Assessing Aspects of Acculturation in a Muslim American Sample: Development and Testing of the Acculturation Scale for Muslim Americans

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Abstract: Acculturation of Muslims into the American culture continues to be a topic of deep interest. The purpose of this study was to examine acculturation in a sample of both American-born and Immigrant Muslim Americans. Two hundred and fifty five Muslim Americans completed a scale designed to assess two aspects of acculturation within the population: adherence to Islamic identity and conformity to American social norms. The survey was distributed in both a paper-based and online anonymous format consisting of demographic questions and the acculturation scale designed for this study. Results revealed that both immigrants and U.S. born Muslim Americans demonstrate a strong adherence to their Islamic identity and low levels of conformity to American social norms. American-born Muslims scored significantly lower on conformity to American social norms than immigrant Muslims. Study findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that Muslim Americans are less likely to sacrifice religious values to assimilate. Specific item results provide insight into what aspects of American culture Muslims are more willing to adopt, and which they are likely to shun. These findings demonstrate the challenges Muslim Americans face integrating in an increasingly hostile host culture.

Keywords: acculturation; Muslim American; religious identity; social norms; religious values

1. Introduction

Muslim Americans are a diverse and integral part of the larger American community. The Muslim population in the United States, both native-born and immigrants, are estimated to be around 3.3 million people (Mohamed 2016). Muslims have been part of the United States ever since the first Muslims arrived via slave ships bringing West Africans to the Carolinas (Gomez 1994), and by 1914 Muslims from at least sixty different countries arrived in America (Wormser 2002). The Muslim community in the United States continues to grow through immigration, conversion, and birth rates. The diversity and uniqueness of the Muslim American population, as opposed to stereotypical understandings, presents a challenge to researchers who seek to understand in what ways Muslims adopt American values and norms. This study seeks to understand acculturation in both immigrant and American-born Muslims, using a psychometric scale designed around Islamic values and norms, and select American social norms, rather than ethnic-background based values and norms. The goal of the study is to explore the use of the Acculturation Scale for Muslim Americans (ASMA) as a tool for better understanding both the adoption of American norms and the maintenance of a Muslim identity, and to contribute to the growing body of literature on Muslim American integration and identity development.

The Pew Research Center provides the best picture of the current status of Muslims in the United States (Pew Research Center 2007). The Pew study found that around 65% of American Muslims are foreign-born. Amongst foreign-born Muslims, the majority came from traditionally Muslim majority regions of the Middle East and South Asia. Of the thirty five percent who are native-born Muslims, twenty percent identified themselves as African-American and fifteen percent as belonging to an ethnicity other than African-American. Twenty one percent of native-born Muslims identified themselves as converts to Islam and fourteen percent stated that they were born Muslim (Pew Research Center 2007, p. 7).

Research on identity formation of Muslims in America (Schumann 2007; Haddad and Esposito 2000; Sirin et al. 2008) suggests that Islamic values are emerging as a dominant aspect of group identity. Such self-identification as "Muslim-American" or "American-Muslim" emphasizes both religious adherence and national pride. This creation of a dual or hyphenated identity, has been attributed to a number of factors including globalization, the shared experiences of first and second-generation Muslims, and increased inter-racial marriages (Al-Johar 2005; Grewal 2009).

The Pew Study (Pew Research Center 2007) confirms the large number of Muslims self-identifying primarily as Muslim and American rather than as Asian or Arab American. This mixture of both religion and location is similar to Jewish-Americans but is different than African-Americans or Asian-Americans where we are looking at a mixture of race and current location. Allegiance to religion (Islam) has become the dominant social paradigm that transcends racial and ethnic boundaries. The terrorist attacks of September 11th, though not the origination of discourse on Muslim American identity, served as a catalyst for debate and interpretation related to Islamic identity in the American context (Kahera 2002; Abdo 2005). The assertion of a Muslim American identity reflects the desire of many Muslims to represent themselves according to two dominant factors; religion and national allegiance. The adoption of English as a common language overcomes previous ethnic and cultural boundaries and thereby promotes institutional building within Muslim communities leading to a more unified Muslim identity. The degree to which Muslim Americans acculturate, holding on to religious values and behaviors or adopt American values and behaviors, has not previously been explored.

2. Contemporary Acculturation Research

Rapid changes in intercultural communication and contact (i.e., globalization, the internet, global media) continue to make acculturation modeling critically important. Acculturation has its roots in anthropology and sociological research, and has been revisited and re-formulated at regular intervals (Schwartz et al. 2010). Early definitions incorporated the ideas of acculturation as a process that involves cultural contact between societies (Gillin and Raimy 1940). Since these initial definitions, acculturation has been conceptualized as both an individual and group process and approached as uni-dimensional or bi-dimensional (Schwartz et al. 2010; Berry 2003).

Enculturation or cultural adaptation is of great concern in the American context, as the United States consists of a population of immigrants, descendants of immigrants and slaves, refugees, international students and migrant workers, all in addition to the indigenous peoples of the land. In this model individuals who live within more than one cultural context, usually as a result of migration or occupation, are often forced to adapt to the social norms of the dominant culture (Berry 1997).

Acculturation is typically understood as a process in which an individual or group adapts to a different cultural system (Matsumoto and Juang 2008). Unlike enculturation, the process of acculturation suggests changes in the cultural patterns of one or both of the groups (Berry 1997). Psychological acculturation, a sub-process in acculturation, is defined as the psychological and behavioral changes that individuals experience as a result of contact with members of other cultural groups (Padilla 2006; Berry 1997).

In Berry's conceptualization of the process of acculturation, two major questions are posed, which form the two dimensions of his current model: (1) "Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics? And (2) "Is it considered of value to maintain relationships with other groups?" Berry (1997, 2003) proposes four basic acculturation strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, or marginalization. Assimilation is the concept that individuals should set aside the culture in which they were raised or out of which they have come and should accept and embrace the culture of the majority population in which they live. It is commonly understood that immigrant entry into a host society involves assimilation to a certain degree, and many nations have specific integration policies (Bourhis et al. 1997; Kymlicka 1995). The United States is no exception, as was clearly outlined in the melting pot ideology, and manifests itself in policies such as renunciation of citizenship, learning American laws and history, and passing English-language tests. A true assimilationist willingly rejects the values and norms of his or her original culture in order to embrace the values of the host or dominant culture. For many immigrants, assimilation is increasingly difficult as they see value in their own culture as well as the dominant culture, and reject the necessity of assimilation in an increasingly globalized world.

Integration, in Berry's acculturation framework, is distinct from assimilation, in that maintaining one's original cultural identity and characteristics is as valuable as establishing and maintaining relationships with other groups, most notably that of the dominant host culture in situations that involve immigration. Unlike assimilation, the individual or group incorporates aspects of the new culture into their life while preserving aspects of their original culture. These may be specific rituals, beliefs, or values, such as marriage practices, family values, superstitions, food preparation, and others. The individual or group may choose to preserve these aspects for themselves and emphasize aspects of their old culture when raising children in the host culture. Berry notes that integration may not be the goal of an individual in all aspects of their life (Berry 1995, p. 472). For example, an individual may choose to assimilate in their work life, and integrate in their home life. Integration is more reflective of the current reality of contemporary American life. This can be seen in many Muslim households in the United States, where Islamic dietary rules are maintained, but does not prevent a Muslim family from enjoying a restaurant meal or attending parties hosted by their non-Muslim friends. In these cases, individuals may eat fish as a substitute for non-*zabiha* (Islamically cut and prepared) meat, or partake in vegetarian options. Another example of the phenomenon of integration in Muslim American life is the maintenance of modest dress without sacrificing recreational activities. Many Muslim women who wear the hijab are able to swim and engage in other outdoor activities without compromising their values on modesty by wearing "Muslim swimwear". American society, with an emphasis on assimilation as a key component of the melting pot, fails to recognize that assimilation often takes many years, might never occur completely, or may be impacted by external factors.

3. The Development of Acculturation Measures

Berry's work argues for two fundamental dimensions that must be present in the measurement of the process of acculturation. These are the maintenance of cultural identity and the maintenance of relations with the other group or groups, sometime referred to as the dominant or host culture.

Many scales maintain a linear, unidimensional form of measuring acculturation; however, recent developments of acculturation measures reflect a current understanding of acculturation as a bi-directional, multidimensional process (Schwartz et al. 2010; Bourhis et al. 1997; Zea et al. 2003). Integration may progress or regress depending on the relations between two groups. Unidimensional measurements of acculturation have been developed and tested on a few minority populations within the United States, mostly Hispanic-Americans, Asian Americans, and Arab Americans (Kumar and Nevid 2010; Cabassa 2003; Zea et al. 2003). As the concept of acculturation continues to develop, looking at acculturation as merely a process undergone by immigrants is changing and suggests that acculturation can occur between any host or dominant culture and a subculture.

Contemporary acculturation measures usually include several factors such as language, behavior, cultural identity, values, and cultural knowledge. The most common element to ethnic based measures is language use and culture of origin identity. As noted by Zea et al. (2003) the most difficult factor to asses is values, which may be constantly shifting in both the host or dominant cultures, as well as in the culture of origin. Many existing measures include culture specific constructs that correspond to identity, values, or behavior. For example, the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation scale measures loss of face and impression management, two constructs that are culture-specific to East Asian populations (Suinn et al. 1995). These cultural indicators are unique variables in a culture-specific measure. Several measures have also been developed to measure acculturation within the Hispanic populations in the United States (Cuellar et al. 1995; Marin and Gamba 1996). Cabassa (2003) has noted that these measures have struggled to incorporate value and attitude indicators, necessitating the need for further development and testing of these measures.

Since 9-11 and the more recent election of Donald Trump, Muslims in the United States have faced an increasing barrage of prejudice and discrimination from their fellow Americans, with reports of hate crimes based on race and religion growing each year (Considine 2017). As a result of this increasing hostility towards Muslims, especially visible Muslims who wear hijab or native clothing, first and second generation Muslim American youth may experience what Berry referred to as reverse acculturation. Rumbaut (2008) discussed this phenomenon and referred to it as reactive ethnicity. As noted by Padilla (1987), the greater the level of perceived discrimination, the more likely an individual was to identify strongly with his or her heritage group. Muslim American youth in particular struggle to establish a "blended" identity (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005) as both Muslim and very much American, as most are first or second generation and therefore have no "home country" to return to. They are not immigrants but are often viewed as immigrants by members of the host community, resulting in a reaction of holding on to their parents' cultural heritage more strongly that their parents or grandparents may have when they immigrated. Some Muslim Americans are attempting to assert their Muslim identity, most notably by way of dress and social relationships, while others make an effort to integrate into the mainstream culture of their community (Abdo 2005). More recent research has also started to examine Black Muslim identity, from both the perspectives of indigenous African Americans and more contemporary immigrants (Ali 2011; Auston 2017; Mauleón 2018). The impact of Islamophobia and discrimination on identity development and acculturation is an emerging field of study.

The acculturation process specifically concerning Muslim Americans has only recently been studied. Older studies such as Horan (1996) found that Muslim Arab-Americans are reluctant or unwilling to adapt to American culture. Christian Arab-Americans were more likely to choose integration. Amer and Hovey (2005) found differences in acculturation between Muslim and Christian Arabs as well, with Christians reporting greater assimilation.

Britto and Amer (2007) similarly studied the intersection of culture and faith on Arab Muslim young adults in the United States. They found that most youth fell into one of three categories: High Bicultural, Moderate Bicultural, or High Arab cultural. Britto and Amer (2007) used acculturation scales that showed higher levels of acculturative stress for those who scored as moderate bicultural. This demonstrates the difficulties that individuals face when they are neither strongly integrated into the host culture, nor strongly tied to the culture of their ancestry of origin.

Faragallah et al. (2003) have also explored the acculturation of Arab-American immigrants using length of residence, age at immigration, and time since last visit to their Arab homeland as a way to measure exposure to U.S. culture. Other measures utilized to assess acculturation include adoption of American cultural practices, identification, American friendships, usage of American media, and use of English at home. Given the wide range of existing acculturation measures focusing on specific ethnic groups rather than a shared religious heritage, the present acculturation scale was created and tested in a sample of Muslim Americans.

4. Method

4.1. Participants

Participants were 255 (118 males and 135 females) individuals in the United States who self-identified as Muslim and met the criteria of being 18 years or older and either a United States citizen, permanent resident, or residing in the United States for at least 8 months out of the year. Ninety-three participants completed a paper-based survey and 162 completed the survey via the internet-based survey tool SurveyMonkey.

4.2. Measures

The acculturation scale for Muslim Americans (ASMA) is designed to measure the degree to which an individual is integrated into American culture (through conformity to American social norms) and to what degree an individual espouses Islamic values. The 13 item scale asks participants to indicate how true each statement is in terms of their own attitudes and behaviors on a 5 point Likert scale, with 1 labeled as not true at all and 5 labeled as extremely true of me. Eight items measure constructs that represent a high level of cultural adjustment and integration, such as the celebration of non-Muslim holidays, voting in elections, shaking hands with members of the opposite sex, and willingness to marry a non-Muslim. Five of the items represent adherence to values of Muslim identity, such as the importance of maintaining Islamic practices, avoidance of situations involving alcohol, and the importance of modest dress. Initial questions design was based upon existing literature, participant observation, and small focus groups with members of the Muslim American community. Questions were pilot tested with 55 participants who provided comments on question wording, format, and question order. Modifications were then made to some questions.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the ASMA Scale using Maximum Likelihood and Varimax orthogonal factor rotation. This produced 2 factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0. The first factor accounted for 81% of the total variance in items. Five items had strong loadings of more than 0.40 on the first factor. All of these items were part of the Islamic values construct developed in the conceptual model. Five items also loaded strongly on factor 2, which represent items from the conformity to Western behavior construct. Six items did not load strongly on either factor. A subsequent exploratory factor analysis was conducted for each sub-scale, removing those items from the scale that did not fit clearly as Islamic identity values or American norm behaviors. Results of the conformity to American norms sub-scale exploratory factor analysis found all 8 of the items loading strongly. A reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.79. An exploratory factor analysis was also conducted for the Islamic identity subscale, resulting in 1 factor that had an eigenvalue of 1.0. All 5 items loaded strongly and a reliability analysis yielded a Chronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.72, which would not increase by removing any of the items (See Table 1).

4.3. Procedures

This research used both paper and online survey methodology to collect surveys from 255 Muslim Americans. Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board. All potential participants were provided a brief description of the study via either a paper or electronic "cover letter" that informed them of the purpose of the study, potential benefits and risks of participation, and the voluntary nature of their participation. The cover letter emphasized the anonymity of participation and provided contact information for the principal researcher. In addition, the cover letter outlined the age and residency criteria for participation.

Muslim, for the purpose of the study, was defined as an individual who identifies him or herself as a follower of the religion of Islam. Surveys were distributed to Muslim Americans through both paper, mail, and on-line distribution in order to increase response rates and reach a diverse segment of the Muslim American population. The main method of paper survey distribution was through specific religious organizations and mosques. Paper surveys were mainly distributed at mosques in

the Southeast region during Friday prayer services. The community leaders at these mosques were contacted and permission to disseminate packets was acquired. Packets included the cover letter and full survey, and were enclosed in envelopes. A designated place for completed surveys to be dropped off on-site was determined by the mosque or Islamic center leader, and announced to the congregation. Survey packets were also distributed at non-religious social events and included a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return. In addition, one hundred survey packets were sent through the mail to Muslim Americans whose addresses were available through the Atlanta Muslim directory and the South Carolina Muslim directory. Survey packets included the cover letter, a self-addressed stamped envelope, and a small incentive of an Islamic bumper sticker to encourage participation and increase the response rate.

Table 1. EFA Results for the Muslim American Acculturation Scale.

Survey Items		Factor 1	Factor 2
Islamic Identity 1	Muslim friends	0.59	
Islamic Identity 2	Islamic clothing	0.51	
Islamic Identity 3	Maintain Islam	0.68	
Islamic Identity 4	Avoid alcohol parties	0.44	
Islamic Identity 5	Raise child Muslim	0.58	
American norms 1	Willing to marry Non-Muslim		0.23
American norms 2	Comfortable shaking hands		0.59
American norms 3	Ok Muslims to take haram jobs		0.3
American norms 4	Eat meals Non-Muslims		0.5
American norms 5	Ok to keep dogs inside		0.23
American Norms 6	Show patriotism		0.5
American norms 7	Celebrate American holidays		0.66
American Norms 8	Vote in elections		0.52

The second method used to disseminate the survey was through the online survey site SurveyMonkey. The online survey was distributed by advertising on the social networking site Facebook, sending the cover letter with a link to the survey to the listservs of Muslim organizations, and through individual email to Muslim community leaders who were asked to disseminate the link to friends, colleagues, and community members. The SurveyMonkey link was available for three months and relied heavily on social media "word of mouth" to increase response rates across a large and scattered population. Online distribution of the survey was used to reach individuals who identify as Muslims, but do not frequently engage in Muslim events or attend mosques, as well as younger, technologically savvy Muslims who would be more likely to fill out an online than a paper survey. The internet survey also expanded the geographical reach of the study.

5. Results

Participants Demographics

Participants (118 males and 136 females) ranged in age from 18 to 98 years (M = 36.1, SD = 15.6). Reported marital statuses were single (29%), married (62.7%), widowed (0.8%), divorced (4.7%), and engaged (2.7%). Participants self-reported race were categorized into eight groups: Caucasian/White (13%), Asian, including South, South East and Asian Indian (44.5%), Mixed or Multi-Racial (5.9%), Middle Eastern/Arab (15.5%), African American/Black (11.3%), Native American/American Indian (.8%), Hispanic/Latino (1.3%), and Other (7.5%).

Nine educational levels were represented among the respondents (0.8% less than high school, 17.2% High School, 10% Associates Degree, 32.4% Bachelor Degree, 20.8% Master Degree, 5.6% Doctorate, 1.2% J.D. and M.D. respectively, and 0.8% Other). Forty two percent of participants were born in the United States, with the remaining 58% representing 34 different countries of origin ranging from Pakistan (19.1%) to Syria (5.6%) and countries such as Kenya, Canada, Chile, Holland, Burundi, and Guyana. Years in the United States ranged from 1 to 35 years (M = 17.2, SD = 10.9) for

immigrant respondents. Participants resided in all regions of the United States with 51% residing in the Southeastern region. 15% of respondents stated their region of residence as the Midwest, 12% the Northeast, 1% the Rocky Mountain Region, 4% the Mid-Atlantic, 9% the Southwest, and 8% the West Coast.

Participants represented all types of Muslims. Forty one participants (16%) identified as converts/reverts to Islam, while 207 (84%) stated that they were born Muslim. Of the 41 who identified as converts, number of years since conversion ranged from 1 to 57 years (M = 16.6, SD = 13.2). 252 participants answered questions regarding religious orientation. Fifty eight percent identified as Sunni, 31% as 'Just Muslim', 6% as Sufi, 2% as Shia, 2% as Ismaili, and less than 1% each as Bohra, Salafi or Wahabi. Participants reported their level of practice, with 61% identifying their level of practice as 'moderate', 19% as 'Orthodox', 11% as Liberal, 8% as a 'Very Strict Practitioner' (More than Orthodox), 0.8% as Non-practicing, and 0.4% as 'Other'. In response to the question "I primarily identify myself as American" 7.2% of immigrant Muslims stated this was extremely true, compared to 23.5% of participants who were born in the United States.

The acculturation scale consists of two sub scales. Subscale 1 measured Islamic identity and Subscale 2 measured Conformity to American social norms. The lowest possible score was 5 and the highest possible score was 25 on the Islamic identity sub-scale. The mean score for Islamic identity was 17.25. Five percent of participants had scores in the low identity range, between 5 and 11. Forty percent had a score in the moderate Islamic Identity range, between 12 and 18, and 50% had a high Islamic identity score, between 19–25.

The complete avoidance of situations where alcohol is being served appears to be the least important behavior to reflect Islamic values for Muslims in this sample. Overall, the sample felt it was very important to maintain Islamic practices in their everyday lives and to raise their children as Muslim (See Table 2). There were little differences in the Islamic identity scores when broken into immigrants and non-immigrants (See Table 3). The mean score was 16.6 for immigrants, with scores ranging from 5 to 25. Their highest scores were also on the items of maintaining Islam in their lives and raising their children as Muslim. Non-immigrant scores also ranged from 5 to 25 with a mean score of 18.2. The largest differences between the immigrant and non-immigrant sample was the importance of Islamic dress, and identification of fellow Muslims as making up the majority of their social circle, with immigrants mostly likely to identify both as extremely true for them. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare immigrant and non-immigrant scores on the Islamic identity sub-scale. There was not a significant difference in the scores for immigrants (M = 11.28, SD = 5.09) and non-immigrants (M = 10.69, SD = 4.42); t(253) = 0.9752, *p* = 0.33.

Table 2. Adherence to Islamic Identity Sub-Scale.

	Not at All True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Very True	Extremely True
It is important to me to wear clothing that reflects my Muslim identity.	12.5%	14.2%	23.3%	26.7%	23.3%
The majority of my friends are Muslim	10%	12%	31%	31%	16%
It is very important to me to maintain Islamic practices in everyday life.	1.7%	4.6%	20.3%	29.9%	43.6%
I always avoid going to dinners, parties, or social gatherings where people are drinking and serving alcohol.	25.6%	17.8%	17.4%	16.9%	22.3%
It is very important to me to raise my children as Muslim.	2.9%	2.1%	6.6%	11.2%	77.3%

The Conformity to American Norms subscale consists of 8 items, with possible scores ranging from 8 to 40 (Table 4). Actual participant scores ranged from 8 to 38, with a mean score of 18.5. 45.4% had a low conformity score, from 8 to 18, 42.7% of participants had a moderate conformity score, between 19–29, and 6.4% had a high conformity score between 30–40. Immigrant conformity scores

were lower, ranging from 10 to 29 with a mean score of 17.7. Non-immigrant scores ranged from 8 to 38 with a mean score of 18.1.

Table 3. Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Item Differences in Islamic Values.

	Immigrant (Extremely True)	Non-Immigrant (Extremely True)
It is important to me to wear clothing that is modest and reflects my Muslim identity.	**16.1%**	**6.8%**
The majority of my current friends are Muslim.	**12.3%**	**7.8%**
It is very important to me to maintain Islamic practices in my everyday life.	1.4%	1.9%
I always avoid going to dinners, parties, or social gatherings where people are drinking and serving alcohol.	**29.7%**	**20.2%**
It is very important to me to raise my children as Muslim.	77.5%	77.9%

Table 4. Conformity to American Norms.

	Not at All True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Very True	Extremely True
I would be willing to marry a non-Muslim.	67.9%	13.3%	10.4%	5.8%	2.5%
I feel comfortable shaking hands with members of the opposite sex.	24.5%	15.4%	20.3%	19.1%	20.7%
I feel it is okay for a Muslim to take any job in the United States, even if it includes activities such as handling alcohol, pork, or gambling.	72.7%	10.3%	10.3%	3.3%	3.3%
I always celebrate American holidays such as Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving, 4 July and Halloween.	34%	32.8%	16.2%	7.5%	9.5%
I often eat meals with my non-Muslim friends.	11.2%	20.7%	24.8%	24.4%	19%
I think it is okay to keeps dogs as pets inside of the house.	68.5%	14.5%	8.3%	3.7%	5%
I think it is important to display American patriotism.	32.4%	22.4%	20.3%	12.4%	12.4%
I feel it is important to participate in the American political system by voting in local and federal elections.	7.9%	11.2%	16.6%	20.3%	44%

There were more differences on item scores in the conformity sub-scale between immigrant and non-immigrants, particularly on items such as taking jobs handling items forbidden to Muslims, sharing meals with non-Muslim friends, and displaying patriotism. In all cases, subjects born in the United States were less likely to denote that those behaviors were extremely true for them (See Table 5). An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare immigrant and non-immigrant scores on the conformity sub-scale. There was a significant difference in the scores for immigrants (M = 19.73, SD = 8.22) and non-immigrants (M = 16.34, SD = 5.98); t(253) = 2.54, *p* = 0.011.

Table 5. Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Item Differences in Conformity to American Norms.

	Immigrant (Extremely True)	Non-Immigrant (Extremely True)
I would be willing to marry a non-Muslim.	2.2%	2.9%
I feel comfortable shaking hands with members of the opposite sex.	22.6%	18.3%
I feel it is okay for a Muslim to take any job in the United States, even if it includes activities such as handling alcohol, pork, or gambling.	**4.3%**	**1.9%**
I always celebrate American holidays such as Valentine's day, Thanksgiving, 4th of July, and Halloween.	10.1%	8.7%
I often eat meals with my non-Muslim friends.	**24.6%**	**11.5%**
I think it is okay to keep dogs as pets inside of the house.	5.8%	3.9%

6. Discussion

The majority of participants demonstrated a high level of identification with Islamic values. The results of the Islamic identity subscale are profound in re-affirming the many assertions made by scholars on the identity struggle of contemporary Muslims (Rumbaut 2008; Abdo 2005; Peek 2005). Muslim Americans appear to reject pure assimilation by strongly asserting their Islamic identity. These findings have wide implications for those trying to understand the struggle of Muslims in America to find their place within an increasingly hostile post-9/11 world.

Muslim American responses to Conformity to American social norms also suggests a resistance to pure assimilation and a preference to oppose behaviors viewed as a threat to Islamic values (Abdo 2005; Horan 1996; Amer and Hovey 2005). In matters such as marriage and keeping dogs within the home, the subjects were unwilling to sacrifice their Muslim values. They were also opposed to Muslims taking jobs that involve handling alcohol, pork, and gambling; three behaviors strictly forbidden in Islam. Typical American holidays were moderately celebrated, and displaying American Patriotism was also a moderate behavior. Common behaviors that reflected integration and an embrace of American norms such as eating with non-Muslim friends, shaking hands with the opposite sex, and the importance of voting in local and federal elections however, were the most conducted behaviors in this sample. What is most surprising in the results of the conformity sub-scale are the differences between Immigrant Muslims and those born in the United States. The immigrant sample were more embracing of American norms, perhaps a sign of a desire to fit in with a society they chose.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The notion that immigrants adopt the values and practices of the host culture and discard the values and practices of their culture of origin is no longer viewed as the dominant model of acculturation. The results of this study support a bi-dimensional and bidirectional approach to acculturation previously discussed by Berry (2003), Ryder et al. (2000), and Schwartz et al. (2010). The bi-dimensional approach is more pronounced in the present study because it includes both migrants and Muslims born in the United States. Findings from the native-born sample reflect a strong Islamic identity and a lower level of conformity. This resistance to assimilation, or heritage-culture retention as Schwartz and colleagues define it, may be a sign not of rejecting American values, but of more strongly embracing religious (in this case Islamic values) over cultural, ethnic, or nationalistic values. This suggests that second -generation or more Muslims, as well as converts and indigenous Muslims, are more selective in their consumption of American social norms and values than their immigrant counterparts. In addition, many second or third generation Muslim Americans may not face the same language or economic barriers as their parents, but they may still face micro-aggressions such as questions about where they are from, how they speak such good English, and post-9/11 cries for Muslims to "go back to where they came from". Muslim Americans and other minority groups in the United States may also be re-defining what they believe it means to be an American. The salience of these experiences in shaping cultural and religious identity and degree of acculturation deserves further study.

The study findings have implications for research on healthy integration for refugee, immigrant, and asylum seeking populations. Currently, Muslims make up the largest percentage of incoming refugees to the United States. Many European nations have struggled to successfully integrate Muslim refugees into their own societies. A psychometric scale such as the one utilized for this study could benefit communities where their ideas of successful integration are at odds with core Islamic values, and may result in unrealistic expectations for both groups. The adoption of dominant culture norms in the face of discrimination, economic hardships, and fluid and frequently changing political views of migrants make it harder for refugees and asylum seekers to see the benefits of attempting to assimilate. Concerns over the potential marginalization of Muslim youth have arisen as political and terror groups have sought to capitalize on these sentiments to recruit young people. The acculturation scale could potentially be utilized to assess rejection of both Islamic values and American norms.

Understanding an individual's level of acculturation may also be important for helping professionals, especially psychologists, social workers, and physicians. The degree to which an individual holds on to values and practices from a culture outside of the dominant culture may impact their health behaviors, willingness to seek services, and compliance with treatment options.

7. Conclusions

Limitations of the present study include it being a small sample of Muslim Americans using an English language survey, with the majority of responses garnered through the internet. This resulted in a sample that is mostly younger, and highly educated, and second generation or indigenous Muslims. The majority of participants also identified as moderately practicing to strictly observant as a result of the method of survey distribution through mosques, community events, and Islamic social networks. Suspicion toward research and researchers may have also contributed to response bias in the study sample. Another limitation of the present study is an inability to address how political issues, including Islamophobia, increased discrimination against Muslim Americans, and negative media may have affected the outcome of participation and response to this study. The current political and social climate in the United States has created a suspicion in the community that surveys may be a form of profiling. Future studies have to factor in suspicion of researchers and research in an increasingly Islamophobic environment.

Simple dichotomous understanding of acculturation is of limited value. Muslim Americans, like groups before, are a unique mixture of traditional and contemporary values and behaviors. Further research must be conducted to determine if these questions are representative of the types of behaviors that an individual integrating into American culture would expect to encounter. Previous acculturation scales have focused only on language usage and social relationships (Zea et al. 2003; Abe-Kim et al. 2001; Cabassa 2003) which are not the most salient features of Muslim American acculturation.

The acculturation scale demonstrates surprising results about Muslim Americans' willingness to engage in certain aspects of American culture such as displays of patriotism and typical "American" holidays. The scale is an initial attempt at developing items that reflect the Muslim American experience, as articulated in previous research (Haddad and Lummis 1987; Sirin et al. 2008; Pew Research Center 2007). The focus of the present article is to explore and test the development of an acculturation scale for Muslim Americans. Future studies, with a larger and more diverse sample, will include additional reporting of data to further understand demographic differences, such as generational, gender, and ethnic background differences. The initial testing of the scale provides insight into the nature of acculturation within the Muslim American population and provides a starting point for future acculturation research that goes beyond language or ethnicity-based constructs.

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