadan. There are a few mosques around here that we go for *taraaweeh* prayers at night, but again, I'm not connected to one particular mosque. . . And that's really sad, 'cause I grew up having a connection with one particular mosque, the one that my parents went to,

and I had all these friends, 'cause we would go Fridays and Sundays. And I had a group of friends, and I loved that, but I don't see that with me now. I don't have a mosque that I can call my own now.

Fouzia mourns the loss of connection with both her Muslim female peers—the support system from adolescence—and the Masjid space itself. Even though she makes sure her children attend Sunday religious classes at her family's masjid, the Masjid space that she would ideally attend now due to proximity is "ultra conservative, where there's a very strict segregation of women and men, and right away, [she doesn't] like that at all." Despite the complexities of Masjid, MAAW crave the socio-religious fulfillment the space had given them as young Muslims: "It's not like I hate mosques, and I don't want to go; there's just nothing there that entices me, where it's like calling to me, calling to my heart. And that's really unfortunate because I know my parents still go to one mosque." Fouzia is troubled by the conflicting values she holds, wanting to pass on the positive she experienced in Masjid but without what she views as the negative:

> It's unfortunate because I'd love for my kids to have that connection with the mosque and to feel like, after home, that's their second home. I'd love for my kids to feel that, but if I don't feel that, how can I expect that of my kids? It's hard. I wish I had a place where I could take my kids and be like, 'This is it, this is our place of worship; you have to love it.' But if I don't love it myself, how do I ask that of them?

Fouzia is not alone in feeling this conflict. Marjaan says she has "given up on all that crap" when discussing attending an established Masjid space. She "consider[s] [her]self religious," but does "not really care for any of [the] mosques" in her area. When I asked her why, she said,

> I *hate* praying with a barrier. I *hate* that people think women's *awraah* [part of her that is meant to be covered/reserved for husband] is her voice, so you can't be seen, you can't be heard. . . I thought that if I built a relationship, and then I tried to show what contributions I can make in getting involved with the mosque, that I could be able to work with people, right. 'Cause [if] people don't know who you are, they're not gonna trust you. So I

206

volunteered at the mosque for years, to no effect. When it was convenient for them to use my services, great. And then when we did stuff, when we wanted to host events at the masjid, and then they didn't like it, or they thought it was too liberal, or there might be mixing of genders: They just wouldn't even respond. I got tired of it. You pour so much into it. I know that change takes time, but I can't wait for people to die before there's change.

Marjaan also sends her children to the religious classes at the local masjid on weekends, but she has severe disagreements with what she dubs "the immigrant mindset." When her children tell her that the religious teachers yell or spank the students, it is clear to her that "the value system [she wants] isn't there." By viewing the situation as a generational issue, Marjaan highlights how the increasing lack of connection with a religious space is a specifically MAAW risk.

B. *Third spaces: A mindfully constructed coping mechanism*

MAAW exhibit an independent, flexible, entrepreneurial spirit that serves them well, though: They create third spaces, their own coping mechanism to deal with the socio-religious isolation they feel. Third or alternative spaces are abstract spaces, often meeting in different locations each time (such as private residences) and with no set schedule. MAAW carve out their own niche within which to gather to practice their faith in a safe, understanding, and mostly female-centered group. Third spaces usually maintain an ethos of not just tolerance but loving acceptance, especially of women's experiences, encouraging a withholding of judgment and a giving of support. Creating one's own community might be seen as a hallmark of the Muslim female experience, as discovering Muslim girlfriends during adolescence is a parallel sort of community-making.

Afreen's challenge with her established Masjid space stems directly from her being a mother. She describes how "a lot of mosques do not cater programs towards young families with kids," and how in "some Muslim communities, they say children should be seen and not heard—

or not even seen." Consequently, Afreen and her fellow MAA mothers "end up making [their] own gatherings." The Masjid space is still valued because it serves as a networking point to meet other young mothers; beyond that, though, it only provides MAAW like Afreen a feeling of discontent and disconnect:

> For Muslim women, it's very isolating. . If kids are rowdy, then they're not kind of accepted at the masjid—not rowdy, actually, I wouldn't even say that. If my kids are rowdy, I walk out with them. . . . So we meet people at the mosque, and I wouldn't have met a lot of my friends if it wasn't for the masjid, and then we kind of, we do our own spiritual gathering. We find time to pray. Five or six gals, we kind of get together on our own and try to spiritually connect and whatnot.

Marjaan, too, turns to her MAAW friends to make a space she is comfortable raising her children in:

> And, so my friends and I are actually creating a constitution and by-laws for a third space, which will basically be an inclusive, family-based mosque. And we're trying to create it how we want, and we hope that—it'll probably be a pop-up mosque for a while, different locations, build a following over time. But you know what, I want my kids to be able to go somewhere, where they feel good about learning.

To become a third-spacer, one inevitably has to experience a degree of being unmosqued. While being unmosqued can often be a literal experience with being uncommitted physically to one particular Masjid space, it is more often and more importantly a spiritual and social experience, a feeling of being ungrounded and disconnected from one's religious community. However, as MAAW soon realize, many of their peers are experiencing the same feeling of unrest they are. As during adolescence, the relief found in discovering that one is not alone in suffering a particular situation leads to unity and inevitably, social support. Joumana, another MAA mother whom we met in Chapter 2, says, "I'm unmosqued. But I think I'm not alone in that. . . I think most of my Muslim peers and social circle are unmosqued. So within that, we have found kind of a third space community." While there are already some efforts to more

officially establish inclusive spaces like Masjid al Rabia in Chicago (see Chapter 2), for now, some MAAW are offering each other pockets of support by undermining the control over literal space masjids have.

III. Islamophobia and Muslim womanhood: Then and Now

Before a discussion of experiential differences regarding a single event can happen, several serious research caveats must be made. As previously mentioned, the cohort effect between the age cohorts, particularly the adolescent and adult, is something this study was originally interested in. However, by definition, if a cohort effect exists, then reliable comparisons between groups cannot be made. Accordingly, while I still engage the adult cohort regarding issues of islamophobia and 9/11, it is impossible to conclusively make any statements about how experiencing 9/11 after one's formative years results in differing life trajectories and stable identities. Furthermore, the limited participant sample size becomes poignantly clear when attempting an analysis while bearing the cohort effect in mind. Finally, as this research involves human subjects with fallible memories, varied personalities, and inconsistent experiences, drawing conclusions is again a perilous matter. Bearing these factors in mind, I still stand firm in the merit of comparing adult memories of 9/11 with adolescent experiences. Of course, most of the adolescent cohort were not even teenagers when 9/11 occurred, so their memories of the day itself are usually described in a benign, confused, or vague manner. What I am most interested in with my discussion of MAAW 9/11 experiences is the comparison they can draw between the Before and the After of their lives, and how their After compares with the adolescent Always. I find support for my hypothesis that Islamophobia and all its ramifications present a lower risk for the adult cohort than the adolescent.

A. *A retrospective: Where were you when 9/11 happened?*

The Questions that the adolescent cohort grapple with had not existed in the same way for the adult cohort when they were teenagers. Most of the MAAW participants were either in college or had just recently graduated on the morning of September 11th, 2001; in other words, they were emerging adults. However, the experience of Islamophobia and the stereotyping of Muslim women was experienced in a drastically different way than the AMEA cohort within this study, even though the developmental and identity risk was lower for the adults. The self-consciousness implanted by 9/11 within the American Muslim psyche was a new experience in and of itself, one that required the population to educate themselves *about* themselves. Even though peers may have asked vague questions about the ethnic origins of MAAW when they were younger, after 9/11, the questions became sharper, louder, and much more pervasive.

Nazli, 35 and a Houston native, says, "Religion was never really talked about, at least in my high school." While not talking about religion could be construed as a positive if the "talking" was equivalent to derogatory or stereotyped comments, what Nazli is actually describing is a phenomenon many MAAW experienced: silence regarding Islam. This silence, in turn, prioritized the dominant religion, i.e., Protestant Christianity, as "normal." It was not uncommon that the only time MAAW even heard the word "Islam" uttered in a school or non-Muslim context was the one or two days in world history class when it was ironically being skimmed over as a major world religion. Nazli had an especially highlighted experience of this ignoring and ignorance of Islam as the college she attended when 9/11 happened was a conservative private Christian one in Houston:

> And my school, it was very white; they were Christian. And suddenly, there was a lot of conversation about Islam. . . So apparently this guy brought in his pastor, who was like, 'Islam is like a virus, and Islam basically promotes terrorism.' So that hurt. . . Apparently that's when it really—people were sad after 9/11 and it was tragic, but everyone was together. But then after that happened—I remember, like, people had tried to get up to leave while it was happening, but they had locked the doors, so they couldn't leave. And

they had some sad excuse like, if you leave, you'll lose your points or something. But they were almost fighting inside the stadium. And then they left, and people were just crying. The sponsor came in later and apologized for his pastor, but I think it broke us. There was a lot of, there was just so much tension in school. . . It just, it became very intolerant, it felt like.

It was clear that the rise in conversation about Islam was not necessarily going to be a positive one unless Muslims themselves responded, and responded on command. Says Nazli,

> Trying to explain it gets a little--veers off, you know, because I'm not the most educated person as far as *deen* [religion] is concerned, so I'm going by a lot of what I learned in madrasah, but I can't have very involved discussions. . . I think more than that—more than Rasulallah [the Prophet], they were more into the whole jihad concept. I had a lot of conversations about "What does jihad mean?," and educated them about that as well. That I found interesting because I ended up being more well-educated so that I could answer questions, if that makes sense.

Nazli had actually set up repeated meetings with a few community leaders she knew in order to get answers to the barrage of questions she was suddenly facing at school—questions she herself did not know the answers to. The effort to answer historical, social, and theological questions about Islam became a community effort, unbeknownst to non-Muslims. Having to suddenly speak out as a defensive but calm encyclopedia of one's religious culture was a dramatic shift in gears for the MAAW cohort, who had largely lived their socio-religious lives in a serene secrecy of sorts. It was not, however, a major developmental risk as they had already experienced their religions in private and had therefore had the opportunity to establish meaningful, authentic relationships with their faith.

Joumana brings up this idea of "authenticity"—a factor that serves as a protective factor against a fragmented identity for the AMEA cohort—when describing the loss she viewed around her amongst her Muslim peers. "I had turned 22 that year. So it was like I had this amazing experience of being able to get through high school and college before 9/11 happened."

Joumana recognizes the benefit of being able to grow up in a world where her microsystem remained largely private and where her involvement in the macrosystem was not seen as something to be suspicious of:

> There was almost like an innocence where I got to experience what it meant [to be Muslim]. And it was this almost, like, very ideal, at that time, situation for me, where I was able to, unfiltered and not being under a microscope, I was able to experience what it means to be both American and Muslim at the same time. And I am so grateful for that, because I think literally the next year, that was taken away from all the college students who were on campus. 'Cause I saw that happen to kids who were in undergrad at that time, where all of a sudden, they were under a microscope. If you wore a hijab on campus, you were being examined and people were looking at you. . . And so it was like all of a sudden, this microscope turned on, and we were always being surveilled. And I'm using surveillance in a very specific way because it was the feeling of state surveillance that was kind of on, we were aware of that. But way more than that and much more impactful than that was this public surveillance. That we had to be performative about our faith, that we have to be these good Muslims. That we read in the Quran that to kill a man is to kill all of humanity. And all of a sudden, we had to take all these things out. *And our practice of religion was now not authentic.* [emphasis added] It was troubled. We weren't allowed to have problems with our faith because we had to be like, oh my gosh, Islam is beautiful! It's not about hijackers. And so it changed because I think we were robbed of the experience of having a complex practice of our faith.

Joumana eloquently points out the numerous changes that were felt within the Muslim American community after 9/11. Her resilience in the face of these changes is no weak matter because as a reminder, she is the same woman discussed in Chapter 2 who experienced sexual harassment due to her presentation as a Muslim woman; the new Islamophobic America affected her in one of the most extreme ways imaginable.

Marjaan also experienced the more violent and vocal version of Islamophobia after 9/11, beginning on the day itself when she was 21 years old. While months later a stranger would attempt to stab her with a knife in public—just one of many hate crimes she experienced—on the morning of September 11th, she walked into workplace in her hijab as always, but this time,

"everybody turned around to stare at [her]; like, it wasn't a good thing." She "beelined for [her] office" instead of standing in the lobby to watch the news with her coworkers because she just "didn't feel comfortable or welcome." Later that day, a man would storm into her office and tell her, "'I'm in the Air Force, and you and your family need to go back to where you came from so I can bomb all of you to smithereens.'" Like many Muslim Americans, Marjaan did not even have time to process the terrorist attack as an American citizen; instead, she was directly thrown into proving the validity of that citizenship, feeling unsafe from both extremist terrorists and average Americans alike.

However, Marjaan, like Joumana, was able to process this newfound prejudice against her by channeling established parts of her identity, independence, and understanding of her American peers. For example, she recognized that "while there were a lot of people who had crazy thoughts, there were even more people who were nice, right, like my office mate," someone who had stepped in to stop the assault from the Air Force individual. Furthermore, Marjaan actively "changed [her] behavior a little bit:" "I removed myself from vulnerable situations." She changed her personal schedule so that she would reduce her chances of encounters with aggressive individuals, grocery shopping at 6:00 A.M. before work and going for her runs before dark. Most importantly, she did not view the aggression against her as something that was her fault. Rather, she recognized it for what it was—a dangerous combination of ignorance and fear—and continued living her life as best she could: "And so I was like, I'm not changing myself for anybody. I'm just going to live myself; this is who I am. I'm not going to hide. . . I'm not going to quit and go home and give up."

Joumana's and Marjaan's social experience of Muslims as adolescents echoes what adolescent participants shared about their own lives, making their insights into the Before and

After of 9/11 even more applicable. Joumana, for example, also "almost felt like [she] had two lives:" "It was my school friends, and then I had my Muslim community. . . and all my social life consisted of that [Muslim] community." She describes having "very close friendships" with other Muslim girls while she was a teenager as "really formative for [her]," although she also maintained her "crowd of people at school." When she entered college, her experience again echoed other younger participants', this time the AMEA cohort, as "what happened was those parallel tracks [of school and Muslim friends] kind of came together. I maintained the very, very intense and heightened closeness that I had to my Muslim friends and my new Muslim friends that I made on campus. I met a lot of girls through the MSA. . . It was like the best time ever, right?" The difference between the close friendships Joumana formed and those of the adolescent and AMEA cohorts, though, is the texture they are based on. While certain aspects of sororal connection remain the same between the cohorts—issues with patriarchy within the community, questions of whether and how to wear a hijab, when to get married—the younger cohorts, especially the adolescent one, also connect based on being stereotyped in non-Muslim realms. Because these young friendships ar*e* formative, having them include an element of the political macrosystem can have permanent identity repercussions. If a Muslim girl is born directly *under* the microscope Joumana describes and comes to know the world around her as one that is constantly watching her, her views of her religion and her country are going to develop differently, with more tensions, more confusions, and more varied versions of herself in different contexts.

    B. Experiencing the Trump era as an adult

    When Donald Trump was elected president of the United States in November of 2016, I was in the midst of conducting my research. Many people, both Democrats and Republicans,

were shocked. He had run his campaign based on the same combination of ignorance and fear that Marjaan had experienced after 9/11 and had targeted numerous minority groups with negative rhetoric including, of course, Muslims. A drawback to the current research is that I completed interviewing the entire adolescent cohort before the Trump campaign and election occurred, so I have no data regarding adolescent opinions of or experiences after Trump entered the political scene. However, what my data can show is how MAAW reacted to his success and how they are viewing their lives. Overall, the islamophobia that arose the year of the election did not present a risk to the MAAW cohort directly even though they sometimes did themselves experience verbal assault or micro-aggressions. A strengthening of the protective factor and coping mechanism of the AMEA cohort was exhibited, with MAAW prioritizing what was important to them even more and focusing on living their own lives. However, when a major part of those lives is children, the new rise—or re-rise, rather—in Islamophobia does present a risk to MAAW who are mothers, as they are most concerned for what the ramifications for the youngest members of their families might be.

Hawra, a mother of two and a pediatrician who recently finished her residency, says the questions and microaggressions she has experienced throughout her professional educational career "don't really bother her" because she has learned to simply shrug them off and stay focused on her job: saving children's lives. When she was a medical student, a VIP patient had questioned her in front of her colleagues regarding her background due to the hijab she wears: "This happened quite frequently, where you're trying to talk about the patient, plan of care, medical care, what's happened with their test results, and they keep directing the conversation back at you: 'Where are you from? Oh, okay. Do you have to wear that thing?'" Even though "it was kind of embarrassing for [her] because [she] was a medical student, which means you have

very little power," she attempted to stay focused on doing her job. A more recent incident

involves more questioning, but in the context of Trump:

> At night, I'm talking to parents—I'm a senior resident and this is my third and final year of training—at 3:00 AM I'm talking to parents about possibly moving their 1-month-old daughter to the ICU because of a respiratory illness, and they're talking to me about Donald Trump. And they're talking to me about where I grew up, and where I was born. So it's like, so many times, people try to redirect the conversation at inappropriate times, right?

Most telling is Hawra's response to questions she received about ISIS and Pakistan when she

was getting a manicure: "It even doesn't bother me if people ask me where I'm from because I

personally don't think that just being born American is like this super privilege. Like, 'How *dare*

you assume I wasn't born here because I have this American accent.' . . . Why should I be less

proud of who I am because I'm not from America?" It is this view of not having to stubbornly

assert one's Americanness that truly distinguishes the MAAW cohort from their younger

counterparts. The microaggressions are the same between the age groups; it is how they make the

individual feel that is different. While adolescent "whatevering" (see Chapter 2) might

superficially be confused for a lack of caring, it is in truth a reactive coping mechanism rather

than the genuine dismissal that can be a deep-set part of a MAAW's identity.

Seema, 33 and another mother of two, also displays a particular distance from the Trump

rhetoric, though only until a discussion of her children begins. She begins discussing the election

from an informed and impersonal point of view, citing "unhappiness with the economic situation

in the country" as the basis for people "wanting to point fingers" at others. Furthermore, she

says, "All of us who don't agree or definitely don't like his racist rhetoric against us, you know,

we're still able to get up and go out. I wasn't afraid to go out. And that was a positive."

However, the positive comes to a halt when she considers what her young son, just beginning

kindergarten, might have to face within the classroom or when he is apart from her: "In kindergarten, I don't even know if [he] feels it, but in first or second grade, someone's gonna say something. Or when we go somewhere, how are my children gonna react when they see this?— 'Cause you wanna have all the answers right away but you don't." Many MAA mothers echoed these feelings, where they felt comfortable in and of themselves, but became wary when thinking about how to explain Islamophobia to their children. "What do you say to them?" became a common rhetorical question in the interviews. Joumana wants her children to *want* to be a part of the religion, but she realizes that "right now, it kind of sucks to be Muslim."

IV.   **It'll All Be Okay in the End: The consistent risk of education and/or marriage**

MAAW also faced the risks of education, marriage, and their overlap that the AMEA cohort navigates when they were AMEA themselves. The lack of choice regarding educational institution due to a need to maintain proximity to family, the ungrounded plans regarding graduate education due to potential marital interruptions, and the inability to definitively plan a career due to family concerns and lack of encouragement all crop up in MAAW recollections of how their lives unfolded in their twenties. However, because MAAW as a group are productive, healthy, grounded individuals, often holding competitive jobs while also being involved with their families, it would seem that Muslim women are able to ultimately successfully overcome the risks of emerging adulthood. At the same time, though, we should be mindful of the potential benefit or extra protective factor the MAAW cohort might hold over the AMEA cohort: the establishment of a more stable identity before Islam became overtly politicized in the U.S. This may contribute to the adult cohort's success, but the data of the AMEA cohort also seemed to imply a progression towards a similar success. It is not yet possible to determine a difference

between adult success levels, though, since AMEA are not adults according to my research definition. However, because the adult cohort did implement many of the same coping mechanisms to deal with the education and marriage risks they faced as the AMEA cohort, a brief look at MAAW's experiences as emerging adults is merited.

Umaima, 38, based in Houston throughout her teens, actually attended a university in neighboring Austin. She married a Muslim man she met during college and now works for a popular online payment firm, and the two of them travel back and forth between Houston and Austin frequently. Unlike most young Muslim girls, Umaima says her parents gave her a great deal of "autonomy" when she was a high school senior choosing a college, but due to cultural muscle memory, she still chose the school in Austin because that is where her older brother was attending school at the time. Having a male relative in the same city—and living situation— greatly reduced chances of familial worry or socio-religious questioning. Fortunately for Umaima, choosing that particular school turned out to be one of the best decisions in her life. Looking back, she sees how "the college you go to. . . is a pivotal decision because the people you meet, the things you're exposed to, and then the opportunities that you have after graduating are directly impactful to what happens to you next." Even though she did not attempt to apply to all the ivy league schools her friends got into, she realized that the school she was attending still exposed her to similar career opportunities, faculty, and resources, benefits that most of her Muslim girlfriends who had stayed behind in Houston did not have. Furthermore, the liberal spirit of her school exposed her to various ideas and life paths that she previously had never considered for herself: "Please keep in mind that I'm actually super ambitious and career-oriented. . . but as a Muslim girl growing up, I felt I had very little access to women in different careers." When she stepped onto campus, she felt she had come home. Umaima realizes how

"lucky" she is to have had her "eyes opened" to what she could be professionally, but she also acknowledges that it was all largely accidental; there was little encouragement from her home or Islamic front to actually become *anything*.

Razina, the MAAW who declined her acceptance to dental school due to pregnancy and who asked not to be quoted directly, had considerably less flexibility than Umaima when it came to her education even before she became pregnant. Razina was in her second year of her undergraduate education, on the pre-dental plan with a major in biology and minor in architecture, when she got engaged. Within a short period of time, the groom's family began to pressure her for wedding dates, which would mean one thing for her education: having to move to a different state. After emphasizing to her future in-laws that obtaining her degree was a requirement for her, she agreed to get married in her third year as long as her credits transferred to a university in her husband's—and now her—city. All her credits did transfer, which she is grateful for, but only because she changed majors. Instead of biology, she now qualified for a more generic liberal arts degree. When I asked her why she chose not to take the extra time at her new university to gain the credits needed for a biology degree, she said it would have taken too long. Her goal became to finish her degree in four years; it did not matter where or what she studied. As an adult she realizes how her view at the time sounds a bit illogical or unplanned, but she became obsessed with the idea of achieving *something*. Although she did not say this, I suspect her drive to simply finish was out of a fear of not being able to finish at all due to changing life circumstances.

Hawra's professional educational life path had some overlaps with Razina's, though the former was able to follow through on hers more than the latter. Hawra's undergraduate story follows the typical AMEA woman's, which meant she attended school in her hometown while

living at home with her family, became engaged to a Muslim man during that time, and married him as soon as she graduated. Her new husband happened to already be in medical school at the time, and because Razina was also on the pre-med track, she applied and got accepted to the same medical school as her spouse. She now describes this method of decision-making "lame," but at the time, she believed it to be impossible to live apart from her husband in any capacity. Halfway through her medical education, her husband, who was two years ahead of her in school, landed a residency in a different city. Hawra was ready to drop out and follow him:

> I was so dramatic. I was like, "I'm gonna quit!" And then my dean was like, "*What?!*
> That's ridiculous!" I was like, "I'm just gonna quit, I can't do this!" . . . It's funny
> because now—it's so funny how you view life, because now as a 32-year-old woman, I
> look back at my 24-year-old self, and I'm like, that's the dumbest thing ever! You have
> such a different view of marriage when you're past your first ten years.

Not only did Hawra not quit medical school, she managed to specialize in pediatrics and plans to go back to work after her current maternity leave is over. However, the only reason she did finish at the time was because she applied for a transfer to the medical institution where her husband was about to begin residency. She recalls how "they told [her] transfers never happen, but somehow, [her] year, it happened. So, [she] finished the last half of medical school at [school name redacted]." Had the transfer not been accepted, Hawra likely would not be a physician today. As we have seen, this deep intermingling of family, marriage, and education is a hallmark of the AMEA experience.

Even though Muslim women's life trajectories work through this intermingling to result in relatively settled and productive lives by the time they enter their thirties, the questionnaire did hint at possible dissonance between what a MAAW might wish to be as an adult and how her life actually unfolded. The notable discrepancy between the emphasis on marriage and employment in MAAW questionnaire responses highlights how participants believe "holding a job" is a more

important part of adulthood than marriage. If this is true, it may hold ramifications for the way MAAW view themselves and their levels of happiness and fulfillment. Because at the time of the interviews only 48% percent of MAAW were actively employed but 67% percent were married, it is likely that a feeling of unrest and lack of fulfillment clouds a MAAW's perception of herself. Out of the 67% who are married, only 5 or 38% were working full-time. Though most participants did not blatantly communicate unhappiness, there certainly were numerous instances in the interviews when they became wistful about the past, commenting on how their life paths simply changed from what they had been dreaming about during college due to marriage and/or children.

V.   A Loosening of Ties: Religion versus Spirituality

As AMEA women become MAAW, a distinct shift in their relationship with their faith and faith-based communities surfaces. Rather than stringently following socio-religious rules as they might have as AMEA women, MAAW begin to experience a loosening of being that ironically reflects a solidifying of self. Ties to the religious community are loosened through the process of becoming unmosqued, ties to strict religious scheduling are loosened due to life experience and important commitments such as children or careers; and ties to the old "hard-lined" (Safaa) self are loosened due to the development of a more honest, forgiving view of one's self.

This shift marks an increased resilience in the MAAW population through the life-long establishment of protective factors and coping mechanisms such as familial social support and authenticity to one's self, factors that were being developed when they were AMEA. At the same time, this shift can also be viewed through the lens of Marcia's (1966) adolescent developmental stages. The altered order of development for minorities, as discussed in previous chapters,

becomes apparent through the way Muslim American girls and women view their religiosity.

Safaa, a Chicago-based MAAW, says, "Now, I'm approaching 40, I've just become a lot more

tolerant. . . I went through a phase in my twenties where I was so hard-lined about [hijab]. And I

look back, and I'm like, that was ridiculous. Why did I even?" However, Safaa is not alone in her

rigid religious views of her early twenties. Afreen, too, describes her younger self as someone

who could only see the world as "black and white; it was either Islamic or not. There was no

gray middle ground." According to Marcia, these AMEA women were still in the foreclosure

states of their identities, "blindly accept[ing] whatever ideology or values system that [was]

given to them from their parents or family members" (1966). Typically, this phase should be

worked through by the time an individual exits adolescence; however, Muslim women's

development functions differently due to the various socio-cultural factors they face.

Consequently, they still seem to experience elements of what traditionally might be dubbed an

adolescent way of thought through part of their twenties.

Safaa notes which life factors might lead to a needed identity crisis for an AMEA,

pushing her through a moratorium and then to identity achievement when she becomes a

MAAW:

> I think your twenties is for growing up and figuring out your place in all of this. And I
> think it went from graduating college to after I had gotten married, even after I had my
> child, 'cause all that happened, you know, in my twenties. And I feel because I was so
> much, I think I just kind of—I was like, why am I so hard on either on how I'm wearing
> [hijab] or how other people are wearing it? What's the big deal? Like, what's my problem?
> [laugh] Just let people wear it. And even now, I don't agree with a lot of circles within the
> Muslim community about covering head-to-toe. . . Even though my parents are extremely
> conservative, but I don't necessarily see eye to eye with them on some things, either.

Another MAAW echoes this sentiment in fewer words: "It's just a natural part of aging, that I just became, I wouldn't say less rigid, but just more—I don't know what the word is. Just less. . . less. . . I don't know what the right word is. But I just eased up about it."

Hawra also experienced this "easing up," as for her, "religion is more of a higher thing now. It's more understanding spirituality and purpose and God. And not in like a black and white way, but more of understanding divine love and the purpose of your creation. And seeing everything through a divine lens." Like other MAAW, she cites the experience of becoming a mother as something that shook her out of her comfort zone, spiritually, emotionally, and physically, and because of this trying experience, she reevaluated her views on Islam. However, Hawra also cites her close interactions with non-Muslim peers and friends during her time in medical school and residency and her career as a doctor as two factors that forced a loosening of strictures on her world view. "You're there when people are born; you're there when people are dying. It affects you. And then you see humanity in a different lens."

This more inclusive and empathetic view of humanity—and of one's self—is a promising end goal for AMEA women as it allows more space for one to express one's self and to connect with others. It also could possibly change the face of how American Islam grows into the next generation by affecting romantic partner choices. Joumana, divorced twice from Muslim men and a survivor of marital abuse, says she is not sure if she will again confine herself to her religion when and if she looks for a new partner. A more inclusive spirituality also gives hope that women like Soraiya, the AMEA who is struggling with her lesbian identity within an Islamic context, might be able to find peace and a path to openly expressing who she is. Unlike Joumana, though, Soraiya still holds that she would "not be able to love someone who doesn't love Allah and the Prophet (peace be upon Him)." Perhaps Soraiya's views will also shift like those before

223

her as she becomes a MAAW, allowing herself the space to be who she authentically is.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research began as an inquiry into how second-generation Muslim American girls developed their identities in the eye of a multicultural hurricane, facing equally strong pulls and pushes from the American, Islamic, and often South Asian or Middle Eastern cultures they are members of. For the first time in history, young Muslims who view the U.S. as their home are coming of age and realizing they may not be entirely welcome in that home. However, because they do not view their parents' countries of origins as a safe home space, either, and often have difficulties reconciling the imported cultural traditions with what they are taught is "normal" by mainstream America, this young population reacts, adapts, and transforms into an entirely new culture. American Islamic culture is liberal in its social views, yet conservative in its action. It is largely middle class, well-educated, and relatively young, with a population that has few native members older than 40. All these factors might equate to a scenario in which an unmarried hijabi graduate law student is best friends with a non-Muslim gay man who uses marijuana frequently, but she herself abstains from alcohol and other drugs. Or perhaps we might encounter a Muslim woman who steps out of the bar she is meeting her friends in, quickly wraps her head in a scarf, and says her *maghrib* (sundown) prayers before heading back inside. American Islam involves not wanting to draw attention to one's Muslimness, but at the same time, not being ashamed of it. It is a much more flexible, moldable view of the world than either the parental Islamic cultures or American culture itself usually endorses.

It is the women within American Islamic culture who are at the forefront of defining it *because* of most cultures' habitual control of the sex. As we learned, the hijab is scrutinized, symbolized, wrecked, and ravaged from both sides of the fence. In the face of a plethora of violently conflicting cultural opinions, it is the lived ways an adolescent Muslim girl or an

AMEA woman or a MAA woman enact their religion that most visibly communicates what American Islam is. As one Muslim woman from Chicago told me, she is just as comfortable in a hijab or out of it, and she dresses based on her spiritual mood and physical needs. She might don a hijab to the grocery store in the morning and then go to the gym in yoga pants and a top knot in the afternoon. These lived ways of American Muslim women move beyond sartorial choices, though. They are embedded within the decisions—or lack thereof—of where to go to college, of when and whom to marry, of how to raise their children, and, simply, of what they do in their lives. The central role of women in defining this new culture should not be surprising since most heterosexual Muslim men can arguably more easily maintain their socio-religious traditions without sacrificing large parts of their identities. Muslim men are free to move away from home for college (given financial allowance), are encouraged to be professionally ambitious, and can freely associate with the opposite gender without risking their chances of finding a "good Muslim wife." American and Islamic cultures align in their treatment of men more than in their treatment of women, and so it falls on the latter's shoulders to make defining decisions for the young culture as a whole. While Muslim women might sometimes be subjected to being token representatives held responsible for shaping public opinion of Islam as a whole, what I see through my work is that they also speak through their lived actions and are shaping the future of American Islam.

One of the major developmental risks examined in this study was Islamophobia and the consequent stereotyping of Muslim women. Two specific waves of modern Islamophobia were noted—post-9/11 and Trump-era—and there is a notable difference between the two. There is more support, awareness, and ally-ship for Muslims on the part of the non-Muslim majority in the Trump era than there was post-9/11. Furthermore, there is more awareness on the part of the

Muslim American community itself. Is this a cohort effect, based largely on the blunt

Islamophobia currently occurring in the political macrosystem? Is this simply a matter of

"Muslim American" being on the radar for longer? Or is this because a generation of Muslim

American girls and women have begun to start speaking up for themselves and increasing their

own resilience against the vulnerability of being stereotyped and harassed in order to defend their

right to a new multi-cultural identity? The truth remains that it is likely all of these factors

combined, as each cultural element, from the macrosystem to the microsystem, is strongly

intertwined within the experience of an American Muslim woman in the twenty-first century.

This intermingling of cultural factors is at the core of how an individual develops, as

there can be no identity without context; or in the case of Muslim American women, many

contexts. As I conclude the analysis of my current research, I wish to re-contextualize the

discussion itself within the larger context of cultural psychology. If "to be a member of a group

is to think and act in a certain way, in the light of particular goals, values, pictures of the world;

and to think and act so is to belong to a group" (Shweder et al 2007), then the original

conundrum of the Muslim American woman becomes clear. She is definitively American by

virtue of birth, educational acculturation, and peer exposure, to name a few, but she is also

definitively Muslim often again due to those same factors. If cultural participation is what alters

the human psyche and identity (Shweder et al 2007), then it is no surprise that an adolescent

Muslim girl would feel like she is "leading two separate lives." What my research found is that

over time, as a Muslim girl grows up, she learns how to ration her cultural participation—

physically, mentally, and emotionally—in order to preserve a self that can span multiple cultural

contexts. Rather than committing one hundred percent of her self to both the American or

Islamic contexts each time she enters and exits, code switching at astonishing speeds at times,

she learns to commit a lowered percentage; consider it a battery-saving mode. This allows her time and mental energy to focus on the "authenticity" that begins to take root during emerging adulthood. The plasticity of identity and "the human mental equipment" (Shweder et al 2007) is ultimately shown through the holistic, unfragmented identities of adulthood. Muslim American women take this plasticity of identity and turn it back onto the cultures around them, showing that just like human identities, human cultures themselves are plastic and moldable by the individuals who are members of them; indeed, "culture and psyche 'make each other up'" (Shweder et al 2007). Certainly, it is easier for an individual to embrace a pre-existing culture and become a member of it, but when one is presented with multiple cultures and forced to choose, the best choice appears to be one that is thoughtfully—albeit perhaps forcefully—created in response.

Notable cultural psychologists have emphasized the inheritability of culture as a set of symbols and behaviors that guide the morality and meaning of life passed down through generations; in fact, culture is *inherently* inheritance (Shweder et al., 2007). Which symbols and which behaviors have second-genetation Muslim American women inherited, then? If we examine the life trajectories of the women in this study through this lens of cultural inheritance, we begin to see that they selectively choose elements from American and Islamic cultures that least conflict with each other in order to construct the new third space of American Islamic culture. We also begin to see that the plasticity of identity and the human psyche are influenced not only by what one is told is their culture—think back to the frequency with which young Muslim American girls are told by their parents to not become "too Americanized," and at the same time, being told to "go back to your country" by Islamophobes—but also by context. The context of a second-generation Muslim girl is America, so no matter how forcefully parents

might emphasize that "it is not their culture" or how abrasively strangers might yell obscenities about them not belonging in the U.S., the values of the context will seep into their being. The developmental, cultural, existential challenge arises when these young women awaken to their own consciousnesses and the fact that they can see "what is true, beautiful, good, and normal" (Shweder et al., 2007) in *both* cultures. Because of this heightened vision, committing to a side is nearly impossible, as such decisions determine the fate of their own children and what will they will offer the next generation as *their* inheritance. Accordingly, a painstaking process, often through trial and error, of selecting symbols and behaviors from each culture that make the most amount of sense, i.e., contribute the most meaning to a moral, fulfilling, normal life, is begun. This means marrying young so one can easily attend graduate school in a different city. This means wearing a hijab as a turban one night so as not to stand out as conspicuously in a concert crowd. This means teaching one's children about their grandparents' home country and native language, but not getting angry when they cannot remember either. As with nearly every culture, American Islamic culture is an amalgamation of the cultures that pre-existed in the space before it. As a culture, it is still an infant, with barely twenty years of self-awareness. However, American Islam is having to mature and decide its own path at an unconventionally fast pace, a perhaps fitting atypically-ordered development that reflects the life paths of its members.

And finally, a reflective note on semantics: Is the group I have studied one of American Muslims or Muslim Americans? When discussing the third culture itself, it instinctively made sense to me as the researcher to refer to it as "American Islamic culture" rather than "Islamic American culture" because the bulk of private behavior—that behavior which determines for an individual what is good and true—remains based on Islamic rather than American values. Most participants do believe in Islamic marriage as the only valid way to have sex, for example, and

most still exhibit a strong deference for their parents' opinions well into their thirties. Even though there might be a high number of American cultural elements within American Islamic culture, as of now, they still serve as adjectives to the noun of Islam.

When it comes to the individuals themselves, though, I have consciously switched between "Muslim American" and "American Muslim" for two reasons. First, sometimes linguistic and analytic context simply call for it. When discussing Muslims in the U.S. within a context of global Muslims, using nationalities such as "American" as an adjective to "Muslim" is a reasonable way to organize the discussion. Secondly and more importantly, though, is that the participants themselves switched between these two terms. As the researcher who speaks with them in order to understand their lives and perspectives as thoroughly as possible, this switching seemed an accurate micro-microcosm of the microcosms of each of their lives. Linguistic need aside, the casual slipping back and forth between the use of "American" and "Muslim" as both nouns and adjectives is an eloquent two-word summary of the cultural development of their psyches, blurring two mammoth cultures that told them it could never be done.

I. **Looking Back to Look Forward: Weaknesses of this Study and Potential for Future Research**

The sample sizes of each age cohort might potentially be viewed as a weakness, especially when compared to larger studies on Muslim Americans such as Sirin and Fine (2007), as having a relatively small sample size may inhibit drawing strong conclusions about the entire population. However, recurring themes within the interviews did provide a viable inlet into the lived experiences of Muslim American girls and women. Furthermore, the intentionality of the research itself was to explore the nuances of individual lives rather than survey mass tendencies from a distanced perspective. In this case, the limited number of participants was arguably

beneficial rather than detrimental.

As mentioned in the Methodology section, the skewed diversity of the participants—a heavier proportion of South Asians in all three cohorts and most Shi'a participants being specifically Dawoodi Bohras—is something to maintain awareness of while drawing conclusions using this study. However, no notable differences arose based on ethnicity or sect when it came to hijab, college choice (most do not move away from their parents' cities), graduate education (if married, most apply for their graduate degrees in the places their husbands reside), marriage age (average marriage age consistent between the Muslim groups), career development (affected by whether or not one is married and/or has children), and child rearing (2-3 children). The few Arab American participants I spoke with, all Sunni, did report lower stress levels for social and familial marriage pressure, but part of this reduced stress might come from the specific parental situations they grew up in. One AMEA Arab woman's father passed away when she was in her teens, while another's parents divorced when she was younger. Both of these women reported feeling close to their mothers and confidence in their mothers' support for whatever they wanted to do. Amongst unmarried Muslim women, one particular trend cropped up across the sects and ethnicities: Although for undergraduate education she usually stays in her home city, if she is not married shortly after graduation, she tends to attend a school outside of the city for graduate school. While the move away might be met with some resistance, this usually stems from non-family members from within the community and is certainly not to the same degree as resistance to moving away for college.

Despite the seemingly uniform shared experiences across sects and ethnicities, a developmental examination of non-South Asian Muslim women would be useful to confirm and expand these findings. Particular questions that could be asked include (1) whether Arab Muslim

women do generally feel less sociocultural pressures and conflict than South Asian women, (2) how African American Muslim women's experiences differ, if at all, from second-generation Muslim American women's experiences, and (3) will sect identifications become less influential on an individual's identity the longer they remain within the cultural context of American Islam since it is American "Islam" and not "American Shi'ism" or "American Sunnism." Because Muslims are one of the most diverse religious group in the U.S. (Pew Forum, "Demographic Portrait," 2017), there is a plethora of nuanced research questions that yet remain to be answered.

An obvious and important counter-study to the current one would be an in-depth qualitative examination of Muslim American men's experiences in the same vein as this one, but an additional and more intriguing counter-study would be to look at the experiences of the first-generation Muslim mothers who hold such strong influence over their second-generation daughters. Like most children, second-generation Muslim girls naturally look to their mothers as the first source of guidance and approval. A mother's decision on whether she herself wears hijab can affect her daughter's comfort with the garment choice in her own life; a mother's experience with marriage will guide what she thinks is best for her daughter; and a mother's fear of a new culture can inhibit her understanding of the strange American views of her daughter. At the same time, first-generation Muslim mothers are also plastic human beings, responding, reacting, and adapting to the world around them. Would they have guided their daughters differently had they arrived in America themselves today? Would they have been less or more observant of their religion? Would they have been less or more tolerant of sexism within their socio-religious communities? When most of them arrived as emerging adults themselves to the United States in the 1970's, they experienced a different America than the one their daughters grew or are growing up in. Their reasons for wearing or not wearing the hijab were likely

somewhat different from their daughters. Because almost all of these daughters across all three age cohorts report being "close to [their] parents," speaking to one of those parents would shed a valuable counter-perspective to the young Muslim women in this study.

I suggest a study on mothers rather than fathers because of multi-cultural patriarchy. From households to schools to the workplace, patriarchy is built into a Muslim woman's experience to some degree. It is responsible for the idea of "keeping daughters close" and monitoring their behavior more closely than sons', and for inevitably limiting their opportunities more than their brothers'. The trajectory of marriage and motherhood and its effect on personal ambition and professional advancement is also wrapped up in patriarchal notions. The multi-cultural patriarchy is also responsible for the hijab triggering Muslim womanhood stereotypes and Islamophobic harassment of women. Mothers might often be complicit in this patriarchy, but they themselves can relate to being victims of it as well. These experiential overlaps between mothers and daughters qualifies the study of mothers over that of fathers, at least as the next step forward of this research.

Finally, a potential weakness of this study is one that many qualitative—and quantitative—studies might also share: the human element. While I was able to detect developmental and experiential trends among the participants and cohorts, uncontrollable factors might have affected the way they responded to me or the questionnaire I distributed. Although I attempted as much consistency and objectivity as I could during the interview and analysis process, it is possible that I may have overlooked certain factors. A particular phrase that struck me while coding that a few AMEA and MAAW participants used was, "It's just my personality." This phrase was used when describing responses to upsetting instances in their lives such as Islamophobic acts. While this study was not a personality development study but rather an

identity development one, part of one's identity includes one's own conception of self; in other words, personality. In the context the women used the phrase in, "personality" was an aspect of their identities; it was how they knew themselves privately, as human beings, without labels and categorizations; "strong," "easy-going," and "nonchalant" rather than "Muslim," "American," and "woman." However, because the premise of this research was based precisely on those socio-cultural labels, the individual personality factor was not thoroughly explored.

II. Potential Benefits of Study

Despite the shortcomings of the current work, it can still serve to further both literary and applied research in the fields of cultural psychology, developmental psychology, Islamophobia studies, and gender studies. The data can be used to reduce stereotyping of young Muslim women by recognizing their individual stories while also acknowledging the challenges they face as a group in America. Specifically, I hope this work can contribute to reducing the private Islamophobia Beydoun (2018) discusses by increasing awareness and lowering walls between fellow Americans, whether minority or majority, male or female. By incorporating research from various research fields, particularly the areas that emphasize group overlaps, I show how many American women often share the same challenges regardless of race and religion. However, race magnifies and exacerbates certain risks, a fact that emphasizes the need for people of color to work together to improve civil rights, and the need for the majority White to embrace the role of allies. The overcoming of private Islamophobia between individuals can work upwards into the structural and thereby the dialectical. We already witnessed the beginnings of this movement as thousands of Americans protested the Muslim travel ban in 2017, but more socio-psychological work remains to be done in terms of eradicating subtle stereotypes and implied prejudice. Additional uses of this research could also be applied in higher education settings to maximize

potential of minority students by acknowledging the specific cultural stressors they might be facing; see Appendix F for a more detailed proposal on this subject.

At the same time, the current research should serve to increase understanding w*ithin* the Muslim community, amongst family members, amongst community members, and amongst generations. If more understanding and trust can be doled out to girls and women, there would be a reduced need for the institutional attention suggested above. Rather, if the institution of the Masjid space holistically offered its own form of support to girls and women, the population would likely excel more than it already has. If Muslim girls were given the same social and educational freedoms as Muslim boys, if they were judged less, and if they were controlled less, they could exercise their psychological energies into improving their own lives and those of the socio-religious communities as a whole. Daughterhood, marriage, and wifehood may certainly still hold socio-religious value, but they should not be the primary roles women are valued for as that is not the only way the women themselves view their own lives. If she is valued for what she can contribute to her community, both her marriage and her society will improve in productivity and happiness.

With the recent election of the first not one but *two* Muslim American women to the U.S. House of Representatives as a result of the 2018 midterm elections, we are beginning to see what our country might look like if we give the Muslim women within it more support. Despite the Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric of Trump's White House, Rashida Tlaib (MI, D) and Ilhan Omar (MN, D-Farmer-Labor) both made American history in November of 2018. These women hint at a coming change on our country's sociocultural horizon by bringing political power and authentic voice to their populations; even one of my own adult participants ran for local city council office six months after I interviewed her. The future is certainly looking female

235

with the historic election of over one hundred women to Congress, but it is also looking Native American, Black, Jewish, and, yes, even Muslim.

As a result of the current work, I hope that instead of Muslim women having to accomplish all they do in a social vacuum by "forcing it upon [themselves]" (Arefa), their surrounding communities can expand their definitions of what it means to be a Muslim American woman while extending an unbiased hand of support and guidance when needed. Let Muslim American girls and women create their own definitions of themselves; or better yet, give them the option of not having to create a definition at all. Present teenage Muslim girls with a world of extended horizons so that they develop into women who are unafraid to speak up for themselves regardless of cultural contexts, and so that they know they are on equal footing with their male peers. Ultimately, my research has only led me to another, more simple question regarding Muslim American women, one best stated by the 36-year-old Arefa:

> If I was a boy, I would have been much more—God, who knows what I could have done because I wouldn't have had any restrictions on me. I mean, I feel like I've accomplished a lot, and I'm very thankful for what I have accomplished, and that's *with* all the restrictions that I had. So, I always wonder, imagine if somebody said, "Totally: the sky's the limit," as opposed to setting my limit so low. . . **What would the world have been like had the sky been the limit?**

References

Abada, T., Feng, H., & Ram, B. (2008). The effects of harassment and victimization on self-rated health and mental health among Canadian adolescents. *Social Science & Medicine (1982)*, (4), 557.

Abbey, A. 2002. Alcohol-related sexual assault: A common problem among college students. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol. Supplement:*118-128.

Abdelkader, E. When Islamophobia Turns Violent: The 2016 U.S. Presidential Elections. The Bridge Initiative. http://bridge.georgetown.edu/when-islamophobia-turns-violent-the-2016-u-s-presidential-elections/. 2016.

Afshar, H. (2008). Can I see your hair? Choice, agency and attitudes: The dilemma of faith and feminism for Muslim women who cover. *Ethnic and racial studies, 31*(2), 411-427.

Allendorf, K. and Pandian, R. K. (2016). The decline of arranged marriage? Marital change and continuity in India. *Population and Developmental Review, 42*(3), 435-464. September 2016.

Armstrong, E. A., et al. (2014). "Good girls;" Gender, social class, and slut discourse on campus. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 77* (2), 100-122.

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American psychologist*, *55*(5), 469.

Arnett, J. J. (2007). Emerging adulthood: What is it, and what is it good for?. *Child development perspectives*, *1*(2), 68-73.

Arroyo, J., Payne, K. K., Brown, S. L. Manning, W. D. 2012. Crossover in Median Age at First Marriage and First Birth: Thirty Years of Change. family profile FP-12-03 (2012), National Center for Family & Marriage Research, http://ncfmr.bgsu.edu.

Badran, M. 2009. *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences*. One World: Oxford. 349 pages.

Barkhorn, E. 2013. Getting Married Later is Great for College-Educated Women. https://www.theatlantic.com. March 15, 2013.

Barrett, P. M. (2007). *American Islam: The Struggle for the Soul of a Religion*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Becker, J.V., Skinner, L.J., Abel, G.G., Axelrod, R., & Treacy, E.C. (1984). Depressive symptoms associated with sexual assault. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, 10, 185 192.

Berdahl, J. & Moore, C. 2006. Workplace Harassment: Double Jeopardy for Minority Women.

Journal of Applied Psychology. Vol. 91(2):426-436.

Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8* (1).

Beydoun, K. A. 2018. *American Islamophobia: Understanding the Roots and Rise of Fear.* University of California Press: Berkley, CA. 264 pages.

Beydoun, K. A. 2018. Rethinking Islamophobia. Aljazeera.com. March 12, 2018.

Bledstein, B. 1976. *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America.* W. W. Norton and Co.: New York, NY. 366 pages.

Bowen, H. (Ed.). (1996). *Investment in Learning: The Individual and Social Value of American Higher Education*. New York: Routledge. 507 pages.

Boykin, A. (1986). The triple quandary and the schooling of Afro-American children. *The School Achievement of Minority Children: New Perspectives*. U. Neisser (Ed.).. Hillsdale: L. Eribaum Associates, 57-92.

Brown, L. & Gilligan, C. *Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992. 258 pp.

Cainkar, Louise A. (2011). *Homeland insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American experience after 9/11*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Campbell, R., Dworkin, E., & Cabral, G. (2009). An ecological model of the impact of sexual assault on women's mental health. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, *10*(3). Pp. 225-246.

Chodorow, N. 2001. Family structure and feminine personality. *Feminism in the Study of Religion*: *A Reader.* Ed. Darlene M. Juschka. 81-105.

Crothers, Laura M.,Lipinski, John,Minutolo, Marcel C. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, Vol 12(2), Apr 2009, 97-110.

Dasgupta, S. D. and DasGupta, S. (1996). "Public face, private space: Asian Indian women and sexuality." *"Bad Girls/Good Girls": Women, Sex, and Power in the Nineties*, ed. Nan Bauer Maglin and Donna Perry, 226-43. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP.

Diamant, J. American Muslims are concerned—but also satisfied with their lives. July 26, 2017. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/07/26/american-muslims-are-concerned-but-also-satisfied-with-their-lives/.

Ebrahimji, Maria M. and Suratwala, Zahra T (Eds.). (2011). *I speak for myself: American women on being Muslim*. Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press.

Erikson, E. (1959/1980). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York: Norton.

Espiritu, Yen Le. (2001). "'We Don't Sleep Around like White Girls Do': Family, Culture, and Gender in Filipina Lives." *Signs* 26(2): 415-440.

Esposito, J. L., & DeLong-Bas, N. J. (2001). *Women in Muslim family law*. Syracuse University Press.

Fader, A. Mitzvah Girls: Bringing Up the Next Generation of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Fine, M., Burns, A., Payne, Y., and Torre, M. E. (2004). Civics lessons: The color and class of betrayal. *Teachers College Record, 106*, 2193-2223.

Fine, M. and Torre, M. E. (2004). Re-membering exclusions: Participatory action research in public institutions. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 1*(1), 15-37.

Gallup Poll 2009: http://www.gallup.com/poll/116260/Muslim-Americans-Exemplify-Diversity Potential.aspx

Gill, L. & Haurin, D. (2002). Wherever he may go: How wives affect their husbands' career decisions. *Social Science Research, 27*, 264-279.

Gilligan, C. 1993. Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development. *Feminism and Psychology*. Vol. 3(1): 11-35.

Gomaa, M. "American hijab: Why my scarf is sociopolitical statement, not a symbol of my religiosity." xojane.com. November 3, 2014.

Gomez, J., Miranda, R. & Polanco, L. 2011. Acculturative stress, perceived discrimination, and vulnerability to suicide attempts among emerging adults. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 30 June 2011. 40: 1465.

Gonzales, Roberto G. (2011). Learning to be illegal: Undocumented youth and shifting legal contexts in the transition to adulthood. *American Sociological Review*, *76* (4), 602-619.

Gottschalk, Peter and Greenberg, Gabriel. (2008). *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the enemy*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Green, E. 2017. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/07/american-muslims trump/534879/.

Greif, A. 1994. Cultural beliefs and the organization of society: A historical and theoretical reflection on collectivist and individualist societies. *Journal of Political Economy.* 102:5. 912-950.

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, et al. (2006). *Muslim women in America: The challenge of Islamic identitytoday*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hammer, Juliane. (2013). Center stage: Gendered Islamophobia and Muslim women. In Carl W. Ernst (Ed.), *Islamophobia in America: The anatomy of intolerance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Harper, S. R. (2012). *Black male student success in higher education: A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study*. University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.

Hawley, J. 2009. The Amish Veil: Symbol of Separation and Community. *The Veil: Women Writers on its History, Lore, and Politics.* Berkley: U of California Press. pp. 90-99.

Heath, J. 2009. *The Veil: Women Writers on its History, Lore, and Politics.* Berkley: U of California Press. 346 pages.

HEART [Health Education, Advocacy, Research, and Training]/MAWPF [Muslim American Women's Policy Forum] 2017. Removing Roadblocks: Examining Barriers to Justice and Healing to build more victim-centric services for Muslim survivors of Sexual Assault.

Helms, J. E. (Ed.). (1990). *Black and white racial identity: Theory, research, and practice.* New York: Greenwood.

Hilbrecht, M., Shaw, S. M., Johnson, L. C. and Andrey, J. (2008), 'I'm Home for the Kids': Contradictory Implications for Work–Life Balance of Teleworking Mothers. Gender, Work & Organization, 15: 454–476. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0432.2008.00413.**x**

Houston, D. 2005. *Work-Life Balance in the 21st Century*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, xv + 271 pp.

Huffingtonpost.com. Ramadan care package program supports incarcerated LGBT Muslims. June 12, 2017.

Hymowitz, K., Carroll, J., Wilcox, W. B., & Kaye, K. 2013. Knot Yet: The Benefits and Costs of Delayed Marriage in America. http://twentysomethingmarriage.org/

Ilkkaracan, P. (2002). Women, sexuality, and social change in the Middle East and in the Maghreb. *Social Research, 69*(3). 753-779.

Jaggar, A. M. (2008). *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers. 516 pages.

Jerolmack, C. and Khan, S. 2014. Talk is cheap: Ethnography and the attitudinal fallacy. *Sociological Methods and Research*. 1-32. Sagepub.com.

Kahf, M. 2009. From her royal body the robe was removed: The blessings of the veil and the trauma of forced unveilings in the Middle East. *The Veil: Women Writers on its History, Lore, and Politics.* Berkley: U of California Press. pp. 27-43.

Karim, Jamillah. (2009). *American Muslim women: Negotiating race, class, and gender within the Ummah*. New York: New York University Press.

Keels, M. (2013). Getting them enrolled is only half the battle: college success as a function of race or ethnicity, gender, and class. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *83*(2-3), 310.

Khan, M. (2003). Constructing the American Muslim community. In Y. Y. Haddad, J. I. Smith, and J. L. Esposito (Eds.), *Religion and immigration: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim experiences in the United States*. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press.

Klaw, E. L., Lonsway, K. A., Berg, D. R., Waldo, C. R., Kothari, C., Mazurek, C. J., and Hegerman, K. E. (2005). Challenging rape culture: Awareness, emotion and action through campus acquaintance rape education. *Women and therapy, 28* (2), 47-63.

Kossek, E. E. and Lambert, S. J. 2005. Work and Life Integration: Organizational, Cultural, and Individual Perspectives. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ and London, xxviii + 570 pp.

Lane, J. & Fink, R. S. 2015. Attachment, social support satisfaction, and well-being during life transition in emerging adulthood. *The Counseling Psychologist.* 43: 7. 1034-1058.

Larimer, S. 2017. Washingtonpost.com. A fire destroyed this Texas mosque. January 31, 2017.

Leonard, K. I. 2003. *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research.* Russel Sage Foundation.

Mantovani, N., Pizzolati, M., & Edge, D. (2017). Exploring the relationship between stigma and help-seeking for mental illness in African-descended faith communities in the UK. *Health Expectations*, *20*(3), 373-384.

Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 3*, 551–558

McCann, C. R. and Kim, S. (2010). *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspectives.* New York: Routledge.

Medium.com. 2016. Muslim women speak: Open crescents, shining stars. November 30, 2016.

Menon, U. (2002). Neither victim nor rebel: Feminism and the morality of gender and family life in a Hindu temple town. In R. Shweder, M. Minow, and H. R. Markus (Eds.), *Engaging cultural differences: The multicultural challenge in liberal democracies* (288-307). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Menon, U. (2013). *Women, Wellbeing, and the Ethics of Domesticity in an Odia Hindu Temple Town*. Heidelberg: Springer India. 244 pages.

Meyer, I. (1995). Minority Stress and Mental Health in Gay Men. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. Vol. 36 (March):38-56.

Meyer, I. H., Schwartz, S., & Frost, D. M. (2008). Social patterning of stress and coping: Does disadvantaged social statuses confer more stress and fewer coping resources?. *Social science & medicine*, *67*(3), 368-379.

Miller, J. 2008. *Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and Gendered Violence*. New York: New York UP. 312 pages.

Miller, T., Cohen, M., & Wiersema, B. 1996. Victim Costs and Consequences: A New Look. *National Criminal Justice Reference Service*. Special report. 31 pages.

Mishra, S. and Shirazi, F. (2010). Hybrid identities: American Muslim women speak. *Gender, Place and Culture, 17*(2), 191-209.

Naber, Nadine. (2012). *Arab America: Gender, cultural politics, and activism*. New York: NYUP.

Newcity.com. 2017. Cultivating faith from the margins. July 28, 2017.

https://www.nsvrc.org/. Factsheet about sexual violence. Accessed: February 2018.

Nussbaum, M. (2012). *The new religious intolerance: Overcoming the politics of fear in an anxious age.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP.

Okin, S. M. (1999). *Is multiculturalism bad for women.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP.

Page, C. (2011). "Americans would benefit from a Muslim version of the Huxtables." articles.chicagotribune.com. December 14, 2011.

Pande, R. (2016). Becoming modern: British-Indian discourses of arranged marriages. *Social and Cultural Geography, 17*(3). 380-400.

Pew Forum. 2017. http://www.pewforum.org. Demographic portrait of Muslim Americans. July 26, 2017.

Pew Forum. 2017. http://www.pewforum.org. How the U.S. general public views Muslims and Islam. July 2017.

Pew Social Trends. 2011. Barely half of U.S. adults are married: A record low. http://www.pewsocialtrends.org. December 14, 2011.

Phau, I. and Lau, K. C. (2001). Brand personality and consumer self-expression: Single or dual carriageway?. *Journal of Brand Management, 8*(6), pp. 428-444. July 2001.

Pittman, D. M., Cho Kim, S., Hunter, C. D., & Obasi, E. M. (2017). The role of minority stress in second-generation Black emerging adult college students' high-risk drinking behaviors. *Cultural diversity and ethnic minority psychology*, *23*(3), 445.

Platt, M. 2017. *Marriage, Gender, and Islam in Indonesia*. Routledge: London.

Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R. 2006. *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. University of California Press. Berkley, CA.

Qian, Z., Lichter, D. T., & Tumin, D. 2017. Divergent pathways to assimilation? Local marriage markets and intermarriage among U.S. Hispanics. *Journal of Marriage and Family.* July 2017. Wiley.

Qin, D. B., Way, N., & Mukherjee, P. (2008). The other side of the model minority story the familial and peer challenges faced by Chinese American adolescents. *Youth & Society*, *39*(4), 480-506.

Qin, D. B., Way, N., and Rana, M. (2008). The 'model minority' and their discontent: Examining peer discrimination and harassment of Chinese American immigrant youth. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, *121*, 27-42.

Ringrose, J. and Renold, E. (2012). Slut-shaming, girl power, and 'sexualisation:' Thinking through the politics of the international SlutWalks with teen girls. *Gender and Education, 24* (3), 333-343.

Rosenberg, E. 2018. Washingtonpost.com. GOP candidate says feminist have snake-filled heads and hopes daughters don't become she-devils. January 25, 2018.

Saenz, V. B., & Ponjuan, L. (2009). The vanishing Latino male in higher education. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *8*(1), 54-89.

Settersen, R. and Ray, B. 2010. *Not Quite Adults: Why 20 Somethings Are Choosing a Slower Path to Adulthood, and Why It's Good for Everyone*. New York: Bantam. Pp. 272.

Shauman, K. (2010). Gender asymmetry in family migration: Occupational inequality or interspousal comparative advantage? *Journal of Marriage and Family, 72*, 375–392.

Shihadeh, E. (1991). The prevalence of husband-centered migration: Employment consequences for married mothers. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 53,* 432–444.

Shweder, R. (2002). What about "Female Genital Mutilation"? and why understanding culture matters in the first place. In R. Shweder, M. Minow, and H. R. Markus (Eds.), *Engaging cultural differences: The multicultural challenge in liberal*

democracies (216-250). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Shweder, R., Minow, M., and Markus, H. R., Eds. (2002). *Engaging cultural differences: The multicultural challenge in liberal democracies* (216-250). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Shweder, R, Goodnow, J. J., Hatano, G., LeVine, R. A., Markus, H., & Miller, P. 2007. The cultural psychology of development: One mind, many mentalities. *Handbook of Child Psychology.* 1: 13.

Sirin, S. R. and Fine, M. (2007). Hyphenated selves: Muslim American youth negotiating identities on the fault lines of global conflict. *Applied Developmental Science, 11*(3), 151-163.

Solis, J. (2003). Rethinking illegality as violence against, not by, Mexican immigrant children and youth. *Journal of Social Issues, (59)*1, 15-32.

Suratwala, Z. and Ebrahimji, M. (2011). *I speak for myself: American women on being Muslim.* Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press.

Smithson, J. and Stockoe, E. H. 2005. Discourses of work-life balance: Negotiating 'genderblind' terms in organizations. *Gender, Work, and Organization. Vol. 12*: 2, March 2005. 147-168.

Spencer, M. B., Dupree, D., & Hartmann, T. (1997). A phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory (PVEST): A self-organization perspective in context. *Development and psychopathology*, *9*(4), 817-833.

Spencer, M. and Harpalani, V. (2006). What does 'acting White' actually mean?: Racial identity, adolescent development, and academic achievement among African American youth. In J. U. Ogbu (Ed.), *Minority status, collective identity and schooling*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Stone, A. & Catalano, R. F. 2012. Review of risk and protective factors of substance use and problem use in emerging adulthood. *Addictive Behaviors*. Vol. 37(7). 747-775.

Stone, P. & Hernandez, L. The All-or-Nothing Workplace: Flexibility Stigma and "Opting Out" Among Professional Managerial Women. *Journal of Social Issues*. Vol. 69(2):235-256.

Teenvogue.com. 2017. Masjid-al-rabia: Mosque for LGBTQ women Muslims. March 27, 2017.

Tesler, M. "President Obama and the influence of anti-Muslim sentiments in the 2010 midterm elections." mst.michaeltesler.com. American Political Science Association, 2011 meeting.

Thoits, P. A. (1995). Stress, coping, and social support processes: Where are we? What

next?. *Journal of health and social behavior*, 53-79.

Tribune.com. Muslim woman harassed, called "Terrorist" in US. December 3, 2016.

Toffoletti, K. and Starr, K. 2016. Women academics and work-life balance: Gendered discourses of work and care. *Gender, Work, and Organization. Vol. 23*: 5, September 2016. 489-504.

Way, et. al. 2008. "To be or not to be: An exploration of ethnic identity development in context." *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*. 120. 61-79.

https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/sexual-assault-and-rape/college-sexual assault. Accessed: February 2018.

Zaal, M, Salah, T., and Fine, M. (2007). The weight of the hyphen: Freedom, fusion and responsibility embodied by young Muslim-American women during a time of surveillance. *Applied Developmental Science, 11*(3), 164-177.

Zieger, A., Mungee, A., Thi Minh Tam, T., Dettling, M., Hahn, E., Schomerus, G., & Angermeyer, M. C. (n.d). Perceived stigma of mental illness: A comparison between two metropolitan cities in India. *Indian Journal Of Psychiatry*, *58*(4), 432-437.
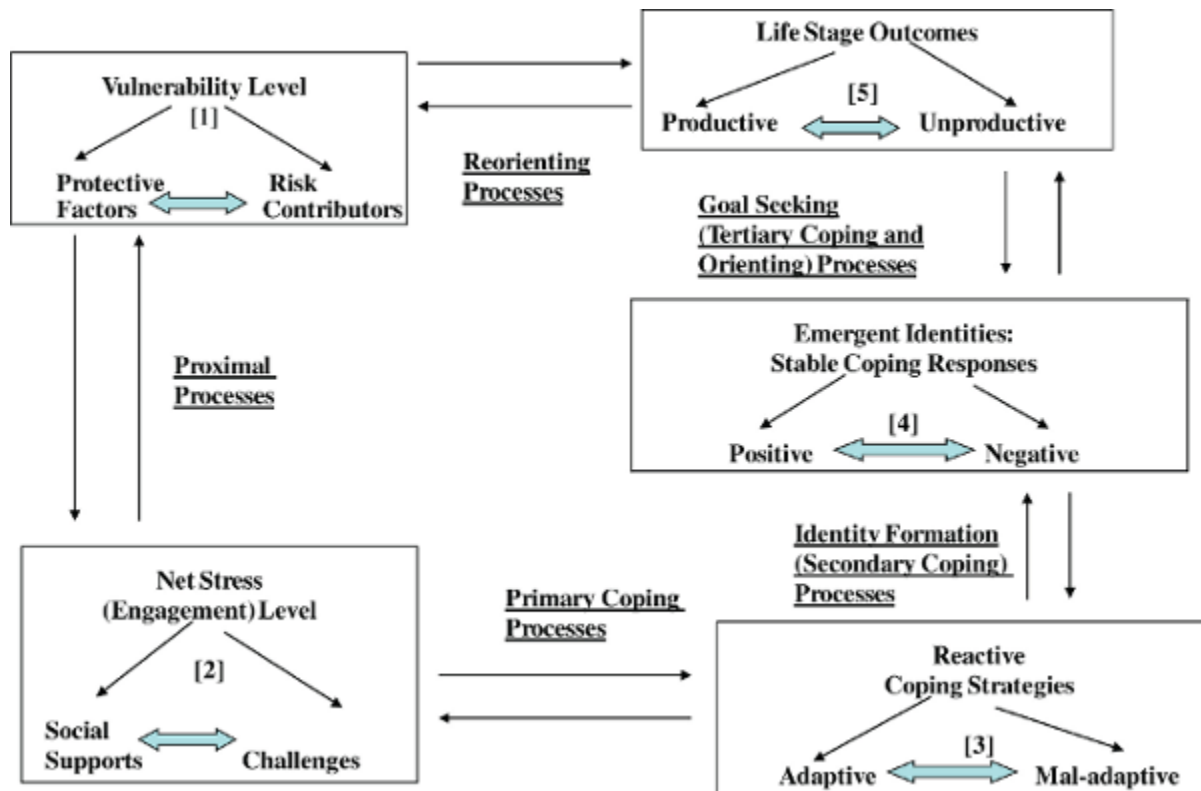
Appendix B
ADOLESCENT ITEMS

Interview Guide

The following questions were asked as open-ended prompts to the subjects:

1. Do you look forward to going to school each day?
   a. Why?
   b. What in particular do you look forward to?
2. How do you decide what you're going to wear for the day (during the week/for school)?
   a. Do you think people notice what you are wearing?
   b. Who notices more, boys or girls?
   c. Do you wear any sort of hijab to school?
      i. All the time/Some of the time/Never?
      ii. Why/why not?
3. How diverse is your school? (How many different kinds of students are there—race, religion, ethnicity-wise?)
   a. Everyone's unique. What is the thing(s) that makes you most different from your classmates?
   b. How do you identify yourself? (e.g., American, Muslim American/American Muslim, Palestinian American, Palestinian Muslim American, etcetera.)
   c. Are there any differences between yourself and your friends at school that you find stressful at all?
   d. Do you ever talk about Islam at school?
   e. How/why/in what context?
4. What is your favorite subject? What is your least favorite subject?
   a. Why?
   b. Does this have something to do with what you want to do when you grow up?
5. Tell me about your friends.
   a. Tell me about your best friend.
   b. How did you meet? How long have you known her (or him)?
   c. What does she know about you? Do you think she knows you as well as you know her?
   d. Do you have friends who are boys? (Do your parents know about them?)
   e. What do you do with your friends?
6. Who would you say "gets" you the most?
   a. (Best friend? Parents? Sibling?)
7. What do your parents do for a living?
   a. Mother
   b. Father
8. Who do you live with?
   a. Siblings?
   b. Grandparents?
9. What kinds of things would your parents ask you to stop doing if they saw you doing them? (What kinds of things have they asked you to stop doing?)

      a. Watching a particular type of TV show?
      b. Doing something on the internet? (Specifically, what?)
      c. Eating something?
      d. Talking to someone? (Who?)
10. If you were having a problem with something, who would you talk to about it?
      a. If you were having a problem at school, who would you talk to about it?
      b. If you were having a problem with someone at home, who would you talk to about it?
      c. If you didn't feel like talking about it, would you do something about the problem yourself?
11. What do you think would be different in your life if you were a boy?
      a. Do you think your parents would treat you differently? How?
      b. Do you think your classmates would treat you differently? How?
12. What is the best/most exciting thing about your life right now?
13. What is the most frustrating/challenging/confusing part of your life right now?
      a. What do you think will fix it? (Time or effort?)
      b. Do you think you'd have a different frustration/challenge if you were a boy?

Online Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability, with 1 being "I AGREE COMPLETELY" and 7 being "I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL."

1. My classmates at school know which religion I follow.

I AGREE 1------------------2-------------------3------------------4--------------------5----------------6--------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

2. I think of myself as a Muslim girl.
I AGREE 1------------------2-------------------3------------------4--------------------5----------------6--------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

3. My parents think I should think of myself as a Muslim girl.

I AGREE 1------------------2-------------------3------------------4--------------------5----------------6--------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

4. I think of myself as an American girl.

I AGREE 1------------------2-------------------3------------------4--------------------5----------------6--------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

5. My parents think I should think of myself as an American girl.

I AGREE 1------------------2-------------------3------------------4--------------------5----------------6--------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

6. I think about my religion frequently while I am at school.

I AGREE 1------------------2-------------------3------------------4--------------------5----------------6--------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

7. I think about my religion frequently when I am at home.

I AGREE 1------------------2 ---------------------3 -------------------4---------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

8. My religion is very different from my classmates' religions.

I AGREE 1------------------2 ---------------------3 -------------------4---------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

9. Most of my friends who I spend time with and talk to are also my classmates.

I AGREE 1------------------2 ---------------------3 -------------------4---------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

10. I have a lot of friends at school.

I AGREE 1------------------2 ---------------------3 -------------------4---------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

11. I have a lot of friends who don't go to my school.
I AGREE 1------------------2 ---------------------3 -------------------4---------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

12. Most of my friends who I spend time with and talk to I know through my masjid.

I AGREE 1------------------2 ---------------------3 -------------------4---------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

13. My parents think it is better to have friends from masjid than friends from school.
I AGREE 1------------------2 ---------------------3 -------------------4---------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

14. My parents think it is better to have friends from school than friends from masjid.

I AGREE 1------------------2 ---------------------3 -------------------4---------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

Please write in the answers to the following questions:
15. What city/country are your parents from?
16. How many years have your parents lived in the U.S.?
17. Where were you born?
18. Which branch of Islam do you follow? (Please give the most detailed name you know of, including whether it is Sunni, Shi'a, or Unspecified.)
19. When people ask you where you are from, what do you say?
20. On average, how often would you say people ask you where you are from? (Once a day; once a week; once a month; once a year; almost never; never)
21. Do you know any languages besides English? (Please specify if you can read, write, understand, speak, and/or all of the above.)
22. What language do you feel comfortable speaking to your parents in?
23. If you have Muslims friends, what language do you usually speak to them in?

Figure 2.
Questionnaire Response Graphs and Statistics
(Likert-scale Questions)

I think of myself as a Muslim girl.

My parents think I should think of myself as a Muslim girl.

I think of myself as an American girl.

My parents think I should think of myself as an American girl.

I think about my religion frequently while I am at school.

I think about my religion frequently when I am at home.

251

My religion is very different from my classmates' religions.

I have a lot of friends who don't go to my school.

Most of my friends who I spend time with and talk to are also my classmates.

252

I have a lot of friends at school.

Most of my friends who I spend time with and talk to go to my masjid.

My parents think it is better to have friends from masjid than from school.

My parents think it is better to have friends from school than from masjid.

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
My classmates at school know which religion I follow.	7	7	5	2	0	1	0	22	2.27

Figure 2, continued

Statistic	My classmates at school know which religion I follow.
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Mean	2.27
Variance	1.64
Standard Deviation	1.28
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses
I think of myself as a Muslim girl.	18	4	1	0	0	0	0	23

Statistic	I think of myself as a Muslim girl.
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
My parents think I should think of myself as a Muslim girl.	18	0	2	1	0	0	0	21	1.33

Statistic	My parents think I should think of myself as a Muslim girl.
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.33
Variance	0.73
Standard Deviation	0.86
Total Responses	21

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
I think of myself as an American girl.	5	6	2	0	1	3	5	22	3.68

Statistic	I think of myself as an American girl.
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Mean	3.68
Variance	6.04
Standard Deviation	2.46
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
My parents think I should think of myself as an American girl.	1	3	2	4	1	2	9	22	4.95

Statistic	My parents think I should think of myself as an American girl.
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Mean	4.95
Variance	4.43
Standard Deviation	2.10
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
I think about my religion frequently while I am at school.	8	7	3	3	0	0	1	22	2.27

Figure 2, continued

Statistic	I think about my religion frequently while I am at school.
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Mean	2.27
Variance	2.21
Standard Deviation	1.49
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
I think about my religion frequently when I am at home.	10	8	2	1	0	0	1	22	1.95

Statistic	I think about my religion frequently when I am at home.
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Mean	1.95
Variance	1.95
Standard Deviation	1.40
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
My religion is very different from my classmates' religions.	10	2	5	2	3	0	0	22	2.36

Statistic	My religion is very different from my classmates' religions.
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	2.36
Variance	2.24
Standard Deviation	1.50
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
Most of my friends who I spend time with and talk to are also my classmates.	5	3	3	0	5	4	2	22	3.77

Statistic	Most of my friends who I spend time with and talk to are also my classmates.
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Mean	3.77
Variance	4.66
Standard Deviation	2.16
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
I have a lot of friends at school.	7	5	4	5	1	0	0	22	2.45

Statistic	I have a lot of friends at school.
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	2.45
Variance	1.69
Standard Deviation	1.30
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
I have a lot of friends who don't go to my school.	15	4	1	0	2	0	0	22	1.64

258

Figure 2, continued

Statistic	I have a lot of friends who don't go to my school.
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	1.64
Variance	1.48
Standard Deviation	1.22
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
Most of my friends who I spend time with and talk to go to my masjid.	12	1	4	1	3	1	0	22	2.32

Statistic	Most of my friends who I spend time with and talk to go to my masjid.
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Mean	2.32
Variance	2.89
Standard Deviation	1.70
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
My parents think it is better to have friends from masjid than from school.	7	6	2	4	2	0	1	22	2.64

Figure 2, continued

Statistic	My parents think it is better to have friends from masjid than from school.
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Mean	2.64
Variance	2.81
Standard Deviation	1.68
Total Responses	22

Question	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	2	3	4 (NOT SURE)	5	6	7 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	Total Responses	Mean
My parents think it is better to have friends from school than from masjid.	0	0	0	6	2	5	9	22	5.77

Statistic	My parents think it is better to have friends from school than from masjid.
Min Value	4
Max Value	7
Mean	5.77
Variance	1.61
Standard Deviation	1.27
Total Responses	22

Code Tables

Table 19. RISK FACTORS: GROUP OVERLAPS

	Appearance ("cute"/"pretty"/ "cool")	School peer acceptance (groups)	Conflict with parental culture	Othered ("weird")
Zainab	4	2	0	3
Sanaa	1	1	0	5
Lamiyah	1	1	0	1
Sarrah	5	4	4	4
Farida	6	6	1	5
Fatema	2	4	3	3
Maleka	7	3	2	1
Zahra	0	2	3	0
Nooriyah	2	2	0	1
Rashida	1	1	0	4
Naima	0	1	3	0
Yusor	2	3	0	2
Safia	1	5	1	2
Amina	1	4	0	0

Table 19, continued				
Soraiya	1	3	1	2
Lulua	2	2	1	3
Mariyam	1	1	1	0
Ruquaiya	0	0	1	3
Insiyah	1	3	3	4
Jumana	4	0	2	0
Alia	0	2	2	2
Talibah	0	1	1	0
TOTAL # of girls per theme	17	20	16	16
TOTAL # of theme occurrence	42	51	29	45

Table 20. RISK FACTORS: GROUP-SPECIFIC

	International -political	Muslim womanhood	Religion v. ethnicity	Divided life spaces	Gender roles at Home	Masjid boys/reputation	Masjid friends (hijab judgment/alliances)
Zainab	3	6	3	4	0	3	2
Sanaa	3	2	2	2	1	1	1
Lamiyah	1	0	2	4	0	0	0
Sarrah	3	4	3	7	8	6	5
Farida	1	4	4	6	2	3	5
Fatema	1	4	2	4	3	4	6
Maleka	2	3	5	5	0	3	2
Zahra	1	2	2	2	1	2	0
Nooriyah	1	5	3	3	0	3	1
Rashida	0	3	1	4	1	0	3
Naima	0	3	2	2	0	3	4
Yusor	0	3	1	1	0	5	3
Safia	2	2	4	2	4	5	1
Amina	2	2	0	0	1	0	0
Soraiya	0	1	1	1	2	1	0
Lulua	3	5	3	0	1	4	1
Mariyam	0	3	2	2	2	3	0
Ruquaiya	1	1	0	4	1	1	0
Insiyah	0	2	2	0	1	0	1
Jumana	2	1	2	0	1	0	1
Alia	0	1	3	1	1	2	2
Talibah	0	1	3	1	1	0	0
TOTAL # of girls per theme	14	21	20	18	16	16	15
TOTAL # of theme occurrence	26	58	49	55	31	49	38

Table 21. QUESTIONS: Muslim Womanhood Stereotype

	General curiosity	Asked to be a representative	Questions about body
Zainab	2	5	1
Sanaa	1	3	0
Lamiyah	2	3	0
Sarrah	2	2	2
Farida	2	4	3
Fatema	1	3	4
Maleka	1	3	3
Zahra	1	2	0
Nooriyah	2	4	5
Rashida	1	0	0
Naima	3	3	2
Yusor	1	4	2
Safia	1	0	0
Amina	2	1	3
Soraiya	1	1	0
Lulua	3	2	0
Mariyam	1	3	2
Ruquaiya	1	0	0
Insiyah	1	1	0
Jumana	0	0	0
Alia	1	1	0
Talibah	1	0	0
TOTAL # of girls per theme	21	17	10
TOTAL # of theme occurrence	31	45	27

Table 22. COPING MECHANISMS/PROTECTIVE FACTORS

	Minimizing whatevering	Enhancement whatevering	Sameness/shared experiences	Smartness
Zainab	0	5	4	3
Sanaa	1	1	3	2
Lamiyah	0	2	4	1
Sarrah	3	1	5	3
Farida	1	4	6	2
Fatema	0	3	4	3
Maleka	0	3	1	0
Zahra	3	0	5	1
Nooriyah	0	4	3	0
Rashida	1	2	4	0
Naima	1	0	2	0
Yusor	3	0	4	0
Safia	0	2	0	3
Amina	1	0	2	0
Soraiya	0	0	4	0
Lulua	1	1	3	0
Mariyam	0	2	3	0
Ruquaiya	2	0	2	0
Insiyah	1	0	3	0
Jumana	2	2	2	0
Alia	0	1	3	0
Talibah	1	0	4	0
TOTAL # of girls per theme	13	14	21	8
TOTAL # of theme occurrence	21	33	71	18

Appendix C
Instagram Interaction

The following is an Instragram (social media) interaction between Zainab, 16, and a White, non-Muslim male classmate of hers. She posted a close-up photo of a pin she was wearing on her rida that read, "This is what a feminist looks like," with an arrow pointing up towards her face.

Original post (paired with picture):

Zainab: A certain someone just came upto me saying "if you wear that pin ever again I'm just going to.... you're not a feminist, and you can see that clearly because of what you're wearing." A feminist is one who wants equal rights for men and women. That being said, the liberation lies in the choice. So if I am CHOOSING to cover myself, then how the hell am I not liberated? If what this stereo typical definition of feminism is women who wear "western clothing"-- is that not a choice? So, I'm oppressed just because I don't dress like every other girl in this school? But what if I'm doing it with choice?

The most ignorant, disgusting comment I've ever gotten. Screw you and your bias definition of feminism.

_____

Responses:

Richard [Student who made comment]: Literally, the garment you were wearing is a sign of female oppression and is offensive to women in the Middle East who are forced to wear similar clothing everyday of their lives. The passive aggression of this post is unappreciated. If you have a problem then please take it up with me in person instead of posting on social media. Also, I'm biased against feminists because of previous encounters with them and how extreme they blow things out of proportion. If you need an example, look at yourself. You couldn't take a joke, which I understand is on a touchy subject, but still. And honestly I'm sorry of I offended you.

Zainab: First of all, in order for you to be stating away how women in the Middle East are oppressed by my clothing, you must have either visited, spoken to someone who was oppressed or have prior knowledge on it, correct? I'm pretty sure you don't. So you have no right to say that women are oppressed or not. If you educated yourself, you would understand that yes, some are unfortunately oppressed, but not all, so you can't claim that my covering is a sign of oppression.

Secondly, in this post, I have no where stated your name or even given your gender out for the world to know who you were. You put yourself in that place by commenting publicly. I will post about it, and I'd like to see one aspect of this post that invades your privacy in any way. And if you're calling me an extremist feminist for being intolerable to being called oppressed; then so be it. It seems you've defined me in your eyes well enough as it is, and we both know this was not the first time you've said something offensive to my culture or my religion. That's what offended me-- I take jokes. Every one knows that, but there's a certain limit to everything, Richard, and you have repeatedly crossed every one of them.

I will post about this, and will continue to if it happens in the future because why hide what ignorant people I come across when I can just show the world? ☺. No privacy was invaded, so don't invade me with that shit. So, you're ignorant as hell and I hope you don't go saying these things to the wrong kind of people next time.

Richard: I don't have to know or speak to anyone who was oppressed to know what oppression is. I'm trying to be polite about this and use nice language, but now you're disrespecting me. I can read articles, books, etc. over how women in the Middle East are oppressed, so to answer your question... No you are not correct. And now the one who boasts about equality for both men and women is trying to infringe my right of free speech by saying I have no right to say if women are oppressed or not. You contradicted

yourself, congrats. And I can claim anything I want. First amendment rights... The U.S. Is glorious isn't it? Where everyone has an equal chance of success unlike in most middle eastern societies. So now that that's out of the way, I never once said anything about invasion of privacy. I said your passive aggression is not appreciated, please talk to me about it so I can fix the issue but you go on and start attacking me anyway even after I apologized. I will agree with you that sometimes I do go too far with my jokes and that's because a lot of the time I speak without thinking. I'm working on it and trying to get better about that. And I don't care if you post about it but who is the real ignorant one here? Who is the one who resorts to foul language? And again I'll say whatever I want to whoever I want... First amendment.

Zainab: Does the first amendment not state freedom of religion? Please, correct me if I'm wrong, but how is you bashing a religion of women who cover making you look as patriotic as you're portraying yourself to be? And seriously, since you read so many books and articles and stuff, try some on the modern Middle East, see how it's developed throughout these years. YES, some countries do have restrictions on women and it's terrible. But things are being done. Believe it or not, there IS a thing called MUSLIM feminism, and since you're caught up with your research, check it out. It's enlightening. P.S.-- Incase you forgot, I'm American too. I have a citizenship, and just because I don't look like you, practice your religion or wear the clothes of your society does not make me less of an American than you, so once again, I am a feminist, and once again, first amendment.

Richard: Woah. I never once said anything about religion. So what you said is irrelevant. And I never said you weren't an American. And if you're enrolled in our school then you're obviously a citizen. No need to be redundant. Oh and thanks for responding to what I said about how you fight for equality but then tried to take some of my rights away. It's okay because I know I'm right and that's all the explaining anyone needs. I'm sorry you chose the path of being a radical feminist instead of being a regular one that actually wants equality. I would like equality for both genders. I would like everyone to have equal opportunities regardless of race, religion, gender, or any of those things that some people say sets us apart. And I will take time to read up on the modern Middle East and how it has evolved. Thanks for the recommendation. ❤

Appendix D

EMERGING ADULTHOOD ITEMS

Interview Guide

The following questions will be asked as open-ended prompts to the subjects:

1. What do you do?*
This question will determine how the rest of the interview falls into place.
2. Was there anything else you may have also liked to do?
    a. Why didn't you?
3. How did you decide which college to go to?
    a. Did you always know you were going to college?
    b. Why did you want to go to college?
4. What are you majoring in (or did you major in)?
5. Do you look forward to going to classes/work?
    a. Why?
    b. What in particular do you look forward to?
6. How do you decide what you're going to wear for the day (during the week/for school/work)?
    a. Do you think people notice what you are wearing?
    b. Who notices more, men or women?
    c. Do you wear any sort of hijab to school?
        i. All the time/Some of the time/Never?
        ii. Why/why not?
7. How diverse is your college/university/workplace? (How many different kinds of students are there—race, religion, ethnicity-wise?)
    a. What is the thing(s) that makes you most different from people at your campus?
    b. How do you identify yourself? (e.g., American, Muslim American/American Muslim, Palestinian American, Palestinian Muslim American, etcetera.)
    c. Are there any differences between yourself and your peers on campus that you find stressful at all?
    d. Do you ever talk about Islam on campus?
    e. How/why/in what context?
8. Do you think national politics affects your college/workplace?
    a. 9/11 memories?
    b. Trump?
9. Have you ever experienced any kind of prejudice for being Muslim?
    a. Non-Muslim context
    b. Muslim context—not being Muslim "enough"
10. Have you ever experienced any kind of sexism due to being a woman?
    a. Non-Muslim context?
    b. Muslim context?
11. Do you attend a masjid regularly?
    a. What do you like about it?

      b.   What do you dislike about it?

      c.   Is there anything you would change about it?

Relationships

12. If you were having a problem with something, who would you talk to about it?
    a.   If you were having a problem at school, who would you talk to about it?
    b.   If you were having a problem with someone at home, who would you talk to about it?
13. Who do you live with?
    a.   Dorm/apartment, or at home with parents?
    b.   Siblings?
    c.   Spouse?
14. What do your parents do for a living?
    a.   Mother
    b.   Father
15. What has your relationship been like with them?
    a.   Growing up?
    b.   Now?
16. How much of an influence do your parents have on what you do?
    a.   Daily basis?
    b.   Long-term basis?
17. Have you and your parents disagreed on anything recently?
    a.   If not recently, ever?
    b.   Religious issues? Social issues? Marital issues?
18. Are you married?
    a.   Do you want to be?
    b.   By when?
    c.   How do you envision it happening?

Long-term views

19. What are your major life goals?
20. What do you think would be different in your life if you were a man?
    a.   Do you think your parents would treat you differently? How?
    b.   Do you think your people on campus would treat you differently? How?
21. What is the most frustrating/challenging/confusing part of your life right now?
    a.   What do you think will fix it? (Time or effort?)
    b.   Do you think you'd have a different frustration/challenge if you were a man?
22. What is the most exciting/best part of your life right now?
23. Where do you see yourself in one year?
24. Where do you see yourself in five years?
25. Where do you see yourself in ten years?

Online Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. My peers on campus know which religion I follow.

```
I AGREE  1--------------------2---------------------3----------------------4--------------------5------------------------6  I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY      MOSTLY            AGREE              DISAGREE           MOSTLY                    AT ALL
                AGREE           SOMEWHAT            SOMEWHAT          DISAGREE
```

2. Being Muslim is a choice I've made.

```
I AGREE  1--------------------2---------------------3----------------------4--------------------5------------------------6  I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY      MOSTLY            AGREE              DISAGREE           MOSTLY                    AT ALL
                AGREE           SOMEWHAT            SOMEWHAT          DISAGREE
```

3. I have not always thought of myself as a Muslim.

```
I AGREE  1--------------------2---------------------3----------------------4--------------------5------------------------6  I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY      MOSTLY            AGREE              DISAGREE           MOSTLY                    AT ALL
                AGREE           SOMEWHAT            SOMEWHAT          DISAGREE
```

4. I consider myself very American.

```
I AGREE  1--------------------2---------------------3----------------------4--------------------5------------------------6  I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY      MOSTLY            AGREE              DISAGREE           MOSTLY                    AT ALL
                AGREE           SOMEWHAT            SOMEWHAT          DISAGREE
```

5. I am close to my parents.

```
I AGREE  1--------------------2---------------------3----------------------4--------------------5------------------------6  I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY      MOSTLY            AGREE              DISAGREE           MOSTLY                    AT ALL
                AGREE           SOMEWHAT            SOMEWHAT          DISAGREE
```

6. I think about my religion frequently while I am on campus.

```
I AGREE  1--------------------2---------------------3----------------------4--------------------5------------------------6  I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY      MOSTLY            AGREE              DISAGREE           MOSTLY                    AT ALL
                AGREE           SOMEWHAT            SOMEWHAT          DISAGREE
```

7. I think about my religion frequently when I am at home.

```
I AGREE  1--------------------2---------------------3----------------------4--------------------5------------------------6  I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY      MOSTLY            AGREE              DISAGREE           MOSTLY                    AT ALL
                AGREE           SOMEWHAT            SOMEWHAT          DISAGREE
```

8. My religion does not affect the way people on campus interact with me.

```
I AGREE  1--------------------2---------------------3----------------------4--------------------5------------------------6  I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY      MOSTLY            AGREE              DISAGREE           MOSTLY                    AT ALL
                AGREE           SOMEWHAT            SOMEWHAT          DISAGREE
```

9. My religion plays an important role when I am making life decisions.

I AGREE 1--------------------2 ----------------------3 ----------------------4----------------------5------------------------6 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   MOSTLY   AGREE   DISAGREE   MOSTLY   AT ALL
                          AGREE   SOMEWHAT   SOMEWHAT   DISAGREE

10. I feel comfortable being myself around people from my religious community.

I AGREE 1--------------------2 ----------------------3 ----------------------4----------------------5------------------------6 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   MOSTLY   AGREE   DISAGREE   MOSTLY   AT ALL
                          AGREE   SOMEWHAT   SOMEWHAT   DISAGREE

11. I don't consider myself an active member of my religious community.

I AGREE 1--------------------2 ----------------------3 ----------------------4----------------------5------------------------6 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   MOSTLY   AGREE   DISAGREE   MOSTLY   AT ALL
                          AGREE   SOMEWHAT   SOMEWHAT   DISAGREE

12. I plan on working after college/graduate school.

I AGREE 1--------------------2 ----------------------3 ----------------------4----------------------5------------------------6 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   MOSTLY   AGREE   DISAGREE   MOSTLY   AT ALL
                          AGREE   SOMEWHAT   SOMEWHAT   DISAGREE

13. Thinking about life after college stresses me out.

I AGREE 1--------------------2 ----------------------3 ----------------------4----------------------5------------------------6 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   MOSTLY   AGREE   DISAGREE   MOSTLY   AT ALL
                          AGREE   SOMEWHAT   SOMEWHAT   DISAGREE

14. Marriage is an important step in becoming an adult.

I AGREE 1--------------------2 ----------------------3 ----------------------4----------------------5------------------------6 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   MOSTLY   AGREE   DISAGREE   MOSTLY   AT ALL
                          AGREE   SOMEWHAT   SOMEWHAT   DISAGREE

Please write in the answers to the following questions:

15. What city/country are your parents from?
16. How many years have your parents lived in the U.S.?
17. Where were you born?
18. Which branch of Islam do you follow? (Please give the most detailed name you know of, including whether it is Sunni, Shi'a, or Unspecified.)
19. When people ask you where you are from, what do you say?
20. On average, how often would you say people ask you where you are from? (Once a day; once a week; once a month; once a year; almost never; never)
21. Which university/college do you attend?
22. Do you live with your family? If not, please briefly describe your living situation.
23. How frequently do you see your family?

Figure 3.
Questionnaire Response Graphs and Statistics
(Likert-scale Questions)

Q1: My peers on campus/at work know which religion I follow.
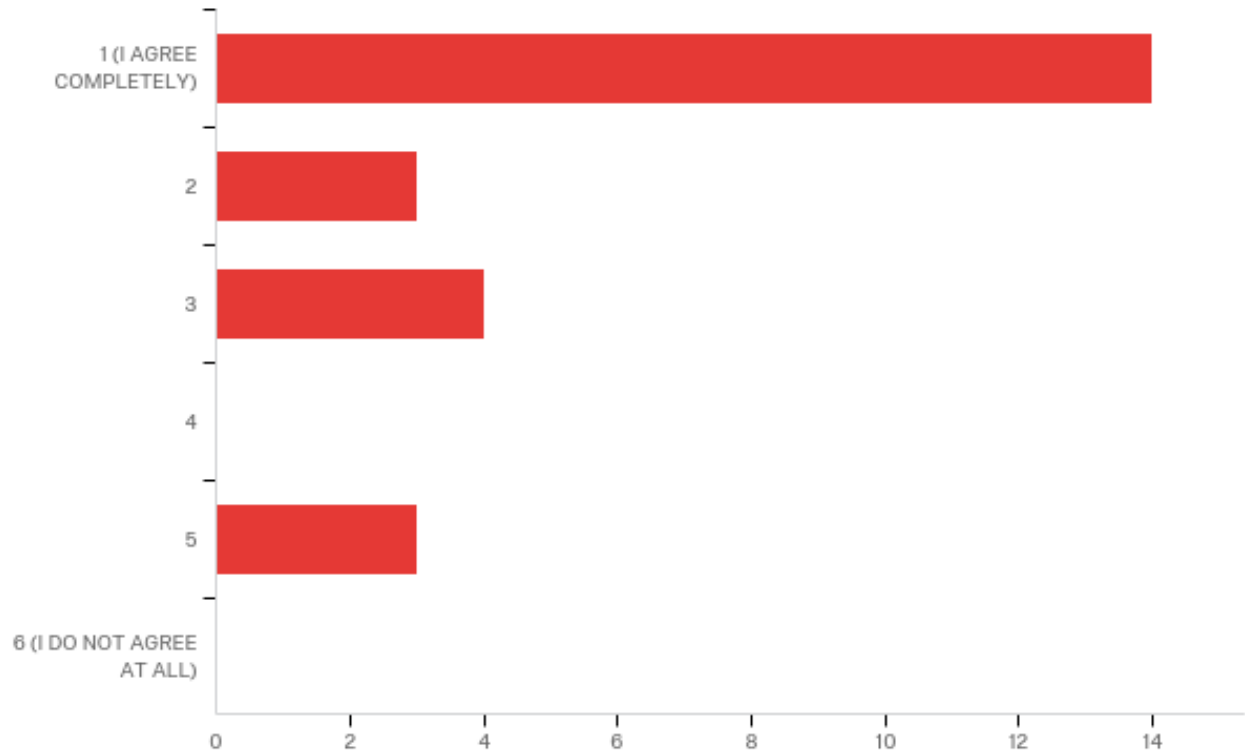
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	58.33%	14
2	2	12.50%	3
3	3	16.67%	4
4	4	0.00%	0
5	5	12.50%	3
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	24

Q2: Being a Muslim is a choice I've made.
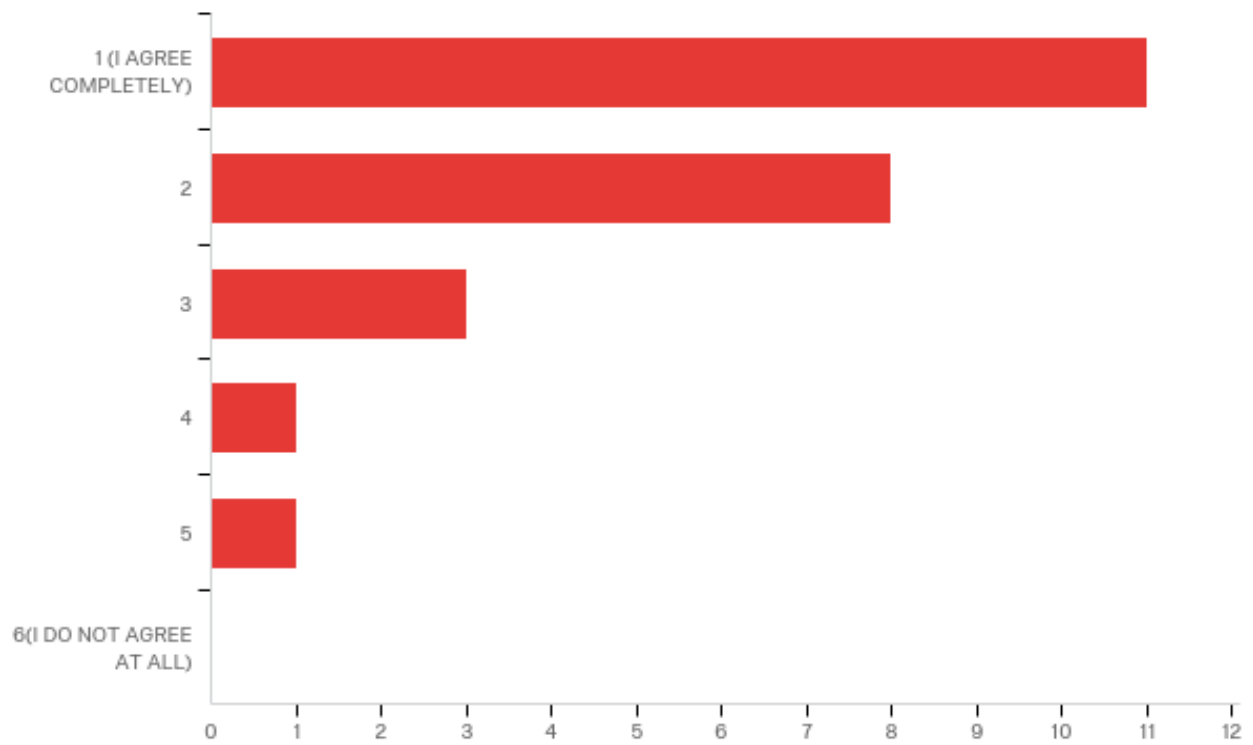
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	45.83%	11
2	2	33.33%	8
3	3	12.50%	3
4	4	4.17%	1
5	5	4.17%	1
6	6(I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	24

Q3: I have not always thought of myself as a Muslim.
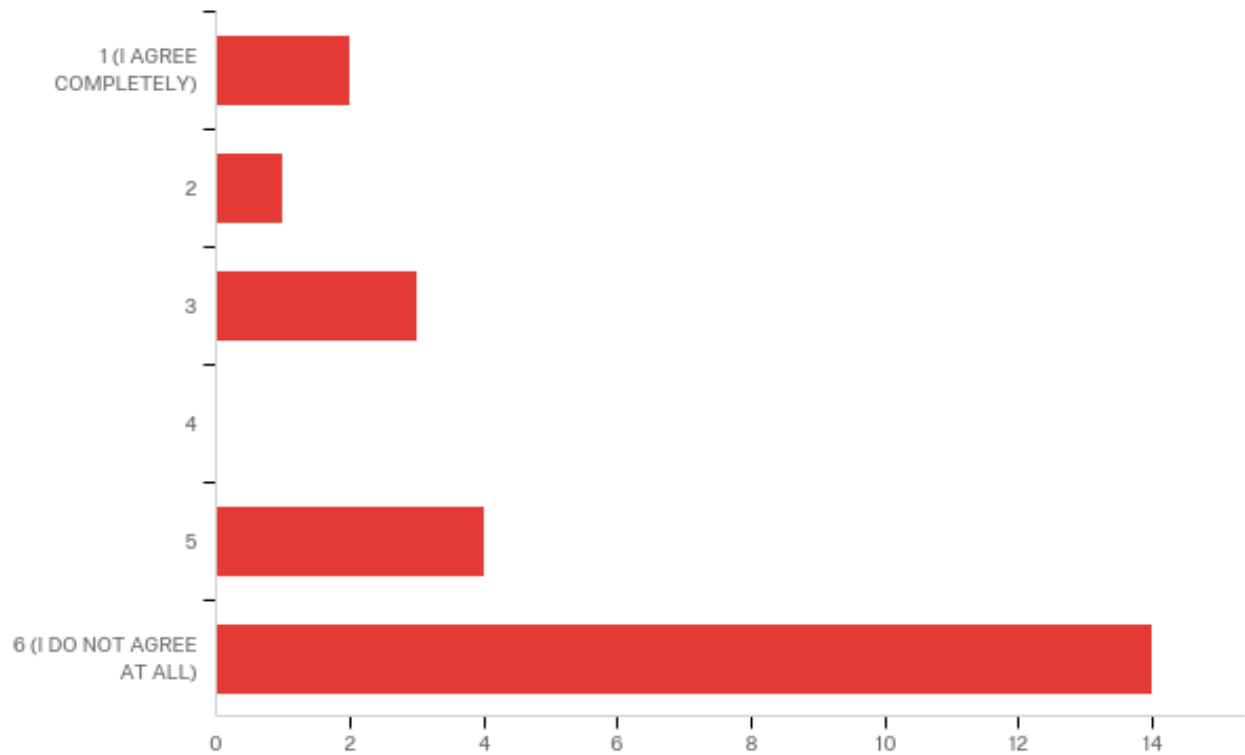
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	8.33%	2
2	2	4.17%	1
3	3	12.50%	3
4	4	0.00%	0
5	5	16.67%	4
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	58.33%	14
	Total	100%	24

Q4: I consider myself very American.
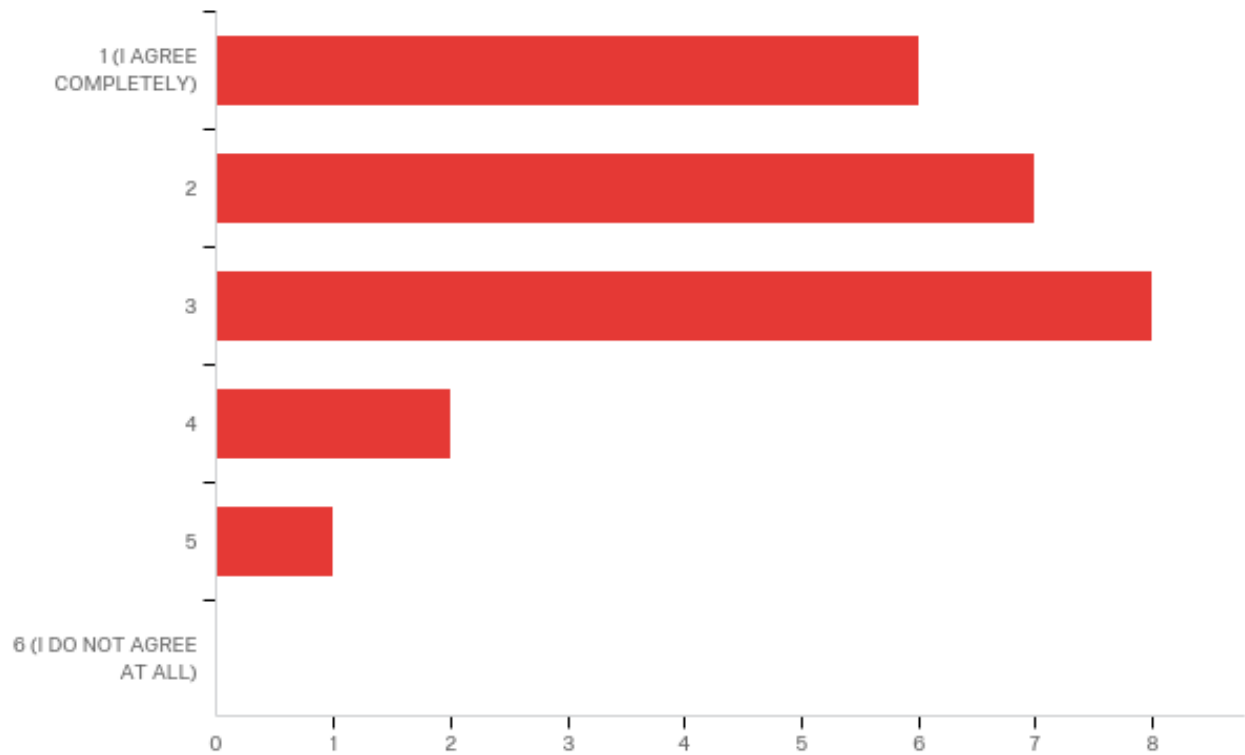
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	25.00%	6
2	2	29.17%	7
3	3	33.33%	8
4	4	8.33%	2
5	5	4.17%	1
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	24

Q5: I am close to my parents.
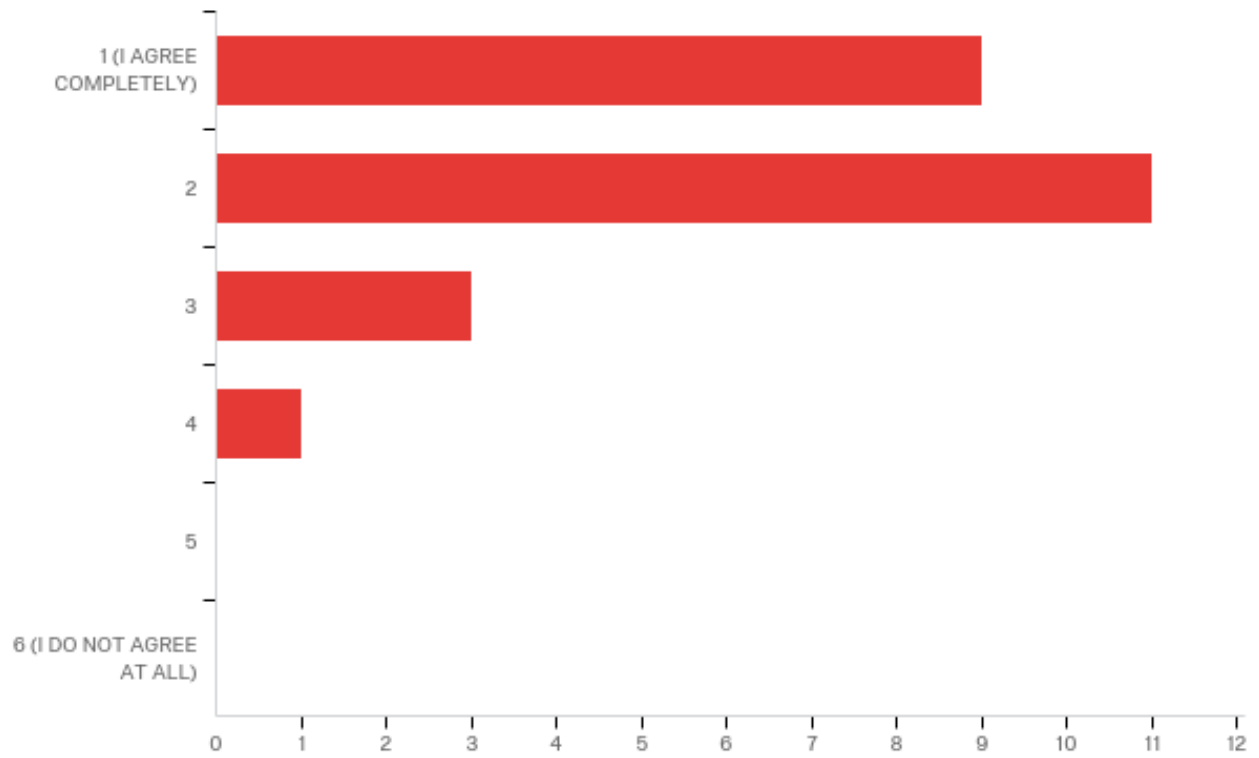
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	37.50%	9
2	2	45.83%	11
3	3	12.50%	3
4	4	4.17%	1
5	5	0.00%	0
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	24

Q6: I think or thought about my religion frequently when I am on campus or at work.
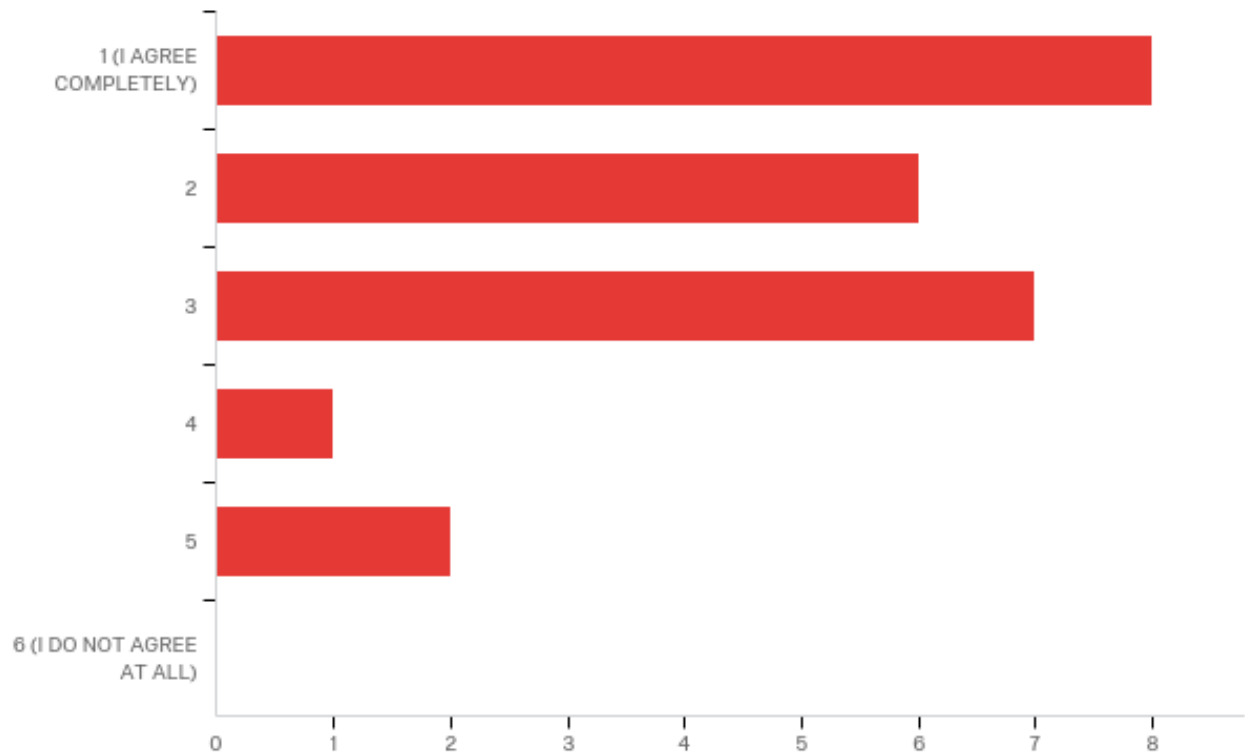
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	33.33%	8
2	2	25.00%	6
3	3	29.17%	7
4	4	4.17%	1
5	5	8.33%	2
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	24

Q7: I think about my religion frequently when I am at home.
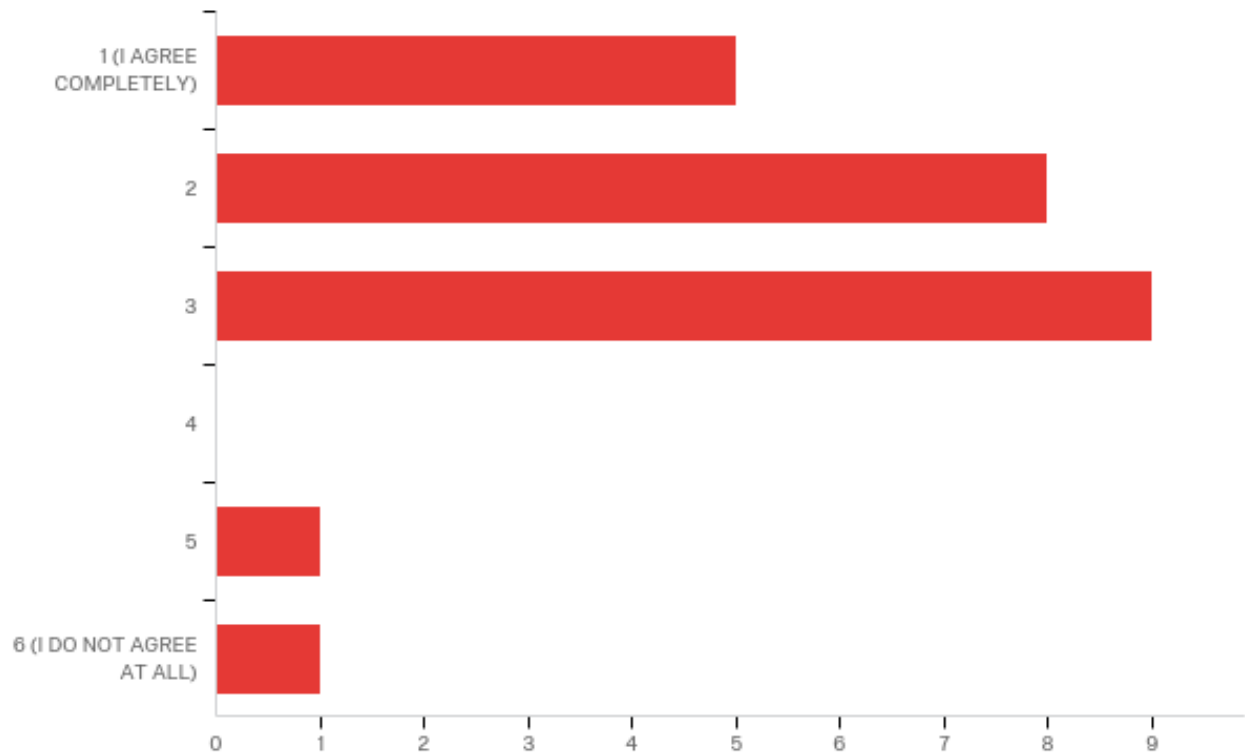
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	20.83%	5
2	2	33.33%	8
3	3	37.50%	9
4	4	0.00%	0
5	5	4.17%	1
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	4.17%	1
	Total	100%	24

Q8: My religion does or did not affect the way people on campus or at work interact with me.
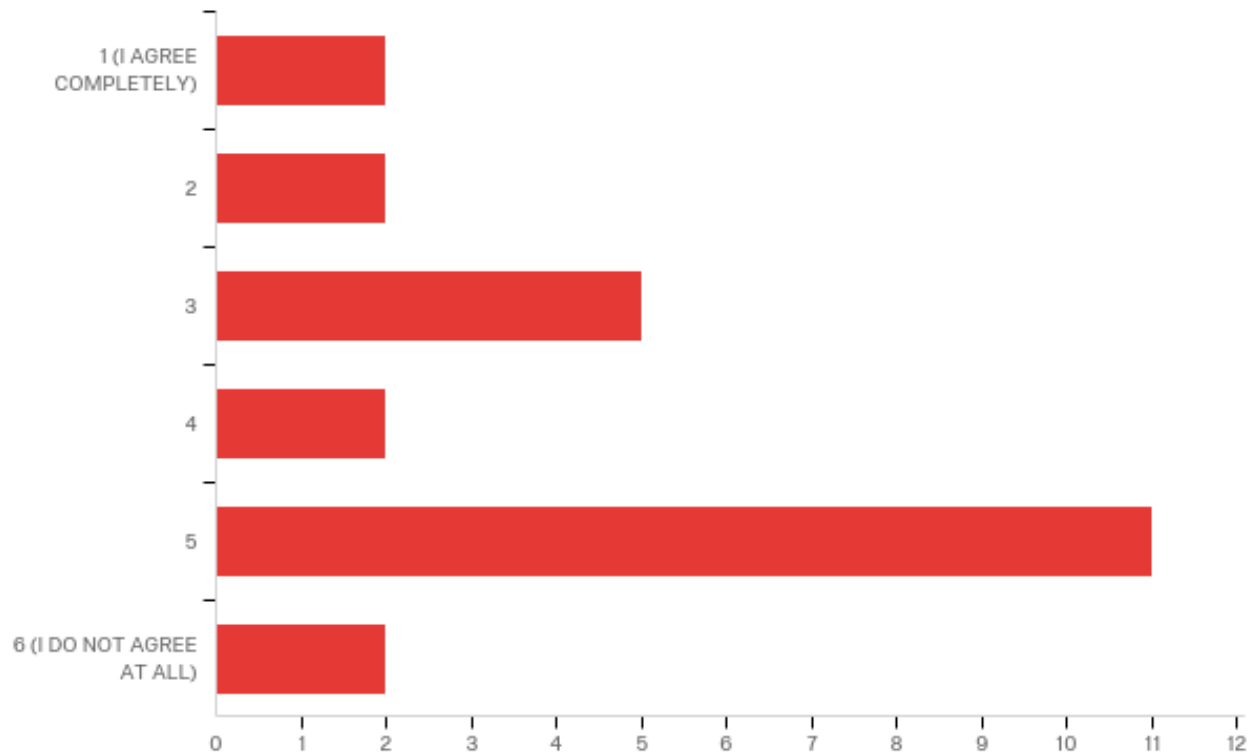
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	8.33%	2
2	2	8.33%	2
3	3	20.83%	5
4	4	8.33%	2
5	5	45.83%	11
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	8.33%	2
	Total	100%	24

Q9: My religion plays an important role when I am making life decisions.
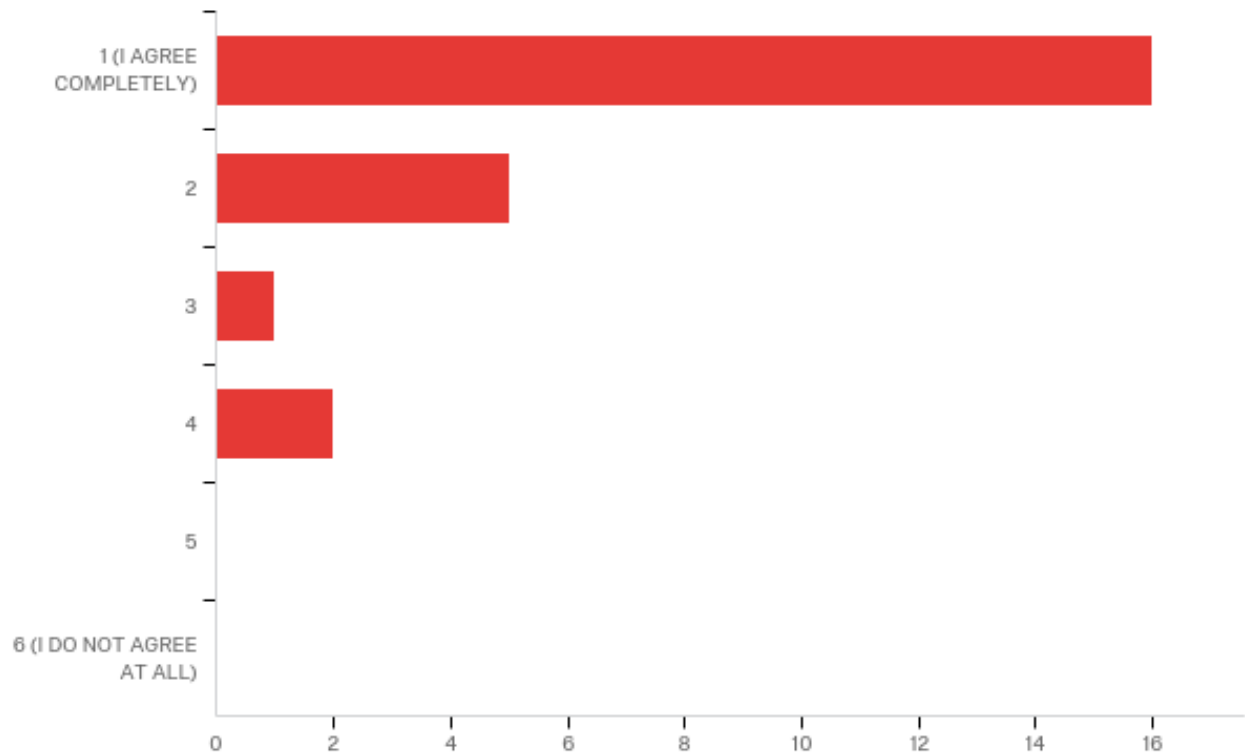
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	66.67%	16
2	2	20.83%	5
3	3	4.17%	1
4	4	8.33%	2
5	5	0.00%	0
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	24

Q10: I feel comfortable being myself around people from my religious community.
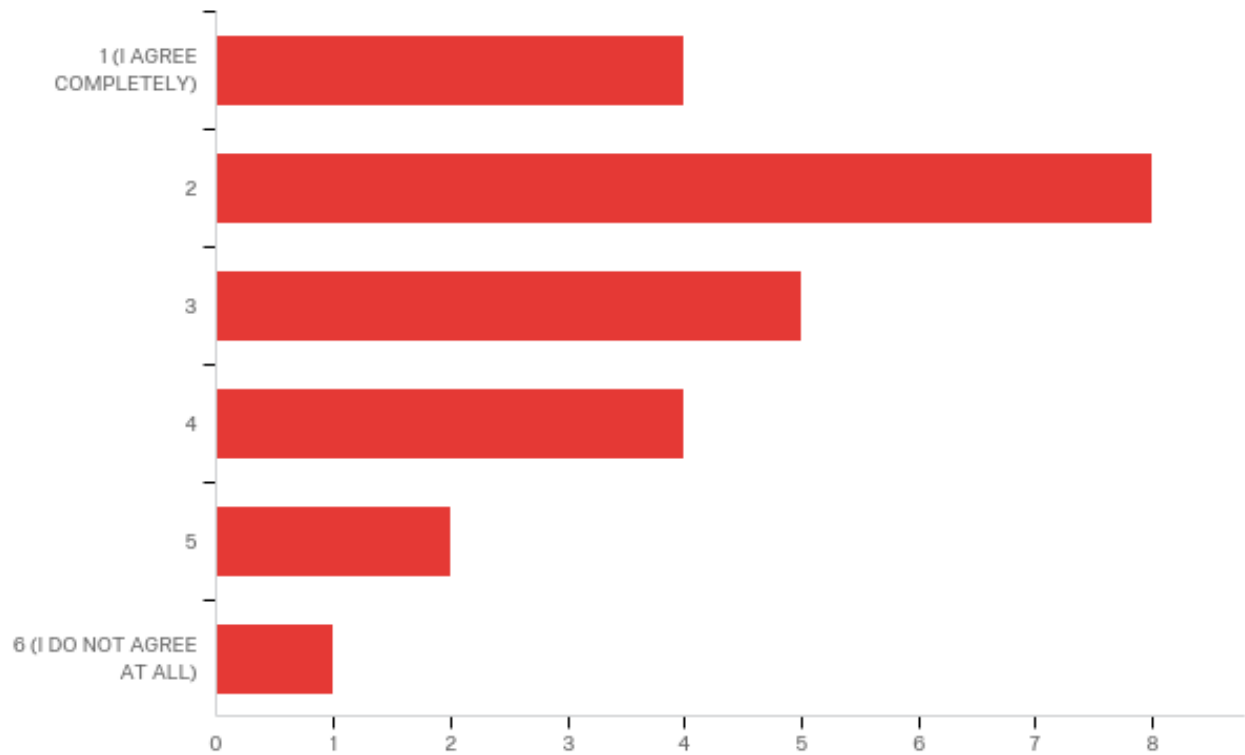
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	16.67%	4
2	2	33.33%	8
3	3	20.83%	5
4	4	16.67%	4
5	5	8.33%	2
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	4.17%	1
	Total	100%	24

Q11: I don't consider myself an active member of my religious community.
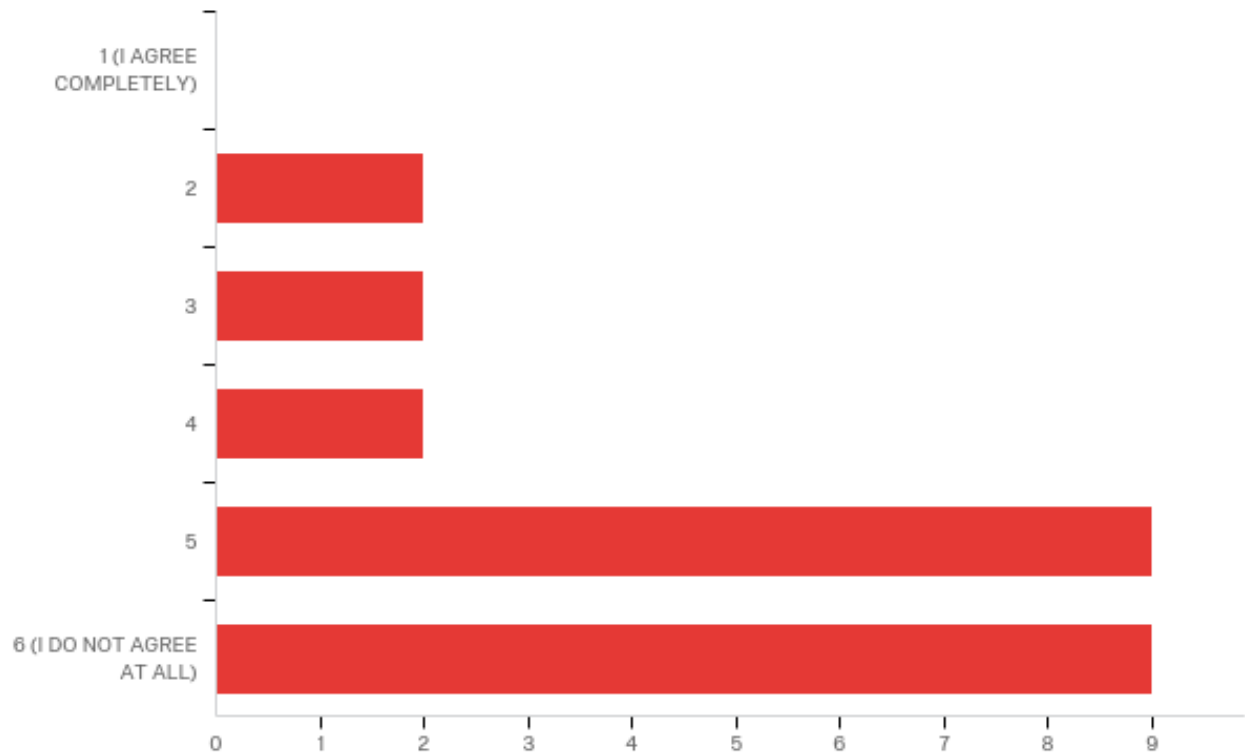
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	0.00%	0
2	2	8.33%	2
3	3	8.33%	2
4	4	8.33%	2
5	5	37.50%	9
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	37.50%	9
	Total	100%	24

Q12: I plan or planned on working after college/graduate school.
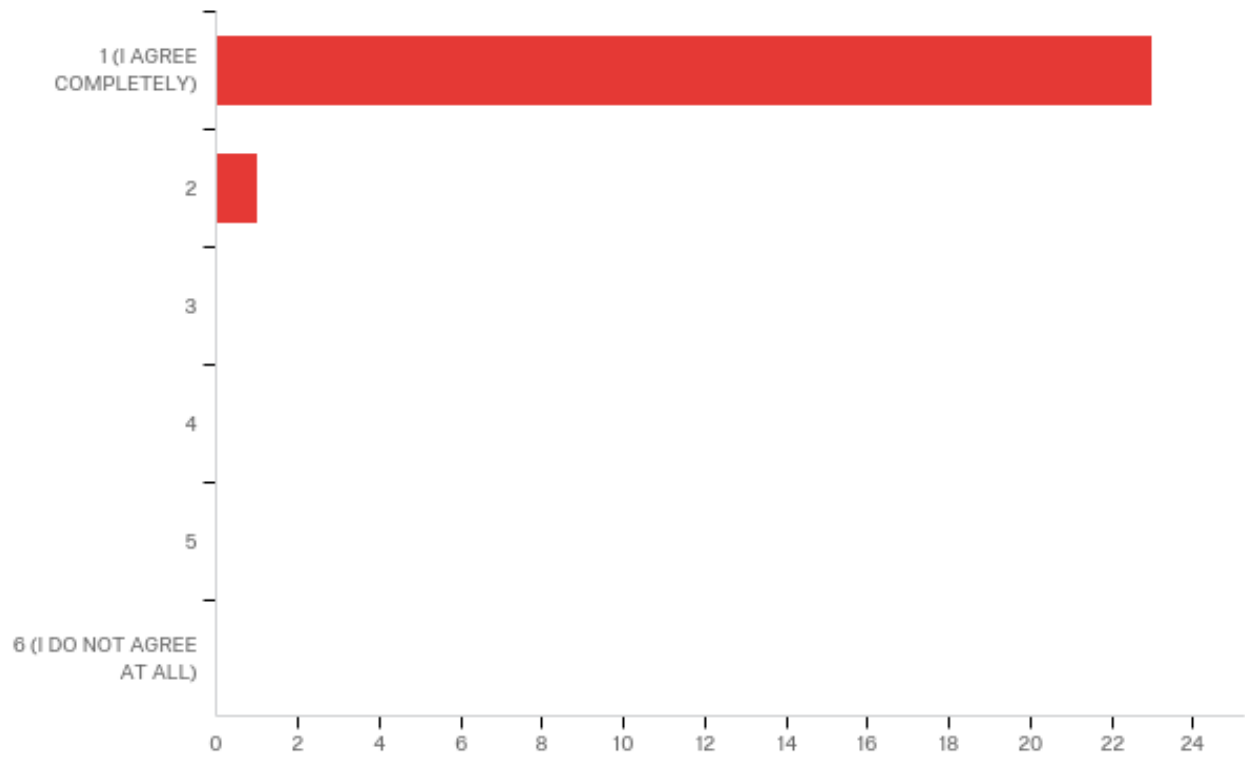
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	95.83%	23
2	2	4.17%	1
3	3	0.00%	0
4	4	0.00%	0
5	5	0.00%	0
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	24

Q13: Thinking about life after college stresses or stressed me out.
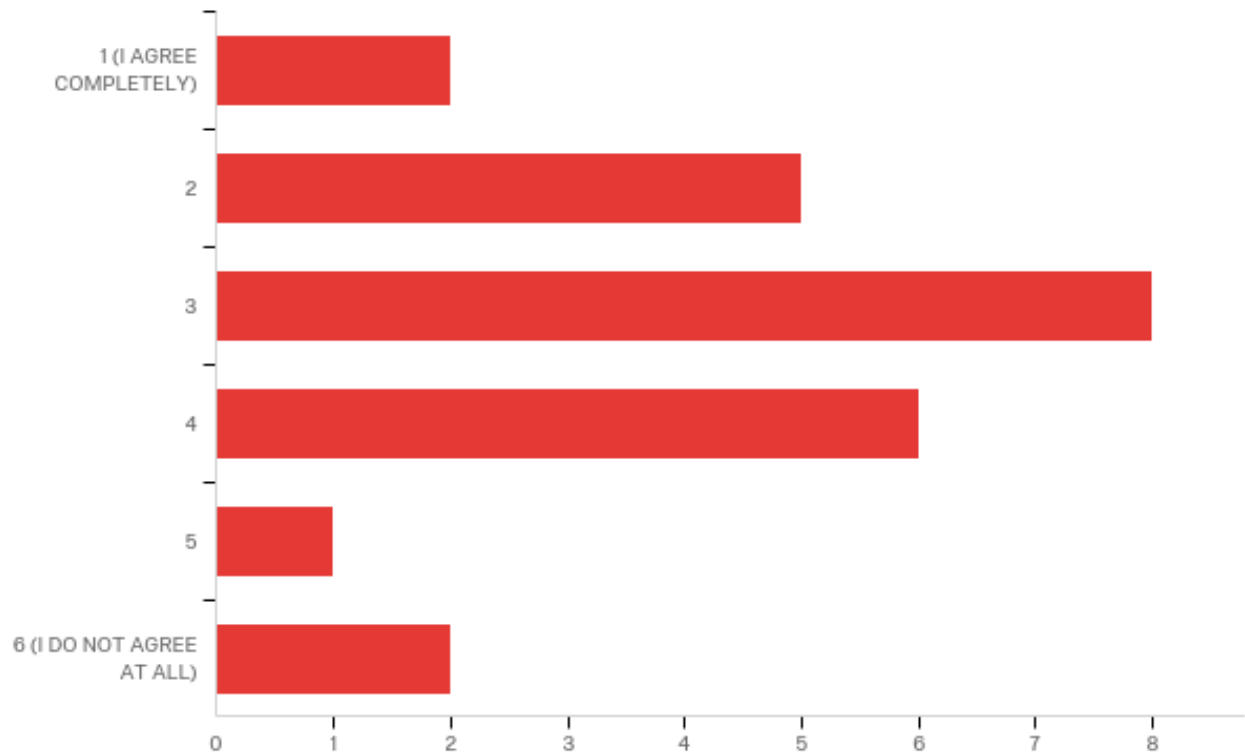
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	8.33%	2
2	2	20.83%	5
3	3	33.33%	8
4	4	25.00%	6
5	5	4.17%	1
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	8.33%	2
	Total	100%	24

Q14: Marriage is an important step in becoming an adult.
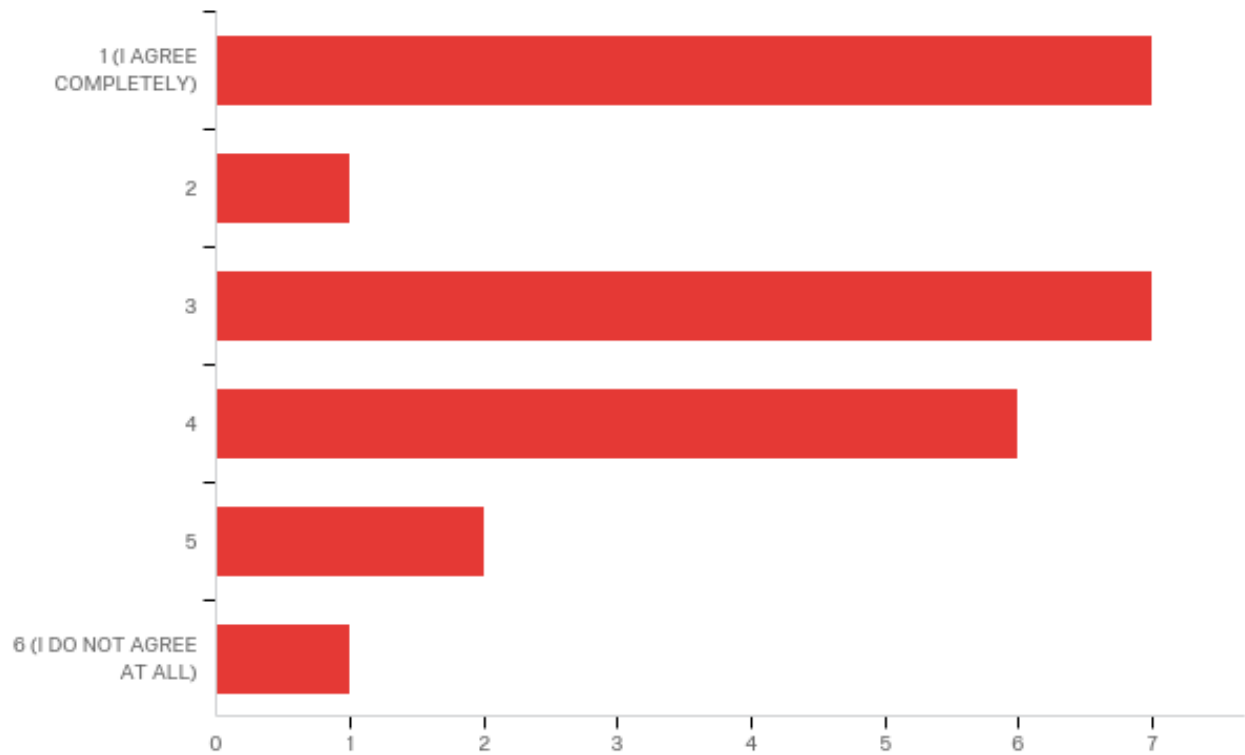
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	29.17%	7
2	2	4.17%	1
3	3	29.17%	7
4	4	25.00%	6
5	5	8.33%	2
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	4.17%	1
	Total	100%	24

Code Tables

Table 23. RISK FACTORS: Group overlaps

	Sexism/gender bias	Minority woman prejudice
Sakuma	4	3
Zainab (long)	6	1
Nadiah	0	0
Farah	1	2
Alisha	1	2
Sarrah (long)	4	0
Laila	4	3
Bani	1	1
Farida (long)	1	1
Rashida (long)	0	1
Ayaala (long)	0	0
Munira	3	2
Farhaana	0	0
Soraiya	2	3
Fatemah	0	0
Sharaf	0	0
Johara	0	1
Umaama	1	1
Arwa	2	0
Hurat	3	2
Malekaah	1	0
Tassu	0	0
Rashu	1	1
Rehana	2	1
Ruquaiyah	1	3
Umme-hani	2	2
TOTAL # of women per theme	18 (69%)	17 (65%)
TOTAL # of theme occurrence	40	30

Table 24. REDUCED RISKS: Group non-overlaps

	No alcohol	Hijab as perceived protection from sexual assault
Sakuma	0	0
Zainab (long)	1	1
Nadiah	1	0
Farah	1	0
Alisha	1	0
Sarrah (long)	1	1
Laila	1	0
Bani	1	0
Farida (long)	1	1
Rashida (long)	1	0
Ayaala (long)	1	0
Munira	0	0
Farha	1	1
Soraiya	1	0
Fatemah	1	1
Sharaf	1	0
Johara	1	0
Umaama	1	1
Arwa	1	0
Hurat	1	0
Malekaah	1	0
Tassu	1	1
Rashu	1	0
Rehana	1	0
Ruquaiyah	1	0
Umme-hani	1	0
TOTAL # of women per theme	24 (92%)	7 (27%)
TOTAL # of theme occurrence	24	7

Table 25. MARRIAGE

	As protective factor—freedom, social support	As risk—divorced/unmarried	As risk—homosexuality	As risk—marital abuse (emotional or physical)
Sakuma	0	4	0	0
Zainab (long)	2	0	0	0
Nadiah	4	0	0	0
Farah	3	0	0	0
Alisha	4	0	0	1
Sarrah (long)	2	2	0	0
Laila	1	3	0	0
Bani	2	0	0	1
Farida (long)	0	0	0	0
Rashida (long)	1	0	0	0
Ayaala (long)	1	0	0	0
Munira	1	2	0	0
Farha	2	1	0	0
Soraiya	1	4	7	2
Fatemah	3	0	0	0
Sharaf	2	0	0	0
Johara	1	1	0	0
Umaama	1	0	0	0
Arwa	1	1	0	0
Hurat	1	0	0	0
Malekaah	2	0	0	0
Tassu	1	0	0	0
Rashu	1	0	0	0
Rehana	0	0	0	0
Ruquaiyah	1	1	0	0
Umme-hani	2	0	0	0
TOTAL # of women per theme	23 (88%)	9 (35%)	1 (3%)	3 (12%)
TOTAL # of theme occurrence	40	19	7	4

Table 26. EDUCATION

	As protective factor (self-fulfillment, career)	As risk (location or duration of)
Sakuma	3	3
Zainab (long)	3	1
Nadiah	1	1
Farah	1	1
Alisha	2	2
Sarrah (long)	3	2
Laila	4	3
Bani	3	2
Farida (long)	2	0
Rashida (long)	1	1
Ayaala (long)	2	0
Munira	3	0
Farha	1	1
Soraiya	2	2
Fatemah	1	1
Sharaf	1	2
Johara	0	1
Umaama	0	1
Arwa	1	1
Hurat	1	1
Malekaah	0	1
Tassu	2	1
Rashu	0	1
Rehana	2	1
Ruquaiyah	2	1
Umme-hani	1	1
TOTAL # of women per theme	22 (85%)	23 (88%)
TOTAL # of theme occurrence	42	32

Table 27. ADDITIONAL RISKS: Group-specific

	Loss of Muslim social support	Islamophobic harassment
Sakuma	3	1
Zainab (long)	0	1
Nadiah	0	0
Farah	0	0
Alisha	0	0
Sarrah (long)	0	0
Laila	2	3
Bani	1	0
Farida (long)	0	0
Rashida (long)	0	0
Ayaala (long)	0	0
Munira	4	0
Farha	0	0
Soraiya	5	0
Fatemah	0	0
Sharaf	0	0
Johara	0	0
Umaama	1	2
Arwa	0	0
Hurat	0	0
Malekaah	0	0
Tassu	0	0
Rashu	0	0
Rehana	0	0
Ruquaiyah	0	0
Umme-hani	0	0
TOTAL # of women per theme	6 (23%)	4 (15%)
TOTAL # of theme occurrence	16	7

Table 28. ADDITIONAL COPING MECHANISMS/PROTECTIVE FACTORS

	Therapy/professional assistance	Goal-oriented focus	Authenticity
Sakuma	2	1	5
Zainab (long)	0	3	1
Nadiah	0	1	0
Farah	0	1	1
Alisha	0	3	2
Sarrah (long)	0	0	2
Laila	0	3	3
Bani	2	2	2
Farida (long)	0	1	1
Rashida (long)	0	1	0
Ayaala (long)	0	2	0
Munira	0	0	3
Farha	0	0	0
Soraiya	3	0	3
Fatemah	0	1	0
Sharaf	0	0	0
Johara	0	0	0
Umaama	0	1	1
Arwa	0	0	0
Hurat	0	0	0
Malekaah	0	0	1
Tassu	0	0	1
Rashu	0	2	0
Rehana	0	0	2
Ruquaiyah	0	0	0
Umme-hani	0	0	0
TOTAL # of women per theme	3 (12%)	13 (50%)	14 (54%)
TOTAL # of theme occurrence	7	22	28

ADULTHOOD ITEMS

Interview Guide

The following questions will be asked as open-ended prompts to the subjects:

1. What do you do?*
This question will determine how the rest of the interview falls into place.
2. Was there anything else you may have also liked to do?
    a. Why didn't you?
3. Tell me about an average day.
4. Did you go to college?
    a. Why/why not?
    b. (If yes) How did you decide where to go?
5. What kind of neighborhood did you grow up in?
6. Describe what middle/high school was like for you.
7. As a teenager, were the majority of your friends Muslim or non-Muslim?
8. Describe what college was like for you (if applicable.)
9. How old were you when 9/11 happened?
    a. Did you notice any changes around you immediately afterwards?
    b. How about 3, 4, 5 years after?
10. How diverse is your daily environment? (How many different kinds of people—racially, religiously, culturally—do you interact with?)
    a. Did you perceive any changes to your daily life after the 2016 presidential election?
    b. Are there any differences between yourself and those you usually interact with that you find stressful at all?
    c. Do you ever talk about Islam with non-Muslims?
    d. How/why/in what context?
11. Have you ever worked? What kind of jobs?
    a. Did you enjoy it?
    b. If you haven't worked, why not?

Religious enactment

12. How do you decide what you're going to wear for the day?
    a. Do you think people notice what you are wearing?
    b. Who notices more, men or women?
    c. Do you wear any sort of hijab?
        i. All the time/Some of the time/Never?
        ii. Why/why not?
13. Do you attend a masjid regularly?
    a. Why or why not?
    b. Would you consider the masjid one of the central elements of your life?
        i. Why?
    c. What do you like about it?
    d. What do you dislike about it?
    e. Is there anything you would change about it?

   f. Is it the same masjid you attended growing up?

Relationships
 14. Tell me about your closest relationship.
   a. How did you meet? How long have you known her (or him)? (e.g., best friend, sibling, spouse, parent?)
   b. What does she know about you? Do you think she knows you as well as you know her?
   c. Do you feel comfortable sharing everything about yourself with this person?
 15. Who do you live with?
 16. Are you married?
   a. If yes, how did you decide to get married?
   b. If no, do you see yourself getting married eventually?
 17. How much of an influence do your parents have on what you do?
   a. Growing up?
   b. Daily basis, current?
   c. Long-term basis/future?
 18. Have you and your parents disagreed on anything recently?
   a. If not recently, ever?
   b. Religious issues? Social issues? Marital issues?

Long term views
 19. What do you think would be different in your life if you were a man?
   a. Do you think your parents would have treated you differently growing up? How?
   b. Would your parents treat you different today if you had been a son?
   c. If you work, would your colleagues treat you differently?
 20. What is the most frustrating/challenging/confusing part of your life right now?
   a. What do you think will fix it? (Time or effort?)
   b. Do you think you'd have a different frustration/challenge if you were a man?
 21. What is the best/most optimistic part of your life right now?

Online Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability, with 1 being "I AGREE COMPLETELY" and 7 being "I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL."

 1. When I was in high school, my classmates knew which religion I followed.

I AGREE 1------------------2 -------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 --------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

 2. I have not encountered many challenges as a result of being a Muslim woman. 5

I AGREE 1------------------2 -------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 --------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

 3. I have not always thought of myself as a Muslim. 7

I AGREE 1------------------2 -------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 --------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

 4. I consider myself very American. 1

I AGREE 1------------------2 -------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 --------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE

COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

5. I am close to my parents. 1

I AGREE 1------------------2 --------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

6. My religion provides me with support and guidance when making life decisions. 3.5

I AGREE 1------------------2 --------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

7. My religion plays an important role in my daily life. 1

I AGREE 1------------------2 --------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

8. My religion does not affect the way most people interact with me. 1

I AGREE 1------------------2 --------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

9. Being a Muslim has not affected the opportunities I have had to pursue my goals. 4

I AGREE 1------------------2 --------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

10. I feel comfortable being myself around people from my religious community. 1

I AGREE 1------------------2 --------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

11. I don't consider myself an active member of my religious community. 7

I AGREE 1------------------2 --------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

12. If I was not a woman, I would have had more opportunities to pursue what I want. 2

I AGREE 1------------------2 --------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

13. Marriage is an important step to becoming an adult. 2

I AGREE 1------------------2 --------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

14. Holding a job is an important part of adulthood. 3

I AGREE 1------------------2 --------------------3 ------------------4--------------------5----------------6 ---------------------7 I DO NOT AGREE
COMPLETELY   NOT SURE   AT ALL

Please write in the answers to the following questions:
15. What city/country are your parents from? Karachi, Pakistan (mom)/India and Pakistan (dad)
16. How many years have your parents lived in the U.S.? 35+
17. Where were you born?

18. Which branch of Islam do you follow? (Please give the most detailed name you know of, including whether it is Sunni, Shi'a, or Unspecified.) Sunni
19. When people ask you where you are from, what do you say? "I grew up in Houston, TX, but ethnically I'm of Pakistani/Indian descent")
20. On average, how often would you say people ask you where you are from? (Once a day; once a week; once a month; once a year; almost never; never) once a month
21. How did you come to live where you currently do? Husband got a job there
22. Who do you live with? Husband and three kids
23. List two important benchmarks in your life. Marriage and having kids

1. When I was in high school, my classmates knew which religion I followed.
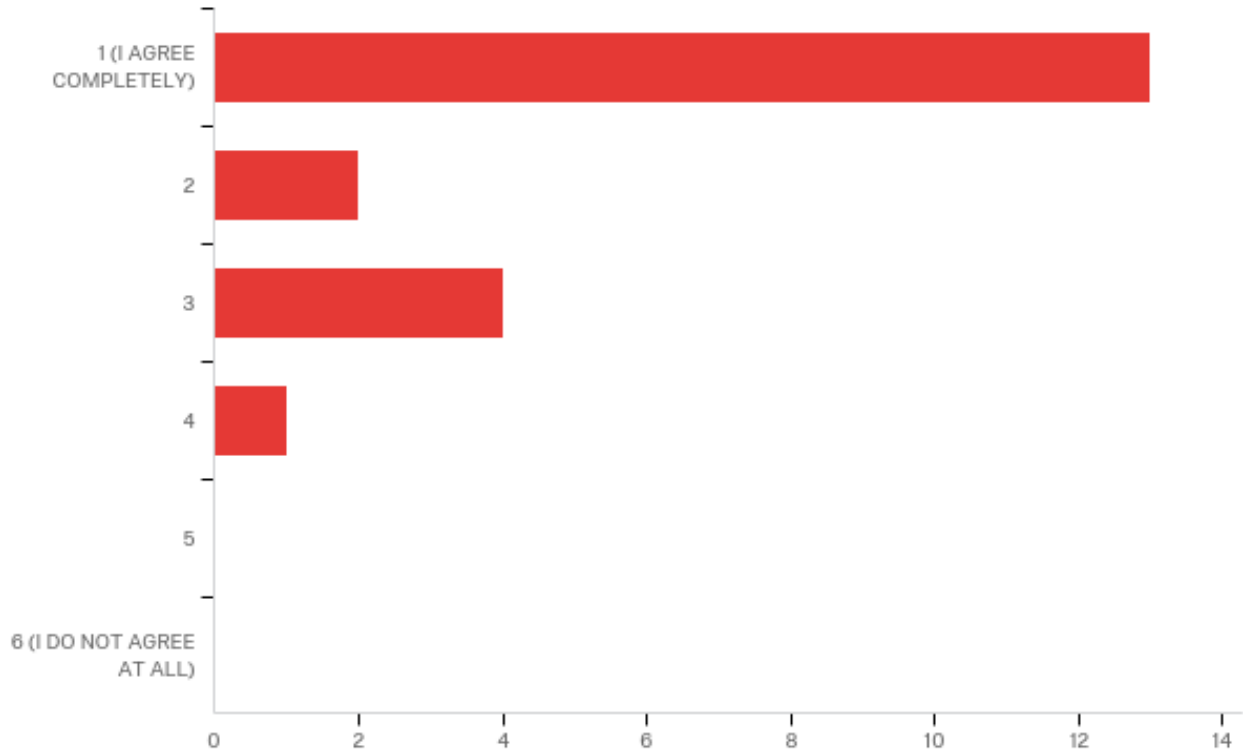
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	65.00%	13
2	2	10.00%	2
3	3	20.00%	4
4	4	5.00%	1
5	5	0.00%	0
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	20

2. I have not encountered many challenges as a result of being a Muslim woman.
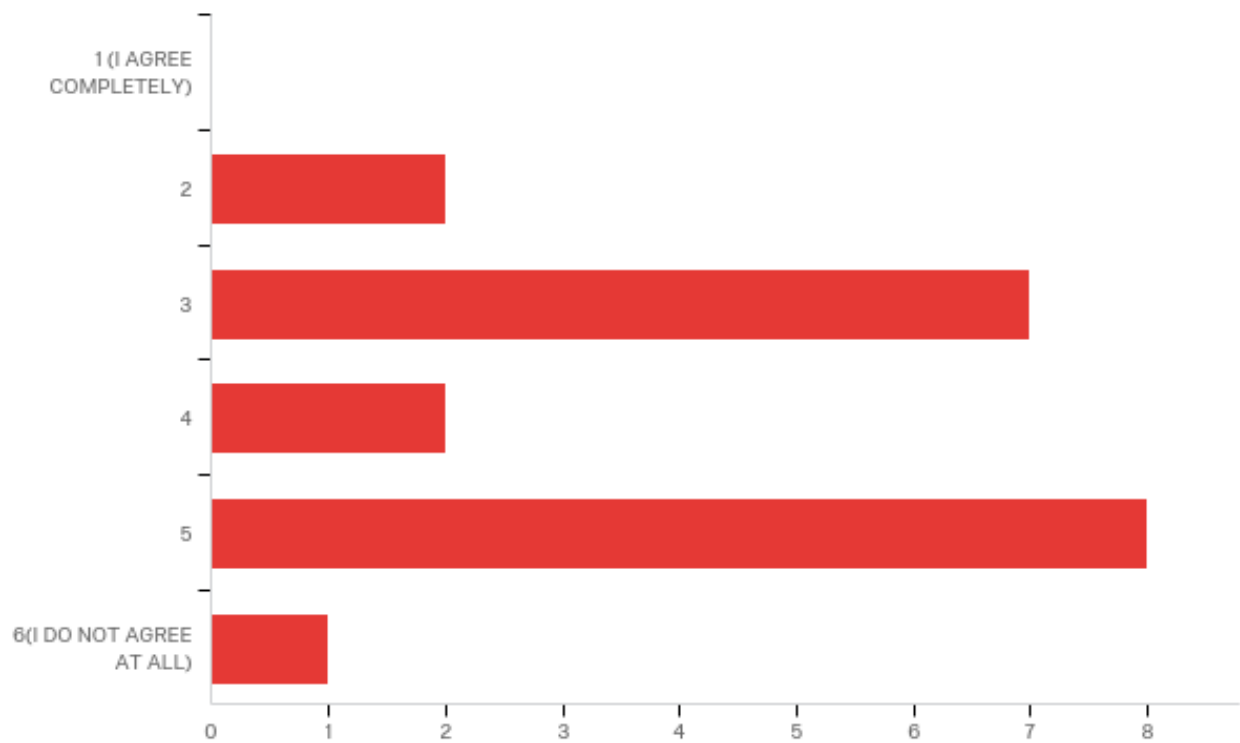
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	0.00%	0
2	2	10.00%	2
3	3	35.00%	7
4	4	10.00%	2
5	5	40.00%	8
6	6(I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	5.00%	1
	Total	100%	20

3. I have not always thought of myself as a Muslim.
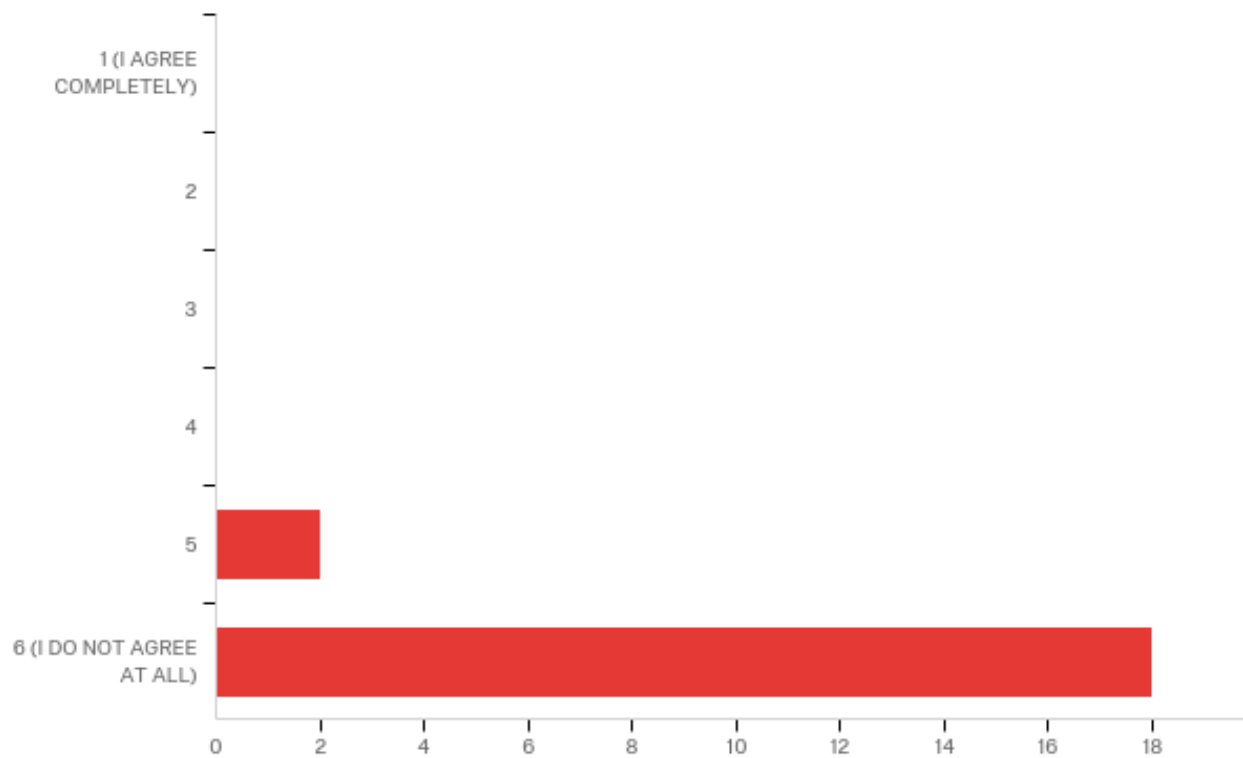
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	0.00%	0
2	2	0.00%	0
3	3	0.00%	0
4	4	0.00%	0
5	5	10.00%	2
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	90.00%	18
	Total	100%	20

4. I consider myself very American
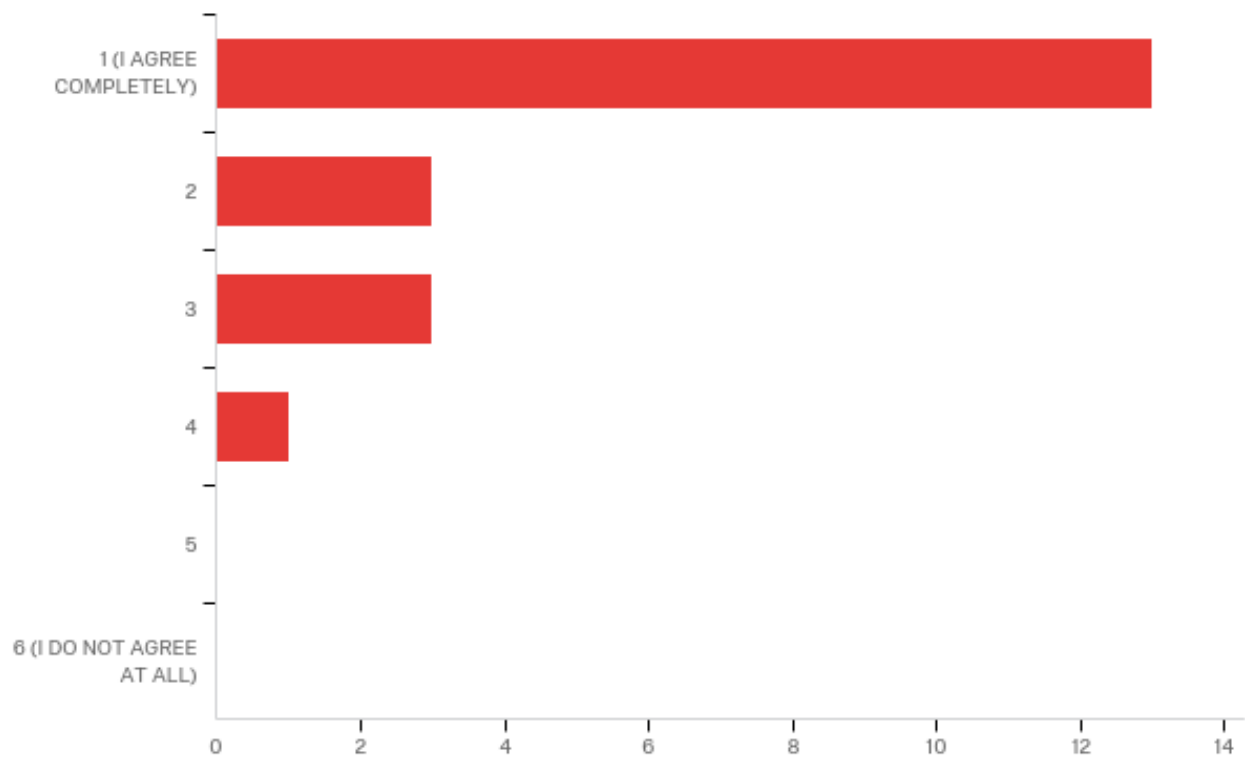
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	65.00%	13
2	2	15.00%	3
3	3	15.00%	3
4	4	5.00%	1
5	5	0.00%	0
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	20

5. I am close to my parents.
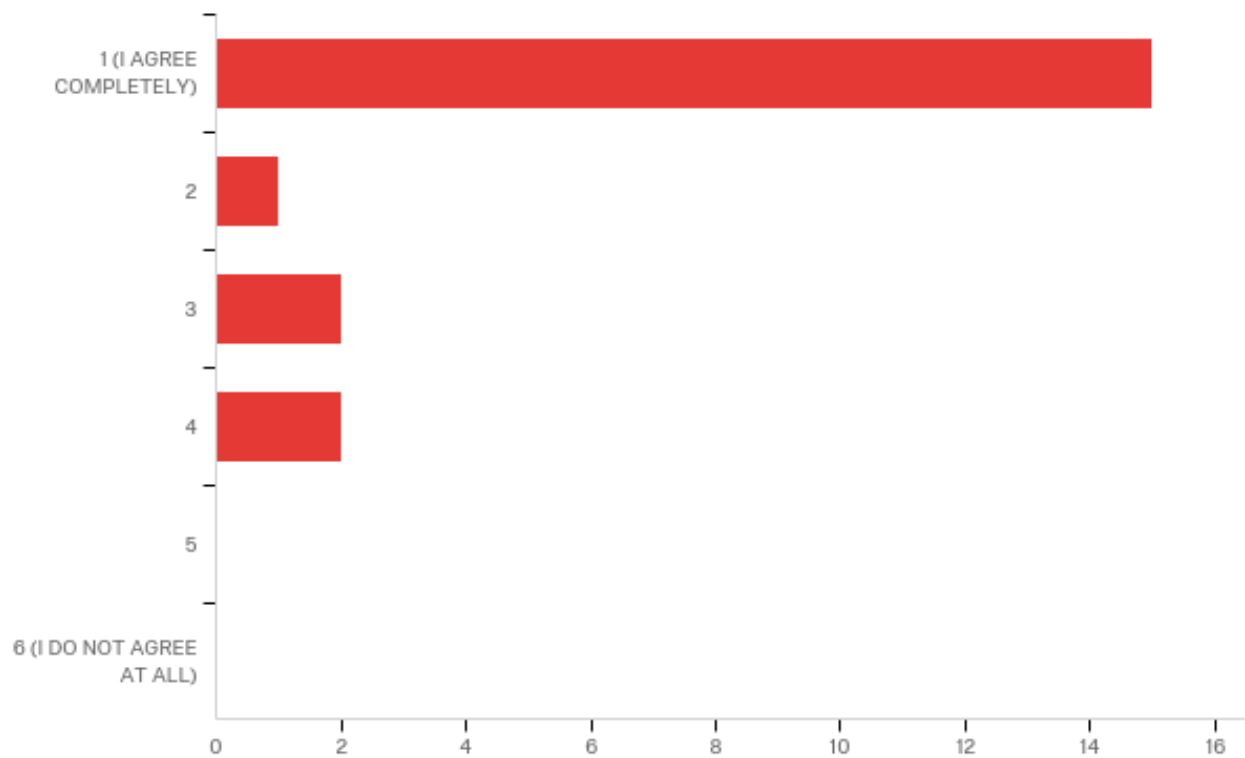
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	75.00%	15
2	2	5.00%	1
3	3	10.00%	2
4	4	10.00%	2
5	5	0.00%	0
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	20

6. My religion provides me with support and guidance when making life decisions.
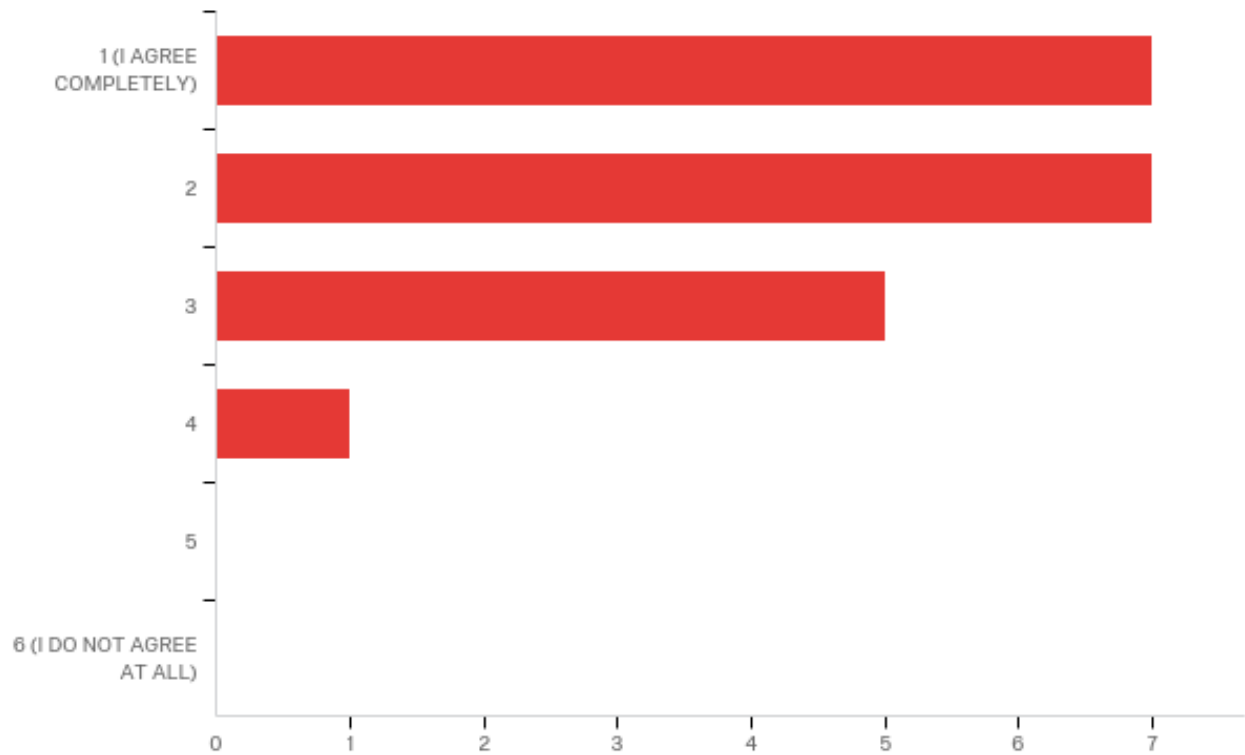
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	35.00%	7
2	2	35.00%	7
3	3	25.00%	5
4	4	5.00%	1
5	5	0.00%	0
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	20

7.   My religion plays an important role in my daily life.
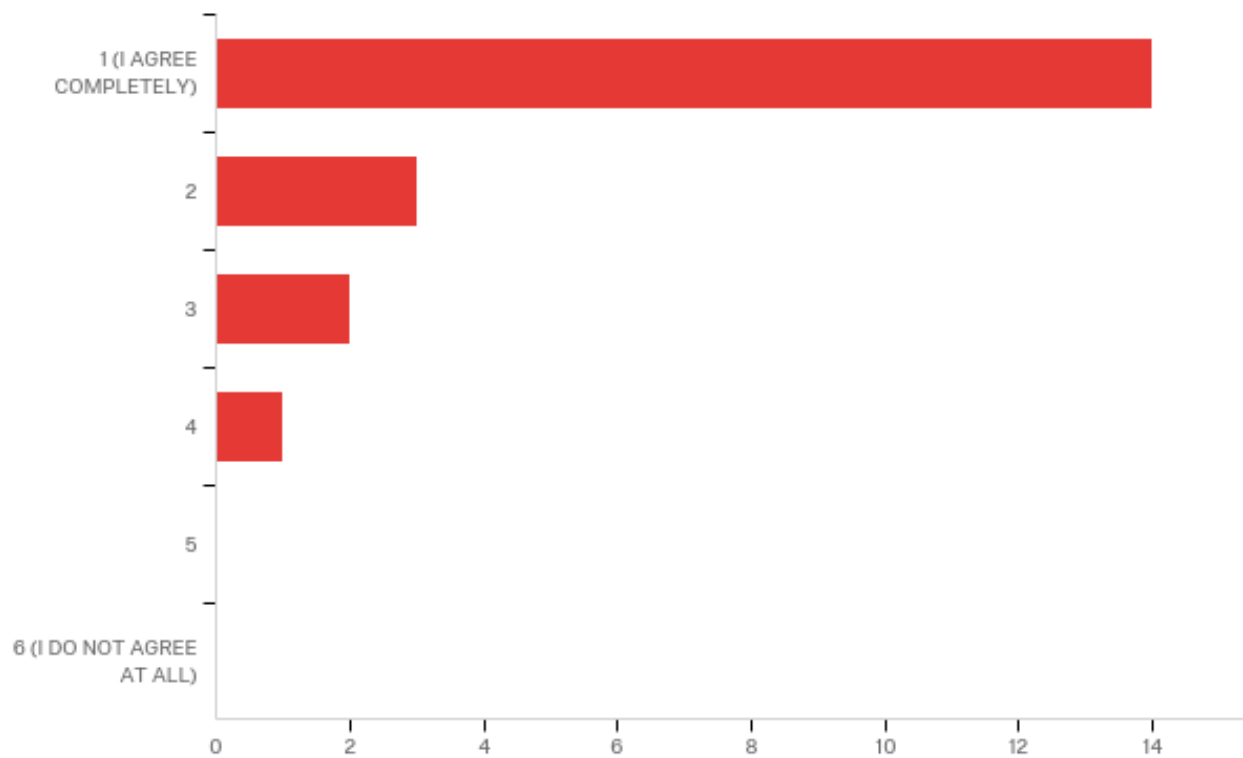
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	70.00%	14
2	2	15.00%	3
3	3	10.00%	2
4	4	5.00%	1
5	5	0.00%	0
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	20

8. My religion does not affect the way most people interact with me.
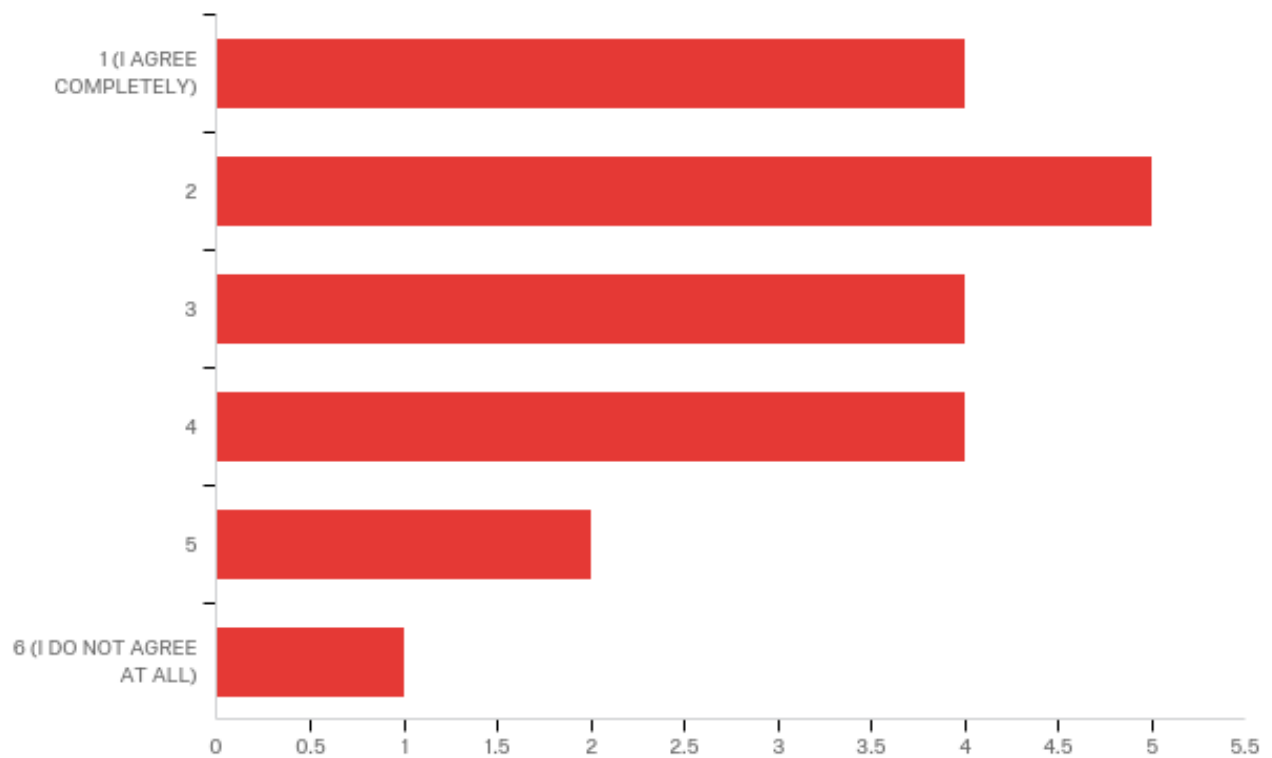
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	20.00%	4
2	2	25.00%	5
3	3	20.00%	4
4	4	20.00%	4
5	5	10.00%	2
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	5.00%	1
	Total	100%	20

9. Being a Muslim has not affected the opportunities I have had to pursue my goals.
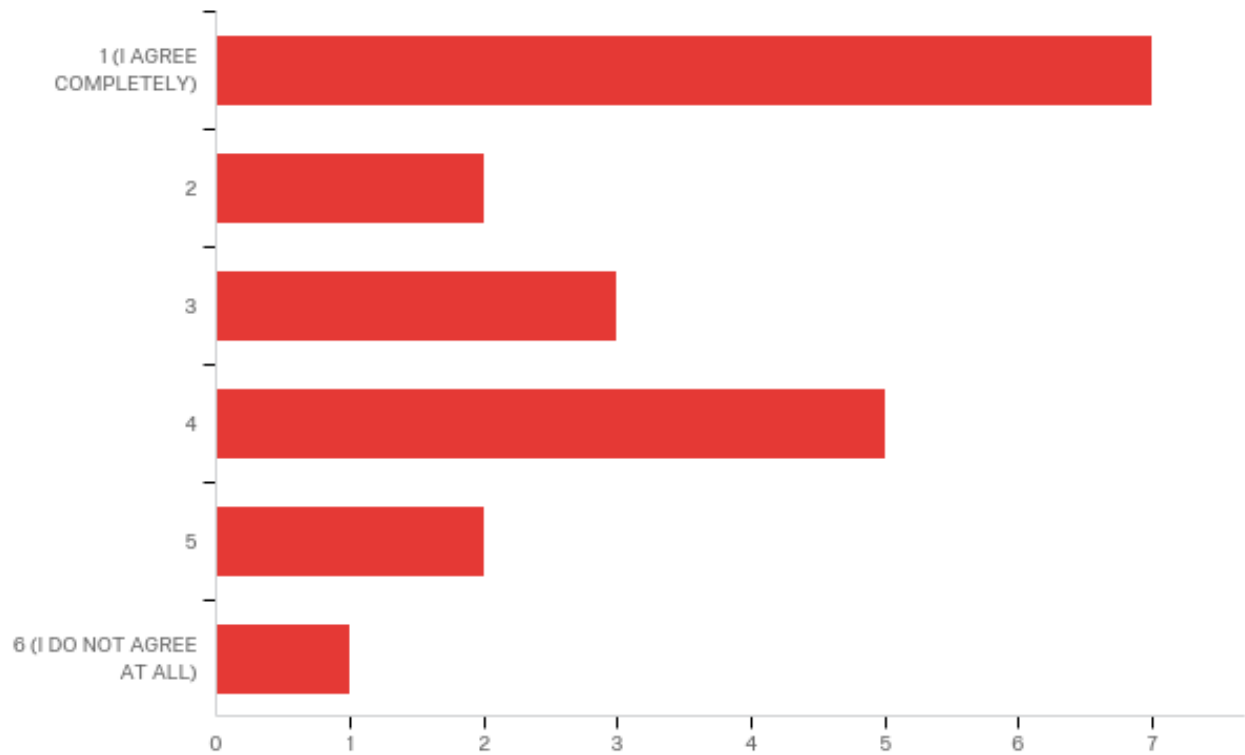
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	35.00%	7
2	2	10.00%	2
3	3	15.00%	3
4	4	25.00%	5
5	5	10.00%	2
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	5.00%	1
	Total	100%	20

10. I feel comfortable being myself around people from my religious community.
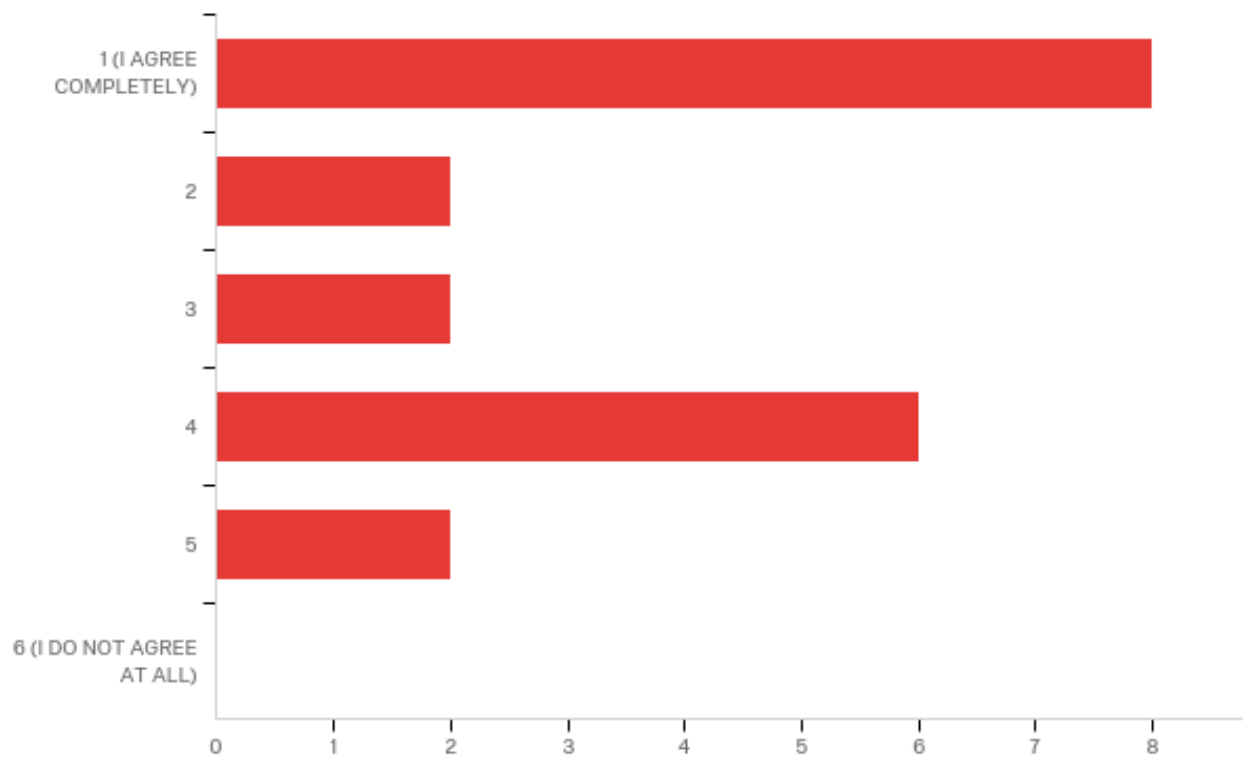
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	40.00%	8
2	2	10.00%	2
3	3	10.00%	2
4	4	30.00%	6
5	5	10.00%	2
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	20

11. I don't consider myself an active member of my religious community.
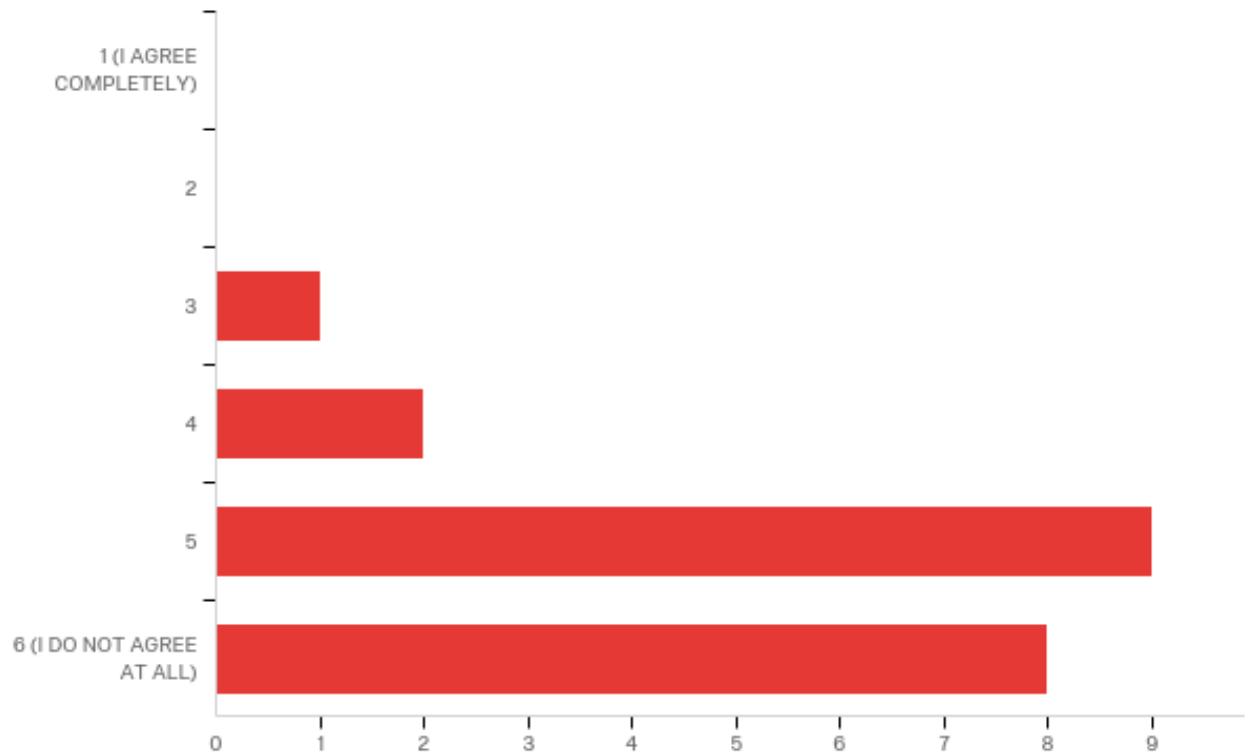
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	0.00%	0
2	2	0.00%	0
3	3	5.00%	1
4	4	10.00%	2
5	5	45.00%	9
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	40.00%	8
	Total	100%	20

12. If I was not a woman, I would have had more opportunities to pursue what I want.
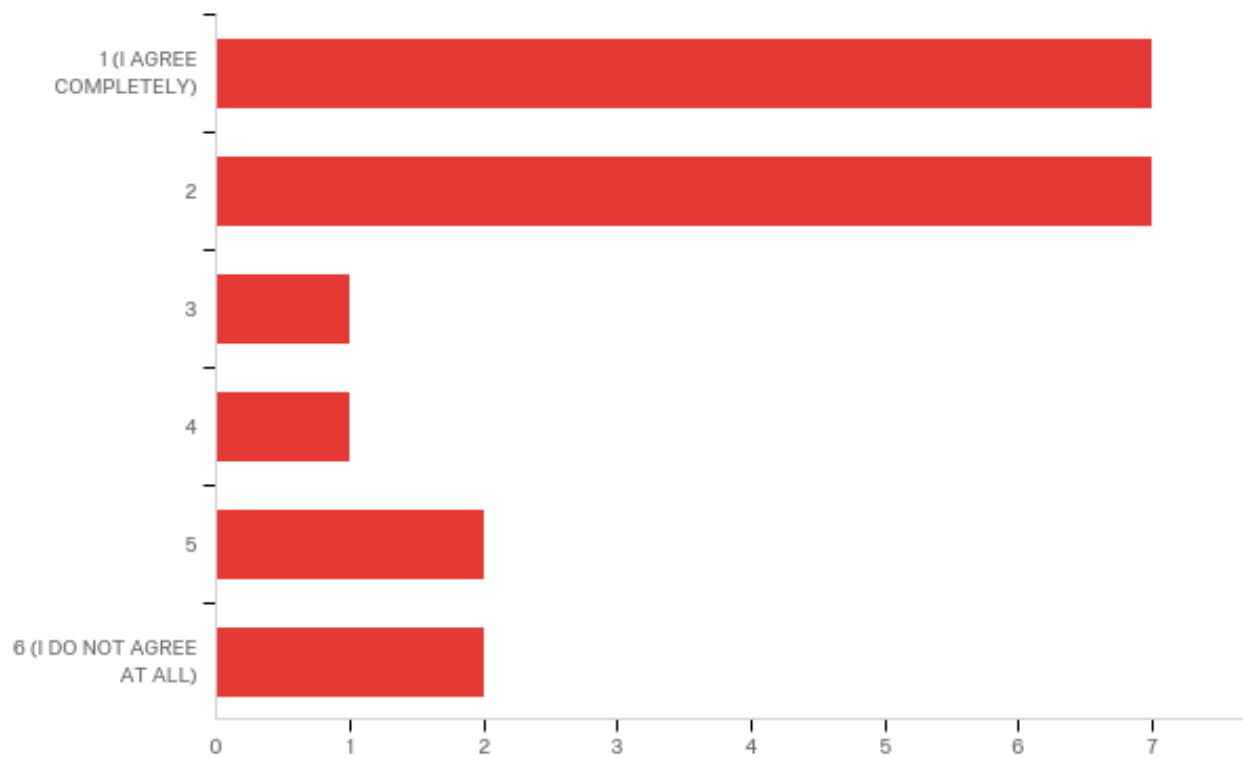
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	35.00%	7
2	2	35.00%	7
3	3	5.00%	1
4	4	5.00%	1
5	5	10.00%	2
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	10.00%	2
	Total	100%	20

13. Marriage is an important step to becoming an adult.
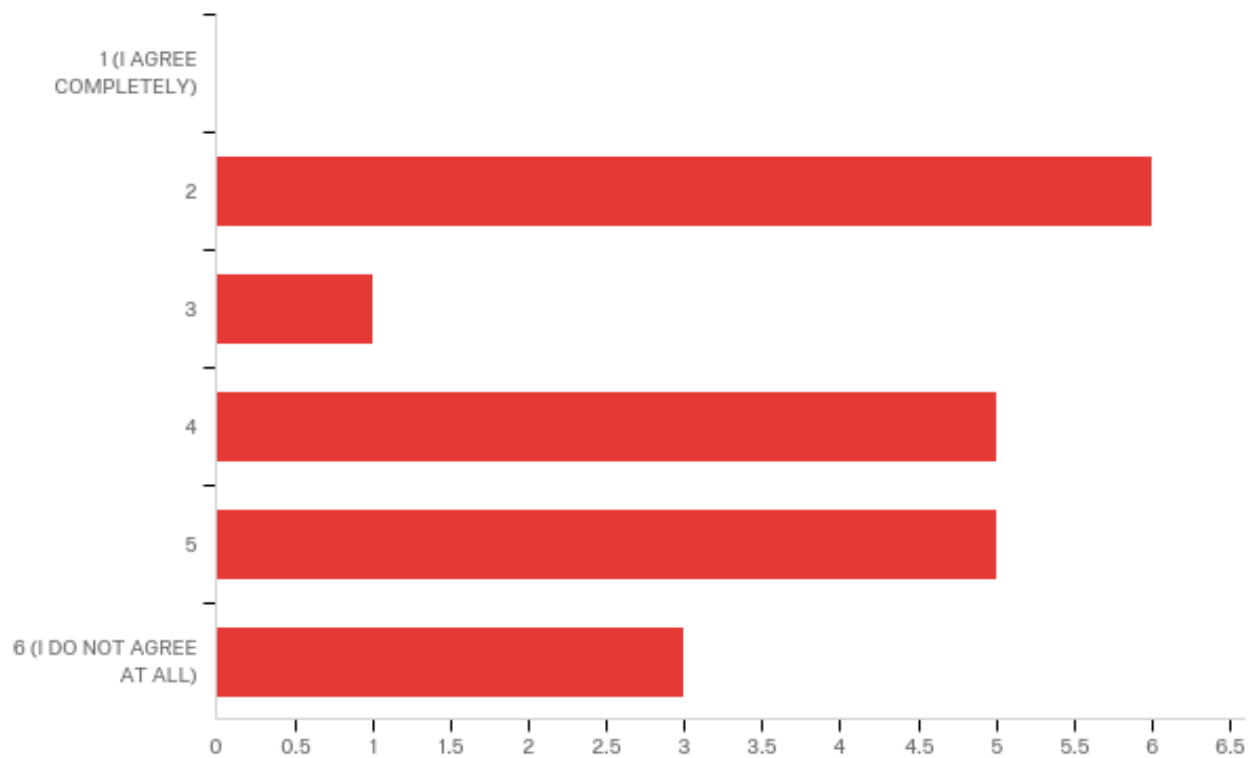
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	0.00%	0
2	2	30.00%	6
3	3	5.00%	1
4	4	25.00%	5
5	5	25.00%	5
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	15.00%	3
	Total	100%	20

14. Holding a job is an important part of adulthood.
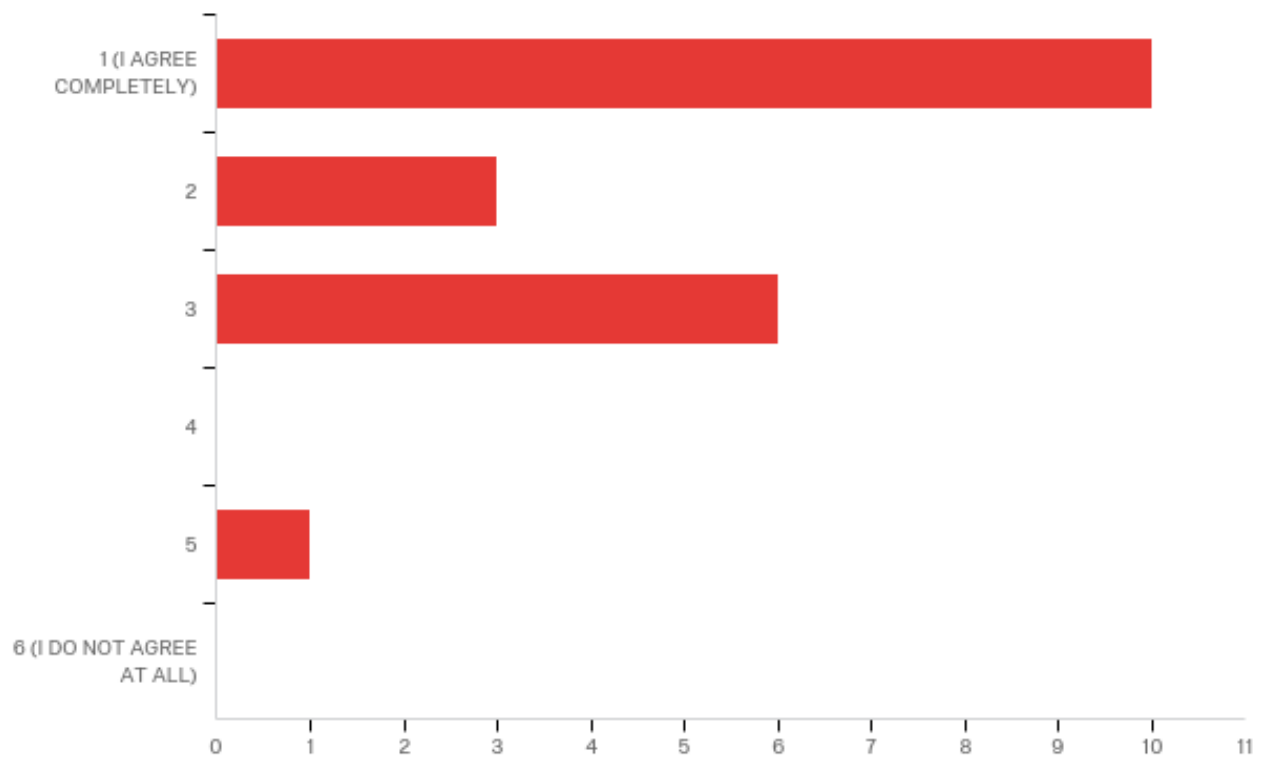
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1 (I AGREE COMPLETELY)	50.00%	10
2	2	15.00%	3
3	3	30.00%	6
4	4	0.00%	0
5	5	5.00%	1
6	6 (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL)	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	20

Code Tables

Table 29. RISKS: GROUP OVERLAPS

	Motherhood versus Career
Fouzia	3
Arefa	4
Farheena	2
Joumana	4
Marjaan	4
Razina	6
Afreen	2
Saaerah	3
Nazli	0
Hawra	3
Seema	2
Umaima	2
Safaa	0
Marwaa	0
Abidah	0
Aasma	0
Hidaaya	0
Inaaya	0
Kalilah	0
Jazmin	0
Yasmin	0
Insiyah	0
TOTAL # of women per theme	11 (52%)
TOTAL #of theme occurrence	35

Table 30. RISKS: GROUP-SPECIFIC

	Unmosqued	Islamophobia: 9/11	Islamophobia: Donald Trump	Marriage (abuse; divorce; single)	Education (during EA)
Fouzia	5	2	2	0	3
Arefa	0	3	0	0	6
Farheena	3	1	0	0	4
Joumana	4	6	1	4	3
Marjaan	4	7	1	0	2
Razina	0	0	0	0	2
Afreen	1	1	2	0	4
Saaerah	2	1	0	0	3
Nazli	0	2	0	5	3
Hawra	0	4	3	0	4
Seema	0	2	2	0	2
Umaima	0	1	1	0	3
Safaa	4	3	2	3	0
Marwaa	0	0	0	2	0
Abidah	0	1	2	0	2
Aasma	0	1	0	1	1
Hidaaya	0	0	0	0	1
Inaaya	0	1	0	1	0
Kalilah	0	2	0	0	0
Jazmin	0	1	0	2	3
Yasmin	1	0	0	1	1
Insiyah	0	1	0	0	1
TOTAL # of women per theme	8 (38%)	17 (81%)	9 (43%)	8 (38%)	17 (81%)
TOTAL #of theme occurrence	24	40	16	19	48

Table 31. COPING MECHANISMS/PROTECTIVE FACTORS: GROUP-SPECIFIC

	Established identity with age	Third space	Marriage	Education	Positive life factors (children/career)
Fouzia	4	2	2	2	4
Arefa	2	1	2	2	3
Farheena	4	2	1	1	6
Joumana	3	5	0	4	5
Marjaan	5	3	2	1	3
Razina	4	0	2	2	5
Afreen	4	4	1	2	4
Saaerah	3	0	2	1	3
Nazli	5	0	1	4	3
Hawra	5	0	1	2	5
Seema	1	0	1	3	2
Umaima	3	1	1	2	3
Safaa	1	2	0	3	5
Marwaa	4	0	0	0	4
Abidah	3	0	2	1	3
Aasma	1	0	0	2	2
Hidaaya	1	0	0	1	3
Inaaya	2	0	0	0	1
Kalilah	3	0	1	0	4
Jazmin	0	0	0	1	2
Yasmin	1	0	0	0	0
Insiyah	2	0	0	1	2
TOTAL # of women per theme	20 (95%)	8 (38%)	13 (62%)	17 (81%)	20 (95%)
TOTAL #of theme occurrence	61	20	19	35	72

Appendix F

Additional Applications of Research

The current research can be useful by directly applying it in college and university settings. We can increase institutional attention where it is needed by acknowledging the cultural stressors minority students might be facing. While the process for this has been started for Black and Latinx students on some college campuses (Saenz and Ponjuan, 2009; Keels, 2013; Harper, 2012), the needs of Muslim students as a group have largely been ignored. However, because Muslim women's experience of college is different from Muslim men's experiences, at least to the degree of choice, autonomy, and, inevitably, opportunity, resources could focus on helping Muslim women maximize opportunities within their lived vicinities. Imagine, perhaps, a version of affirmative action that ensures slots for Muslim women within their own home cities at competitive jobs. Alternately, culturally sensitive career counseling might also be offered, giving female Muslim students an additional resource of encouragement and support to pursue fields and careers they are interested in.