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Islamic Revival among Second-Generation Arab- American Muslims: The American Experience and Globalization Intersect

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ISLAMIC REVIVAL AMONG SECOND-GENERATION ARAB-AMERICAN MUSLIMS: THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND GLOBALIZATION INTERSECT

This article examines the chain of events that facilitated an Islamic revival among second-generation Arab-American Muslims. Based upon research in metropolitan Chicago, it argues against trends in the literature that describe Western-born Muslims as foreigners, immigrants or, worse, anti-Western. Similarly, it argues against setting their religious experiences solely in a domestic context. The article begins by documenting the lack of religious institutions and practices among immigrant Arab Muslims before the 1990s and the limited religious socialization of their American-born children. These conditions emerged in part from secular trends in the immigrants' homelands. By the 1990s, a period of global Islamic revival, both immigrant and second-generation Arab Muslims found practiced Islam attractive, particularly its capacity to provide meaning and resilience for their own experiences in America. Individual decisions to embrace Islam as more than a fact of birth were facilitated by developments resulting from globalization and the creation of American Islamic institutions, yet were, at the same time, intensely personal choices rooted in local experiences. Although Islamic revival is global, its conduits should not be viewed as causal. The article engages findings by Yang and Ebaugh (2001) and Hirschman (2003), arguing that analyses of religiosity in the United States must take into account historical contexts. Religiosity is an intensely personal experience that must be explained at the intersection of the individual, the local and the global.

ISLAMIC REVIVAL IS A COMPLEX historical process with individual, national, transnational and global components. Whether described as religious resurgence, the rise of fundamentalist interpretations of the Qur'an, a return to theological foundations, or a political movement with religion

at its core, Islamic revival should be studied at both macro and micro levels in each society in which it has taken place in order to determine its universal and particular elements.¹ Since structural processes in themselves do not explain situated individual behaviour, micro level studies help us to understand Islamic revival's local roots and appeal. That is, they help us to understand why individuals choose to be religious and, in the case highlighted by this article, why so many American-born Muslims are more religious than their immigrant parents.

In this paper, I look at the historical, local and global events that have set the stage for Islamic revival among second-generation Arab-American Muslims. Metropolitan Chicago is the site of empirically-grounded research placing the specific contributions of migration, transnational relationships and global Islamic revival in the context of a particular Arab-American Muslim experience. At the micro level, Islamic revival is defined as observable and measurable increases in the number of individual Muslims who engage in religious practices (such as praying, fasting and knowledge-seeking) and whose daily lives are informed by core beliefs about faith in God (spirituality) and Islamic philosophies. I argue that Islamic revival among second-generation Arab-American Muslims, a population often referred to as 'immigrants' in the literature on Muslims in the West (although they are not), is an outcome of a complex series of historically-grounded events that offered Islam as a powerful tool providing meaning and resilience for the experience of growing up as a Muslim and an Arab in the United States.

Standing at the intersection of history and biography (Mills 2000), this examination of Islamic revival shows that an individual's decision to embrace Islam as more than a fact of birth has been facilitated by developments resulting from globalization, yet was, at the same time, an intensely personal choice rooted in local experiences. In this article, I set the stage for ongoing oral history research on Islamic revival among second-generation Muslims in the United States and offer a new perspective on the phenomenon.²

Literature review

In the social science literature, Islamic revival is usually discussed as a process particular to Muslim countries (see, for example, Berger and Hefner 2003). It is frequently noted for its appeal to the socially, politically and economically excluded. These assertions have led to widely-accepted notions that the spread of Islam as a potent ideology is inherently related to political and socio-economic conditions in developing nations. Said Arjomand (2003) has described Islamic revival as an outcome of urbanization, modernization and increased literacy in the Muslim world. He explains its expansion from the Muslim core as one

result of globalization—via migration, mass communications and ease of travel (to Mecca and other locales in that core). Arjomand takes issue with Benjamin Barber's (1995) narrow characterization of Islamic revival—and Islam itself—as inherently anti-Western and hostile, noting, however, that this perspective is held by many political commentators and journalists.

The assumption that Muslim countries are central to the process of Islamic revival carries over to social scientific analyses of Islam in the West, where the message and the messengers of Islamic revival are usually described as both foreign and anti-Western. Islamic revival in Europe is explained as a phenomenon rooted in immigrants and migration (that is, foreigners). Giles Kepel (2003, 85), for example, states that "in order to understand the forms that Islamic identity takes in Britain, it is first necessary to look closely at the most noteworthy elements of the history which the *immigrants* brought with them" (my emphasis). Similarly, his analysis of Islamic revival in France begins with a discussion of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria. Masanori Naito's book (1996) on the Islamic awakening in Europe similarly focuses upon immigrants. His interpretation of the unfolding of Islamic revival renders a more accurate picture at the micro level than Kepel's, but one which still counterpoises Islam and Western culture. While Naito importantly anchors Islamic revival in local experiences, he decontextualizes it, thereby missing the link between global events and local outcomes, in other words, between history and biography. Furthermore, he explains the Islamic identity of the second generation as a product of their parents' religiosity and their upbringing.

During the first decade of immigration, the Muslim immigrants had little motivation for religious activities, they just earned money, saved, and sent it to their families in the mother countries. Since they have settled with their families in the mid 1970s, Islam has revitalized as the norm and value of their life, for they were afraid that infiltration of the European life style and behavior into the Muslim youth would seriously damage the unity of family which is the most precious value for the Muslim. In addition, racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination also accelerate to build a wall between host and *immigrant society*. Thus, Islam became the strongest ties of the Muslim immigrants, and it built stronger and broader networks among immigrants than ethnic ties (Naito 1996; my emphasis).

These types of analyses overstress the foreignness of the children of immigrants. Considered members of an 'immigrant society,' they are portrayed as cultural aliens (or, worse, enemy aliens) in the countries into which they have been born. A tautological argument then often follows:

Islam appeals to the second generation because they are essentially foreign (not French, or German, or American). Their essential foreignness is proven by their Islamic identity and practice. Having explained away a complex sociological process by reductionism, analytic discussion quickly turns to the institutional level: mosques, organizations, leaders, fundamentalism, militants, and/or political Islam, the most visible parts of the puzzle and perhaps easier to comprehend. The fundamental concepts of religiosity, spirituality and philosophy are bypassed and important questions—why do people choose to be religious? why do many Muslims born in the West choose to be practising Muslims?—are never asked.

Is there something peculiar about the children of Muslim immigrants that causes them, unlike other second-generation groups (Yang and Ebaugh 2001), to mimic their parents in a near robotic manner? Or are these assumptions simply the outcome of limited grounded research? Islamic revival in the West must be understood as more than the product of migration and culture clash (Huntington 1996), particularly when its adherents are native-born. The assumption that second-generation Muslims are foreign may be yet another (perhaps unintended) manifestation of the allegations of Muslim stagnation that characterize much writing on Islam. Mamdani (2002) has noted: “Muslim culture is viewed as petrified. . . . Muslims conform . . . while others make culture. Muslims need to be rescued by the cultured.” In point of fact, this characterization of Islam reflects the bias of the beholder: it has no place in scholarly work.

In an important article on immigrant religions in the United States, Yang and Ebaugh (2001) present findings that resonate with the second-generation American-Muslim experience. They accurately observe that a return to theological foundations (their term for a type of fundamentalism) occurs among second generations because they must bridge differences of culture and ethnic origin (internal pluralism) among co-religionists and because the “authority of a religion that is based simply on tradition loses its power” (280). Second-generation Muslims are seen as Americans and not foreigners and, like other religious groups, their religious practices and institutions are viewed as dynamic. However, while trying to fit Islam into their universal model of American immigrant religions, Yang and Ebaugh ignore the global aspect of Islamic revival. Since the revival occurred first in the Islamic world, it cannot have solely a local (American) explanation. Rather, it must be viewed in the light of the intersection of local and global factors.

A similar distinction applies to Arab and South Asian Sunni Muslims who migrated to the US between the turn of the twentieth century and the late 1980s: their overwhelming secularism does not fit Herberg's

(1960) classic thesis that new immigrants become more religious after migration to the United States. As Hirschman (2003) notes, Herberg's thesis is limited by ahistoricity and does not fit all immigrant communities. The majority of Italian immigrants, for example, for reasons connected to religiosity in their country of origin and their sojourning orientation, were not practicing Catholics in the early decades of the twentieth century. High levels of religiosity among Irish immigrants in the US during the same period are traced to a "Devotional Revolution" in Ireland and the subsequent export of Irish clergy to the United States (Larkin 1984). Hirschman's analysis points to the importance of examining religiosity in an historical context, taking into account events in immigrants' homelands and the context of their reception in the United States.

Historically-grounded research can help to sort through these complex macro and micro processes, global and local variables and differences between immigrant and second-generation religiosity. While I continue to unpack these processes through oral history research, this paper lays out the contextual background for my exploration of Islamic revival among second-generation Muslims in the US based upon historical research in Chicago's Arab and Muslim communities. In a footnote in his book, *Globalized Islam*, Olivier Roy states: "I consider that it is becoming increasingly irrelevant to study Islam in the West through the prism of immigration" (2004, 8). I agree. While the messengers of Islamic revival may be global in origin—immigrants, transnational relationships and mass communications—these conduits should not be viewed as causal. Religiosity is an intensely personal experience that must, in the end, be explained at the intersection of the individual, the local and the global. When viewed from this perspective, African-American Islam (the largest group of Muslims in the US) may not be an exceptional case that has nothing in common with 'immigrant Islam.' On the contrary, the study of African-American Islam offers insights into the relationship between religion, the course of world history and the patterns of individual lives. Similarly, when examined in historical perspective, immigrant Muslims and their children may share common experiences with members of other religious groups in the United States.

Metropolitan Chicago as a research site

Metropolitan Chicago has one of the largest and most diverse Arab communities in the United States. It is composed of some 100,000 persons,³ of whom an estimated 70% are Muslims of varying economic statuses and countries of nativity. According to Census 2000, Cook County has the third-largest Arabic-speaking population by county in the US and Chicago has the fifth-largest by place. More than half of the Arab

TABLE 1. Arab immigrants intending to settle in Illinois by selected country of birth and proportion of all Arab immigrants intending to settle in Illinois

	1972	1980	1986	1995	2000	Cumulative
Jordan/Palestine+	45%	36%	39%	31%	31%	33%
Iraq* (includes Assyrians)	16%	35%	15%	26%	16%	25%
Egypt	15%	10%	12%	9%	6%	8%
Lebanon	10%	8%	11%	8%	5%	8%
Syria	6%	6%	9%	5%	10%	9%
Kuwait^ (Palestinians)		2%	3%	4%	4%	4%
Yemen						2%
These countries as % of all Arab immigrants to Illinois	97%	97%	89%	83%	71%	89%

Source: INS. Country of Birth data.

+ Jordan and Palestine are combined because more than 70% of Jordanian immigrants are of Palestinian origin. Chicago has the largest concentrated Palestinian community in the US. (See Cainkar 1988.)

* Until the mid-1990s, the overwhelming majority of Iraqi immigrants were Assyrian Christians. Chicago has the largest Assyrian community in the US.

^ We assume that most or all of the immigrants from Kuwait are Palestinian.

population of metropolitan Chicago is under the age of thirty and was born in the United States. The largest Arab-Muslim communities in Chicago are Palestinian and Egyptian, the former a 100-year old community, the latter a more recent arrival.

I have been conducting sociological research among Arab Muslims in the Chicago metropolitan area for twenty-two years. Since the early 1990s, I have observed a major transformation within this community, characterized by the increasing importance of religiosity on individual and institutional levels. On an individual level, religiosity is measured by actions that engage religious practices—most notably, praying and fasting—and actions that increase one's religious knowledge. Religiosity is also a subjective state that includes holding core beliefs about faith in God (spirituality) and perspectives on life issues informed by an Islamic philosophy. Wearing a *hijāb* (headscarf) is often an expression of religiosity for Muslim women, although I believe that it is empirically the case that women may wear a *hijāb* and not be religious (that is, wear one for cultural reasons) or be religious and not wear a *hijāb*. On an institutional level, religiosity is measured by the presence of religious institutions, as well as organizations that approach secular matters (such as civil rights or domestic violence) from a religious perspective. Corresponding to an increase in individual religiosity and religious institution-building, I have observed the decreasing influence of secular, pan-Arab and nationalist organizations, values and perspectives.

This is not to say that all Muslims became religious after 1990 or that none were religious before 1990, but rather that the scales tipped significantly from the secular to the religious during the 1990s.

This change is not explainable solely by migration, that is, by the presence of new immigrants from Muslim countries. A significant proportion of the religiously-observant community is made up of the American-born children of immigrants who came to the US in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Many of these children have parents who are not themselves observant and have voluntarily chosen to practice Islam. This change is also not explainable solely by the influence of transnational experiences. Preliminary data analysis shows that the majority of second-generation Muslims interviewed thus far in an ongoing study of the Islamization of the Arab- (and South Asian-) Muslim community in Chicago found Islam while fully embedded in their American lives. This points to the importance of examining local experiences to understand the appeal of Islam to American-born Muslims.

Indeed, the phenomenon of increasing religiosity among Arab Muslims in metropolitan Chicago is complex because migration and historical change intersect to produce varying outcomes over time. Newer, post-1990 Arab immigrants are more likely to be religiously-observant than pre-1990 immigrants because of the decline of secularism and the Islamic revival in their homelands. Second-generation Arab Americans who reached adulthood in a more secular time may have quite different experiences from those who did so in the 1990s, when religiosity was a popular and viable option. Members of the latter group may even precede their parents in the discovery of faith because of these historical circumstances.

In this article, I will first examine the state of Islam among Arabs in Chicago in the early 1980s. Next, I will note some of the objective indicators of change in religiosity among Arabs that began appearing in the 1990s. Finally, I will examine some of the potential explanations for changes among second-generation Arab Americans. I will assert that Islamic revival among American-born Arab Muslims is a process that is properly explained only by considering the intersection of the global and the local. Universal Islamic themes appeal to many Arab Americans because they provide answers to local experiences. This means that Islamic revival in the US is not solely a foreign import, but also part of the American experience rooted in a globally-connected world.

Chicago's Arab-Muslim communities

Arab-Muslim migration to Chicago commenced in the late 1800s. By the early 1900s, Chicago was home to an Arab-Muslim community that was predominantly Palestinian and largely male. (There was also a primarily

Lebanese-Christian community of families.) When African Americans migrated to Chicago from the southern United States, Palestinians began a one-hundred-year economic relationship with their community, most often as traders, peddlers and shopkeepers. (The current economic relationship between these two communities is not without controversy, which is related to the Arab concentration in small grocery and liquor stores in African-American neighbourhoods.) Palestinian traders and shopkeepers lived in the African-American communities in which they worked, often at the back of their shops, or on their edges in boarding houses, until after World War II, when Palestinian family migration began. The Palestinian immigrants then moved to all-white neighbourhoods on Chicago's southwest side that bordered the so-called Black Belt. Middle-class Palestinians continued to move in a southwest trajectory from these 'buffer areas' in the 1970s. In step with their ethnic European neighbours, who were fleeing neighbourhood decline and African-American expansion, middle-class Arabs moved to neighbouring all-white suburbs. This movement persisted throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and began to include Palestinians of all income levels. Although a core community of new immigrants and low- and middle-income families remains on the southwest side of the city, the weight of the community has shifted to the suburbs, including new immigrants and some low-income families. A more recent migration of Yemenis has settled, like the Palestinians, on the south side and in the southwest suburbs. Large numbers of Palestinian and Jordanian Christians have also migrated to Chicago, although their migration started later than the Muslims and they are as likely to live on the north side of the city as the south.

Arab Muslims from Iraq, Lebanon and Syria and Egyptian Muslims and Christians began migrating to Chicago in the 1950s, initially as students in most cases. After 1965, the size of these groups increased, especially as visas became available for skilled professionals and their families, but their numbers have never approached those of the large Palestinian community in Chicago. At least one out of every three Arab immigrants intending to settle in Illinois since 1965 has been Palestinian (see Table 1). Their actual proportion as a percentage of Arabs in Illinois is much higher than this because a large number of the migrants from Iraq are Assyrians and not Arabs. Although Illinois has an historic Lebanese community, it is one of the few states in which persons of Lebanese and Syrian ancestry are outnumbered by other Arabs (Arab American Institute 2000).

Unlike Palestinian Muslims and Yemenis, who are concentrated on the southwest side and in the southwest suburbs (but also live elsewhere in the metropolitan area), other Arab groups are dispersed across the north side of Chicago and in the north, northwest and western suburbs

of the city. In the 1990s, some two thousand Iraqi refugees were settled on the north side. Because of their location, because most were Shi'a Muslims (and of low socio-economic status) and, possibly, because of the unique political circumstances between Iraq and the US, their interaction with other Arabs in Chicago (including earlier migrating Iraqis) has been limited.

The practice of Islam among Arab Muslims in the early 1980s

In the early 1980s, when I conducted my first ethnographic study of the city's Arab community, there were some 20,000 Palestinians living in metropolitan Chicago. Thousands were Christian, but the majority were Muslim and lived on the southwest side of the city, even though the movement of the middle class to the southwest suburbs had already begun. The Palestinian Muslims were by far the largest Arab group in metropolitan Chicago. Field notes and interviews taken from research that I conducted between 1982 and 1985 provide rich empirical data on the practice of Islam early in the decade.

During this time, Islam was, at best, a way of life for Chicago's Palestinian Muslims. In fact, most of the second-generation (American-born) Palestinian-Muslim women whom I interviewed said that they knew more about Christianity than Islam. Few of the immigrant Palestinian-Muslim women acknowledged practicing their faith beyond fasting during Ramadan and occasionally reading the Qur'an. Islamic dress was uncommon and the *jilbāb* (ankle-length, loose-fitting coat) was never seen in public. Wearing the *hijāb* was largely limited to newly-arrived, married, peasant women who had less than a high-school education and the small number of Palestinian women who had previously lived in the countries of the Gulf. The former were viewed not as religious women invoking modesty, but as representatives of a traditional Palestinian peasantry, whose way of life and cultural symbols (such as embroidered dresses) Palestinian nationalism was fighting to preserve.

Despite a long-standing commercial relationship between Arab Muslims (as sellers) and African Americans (as buyers), there were limited spiritual and congregational relationships between Arab and African American Muslims. Although some immigrant Palestinians taught Arabic at Chicago's Nation of Islam (NOI) institutions, recorded history notes that differences between the Sunni Islam of the immigrants and the Black nationalism of the NOI made shared religious congregations difficult (Curtis 2002). The religious life of Arab Muslims in Chicago was not, therefore, a product of fusion with African-American Islam.

In my original study, I asked immigrant and American-born Palestinian-Muslim women between the ages of 18 and 40 whether religion was important in their lives, why it was or was not, and to provide relevant

examples taken from their day-to-day experiences. More than eighty percent of both groups said that Islam was important in their lives. In response to why and how it was important, they described Islam in terms of its values and prohibitions. They did not, however, describe it as a spiritual force in their lives or as a source of strength and guidance. Islam was about family cohesion, respect for elders, modesty, chastity, being a good person and fasting during Ramadan; it was against alcohol, drugs and pre-marital sex. Muslim holidays were celebrated, but they generally lacked deep spiritual content. Few of my informants engaged in interventive religious practices—seeking access to God by praying, whether routinely or occasionally.

Answers to my questions about the importance of religion in their lives and how it manifested itself are indicative of this state. Normative responses included:

My religion says to me not to drink, not have boyfriends and girlfriends, to respect your brothers and family, to listen to them, and to thank God for everything.

Our religion says that we should stay together, work together, that we should do everything together.

Our religion is Muslim and it is very important to me. We read the Qur'an and my father tells us things. We have to pray and fast, but I don't pray, just the fasting.

Yes, [Muslim] holidays I celebrate. My husband doesn't care so much because he's been here so long and just got busy. I don't fast now. . . . I don't pray so much now, because I have baby and I have to be clean to pray.

I don't follow it very strictly although I do adhere to the basic principles. Q: Do you practice it formally? A: Do you mean praying five times a day? No, I don't. But I do fast and refrain from alcohol and drugs. I try to be good sometimes, most of the time.

There are things I cannot do because of my religion. I could not go to the beach here and not cover up. Yes, I do fast.

It is my background, but I don't pray five times a day. My parents were not religious. Not where they practiced it daily. My mother knows the verses of the Qur'an, but does not go to the mosque. It has been practiced from within in our daily lives; this is our religion.

Indeed, these responses show that 'Muslim' was moving toward becoming a cultural identity because Islam's spiritual core was missing.

This cultural identity was not necessarily a conscious rejection of religion; more accurately, it was the option available and the way of life prevalent at the time. Those who clearly chose to be cultural Muslims answered questions about religion much like the following woman:

I am a Muslim only in the sense that it identifies me and is inbred in me, I do not practice. My husband is Muslim, too. My family was never that religiously-oriented, never fasted.

The reasons for this state of religiosity in the early and mid-1980s were embedded in contemporaneous socio-political conditions in the United States, Palestine and Jordan. In the US, these Muslim women were part of a religious minority in a Christian-majority society. In metropolitan Chicago, in particular, they had no established religious institutions. There was no viable mosque (see below) nor were there avenues for formal religious instruction or spiritual development. In the early to mid-1980s, the Palestinian Muslim community had two religious leaders who could officiate at Muslim marriages and lead prayers, but both of these men had other occupations. One worked in sales and the other was a real estate agent. There were quite a few community institutions, however. These embraced the ideals of secular nationalism and pan-Arabism, and included Christians, Muslims and Jews who shared the same aspirations for Palestinian statehood, human rights, democracy and justice—as well as the fall of Arab regimes compromising these objectives.

Because Chicago lacked appropriate religious institutions, the Muslim education of the second generation was composed almost solely of what their parents had taught them. It was often the case that parents worked long hours and had little time and energy to transmit religious knowledge. It was most efficient to pass on values and prohibitions—about family, modesty, generosity, chastity, diet, intoxicants, sexuality, fasting and holidays. The following responses to the question, “where did you learn about your religion?” give a sense of the religious instruction characteristic of this period.

Basically, what my parents told me and I read some about it, but nothing formal.

We read the Qur’an and my father tells us things.

I am a Muslim, but in name only. I believe in God, but do not participate. Because we never had a mosque to go to and my parents worked and did not have time to teach us the Qur’an verses. But I think now I am becoming more interested.

I never went to a mosque, I don't think. When I was younger we never went to a mosque because there weren't any. I always thought my religion was really very, very different from everybody else's. I know more about Christianity than my own religion, being raised in this country. Every time we saw on TV *The Ten Commandments*, *Jesus of Nazareth*, or something like that, my parents would tell us to sit down and tell us how it is different.

While fasting during the month of Ramadan was considered important and observed by many, praying was uncommon, whether by immigrant parents or immigrant or American-born children. Indeed, most of the latter did not know how to perform *ṣalā* (prayers). One woman spoke about going to Palestine for a visit when a young adult and being pitied by her relatives for not knowing how to pray.

Even the concept of women covering their hair as a religious practice was not mentioned by interviewees in relation to discussions of Islam, and the number of second-generation Arab-American Muslim women who wore the *ḥijāb* was negligible. But foregoing the *ḥijāb* was not necessarily about being in America. Only the women mentioned above, who wore traditional embroidered dresses and the flowing, white, sheer scarf of the Palestinian peasant, wore the *ḥijāb*; urban women and the large corps of young, adult, Palestinian women with high-school and college educations emigrating from Palestine and Jordan did not. Indeed, newly-immigrating young women who wore the *ḥijāb* were expected to take it off in the United States or risk being considered *mutakhallif* (backward). At that time, this act did not evoke as much conflict as might be expected from the perspective of today, nor did it provoke substantial parental disapproval. Wearing the *ḥijāb* had become increasingly uncommon in much of Palestine and Jordan. The 'modern Muslim woman' was not *muhajjaba*. Consider these conversations with Palestinian-Muslim women:

My mother does not wear traditional clothes. When she was young she wore them for 20 years.

Q: Does you mother wear a veil or anything like that? A: No.

Q: If you were still back home in Palestine, do you think you would be the same way? A: Yes.

Q: Do you fast? A: No. My parents are very strict Muslims, but we did not keep up with them. I used to tell my father there are many women who cover their heads and faces and are not nice, and you should be thankful that I do not do those things.

If I say I am Arabian, people are surprised. Some met me and asked where is my veil? Now it is not that way. Some women do wear the veil still, but not all of them.

Only among the minority of Palestinian women, those arriving from Arab Gulf countries, where the *hijāb* was still commonly worn, did one hear of anguished experiences when women were asked by others to remove their headscarves.

The state of religious knowledge and practice described above was not merely the result of being in the United States. Modernity, foreign occupation, Westernization, secularism, communism and nationalism each played a role in marginalizing religious rituals and practices in much of the post-colonial Islamic world. So when Palestinian, Egyptian, Iraqi, Lebanese and Syrian Muslims migrated to the US in the 1980s or before, many had already cast aside a number of religious practices. The everyday experience of being a Muslim in the United States was, of course, different from being a Muslim in a Muslim country, but the range and degree of difference between the two geographic spaces was not as great as might be expected given the wide institutional and cultural disparities. Moreover, Islam reduced of its rituals and practices rendered adjustment to American society and culture easier than it might otherwise have been—although this was not the primary reason for the secularism of immigrants and their children. Life in the US was challenging and negative stereotypes of Arabs were abundant. Immigrant and second-generation Arabs of all religious faiths drew strength and pride from ideas based upon nationalism, pan-Arabism and the historic magnificence and resilience of their culture; they also maintained deep, transnational relationships. But, in time, these organizing ideologies lost meaning in the Arab community, beaten into submission worldwide by the outcomes of the 1990-91 Gulf War, the first Palestinian *intifāda* and the failed peace process. Islam emerged as an option for filling the moral and spiritual vacuum created by their absence. While an Islam reduced of its spirituality was no aid in coping with the challenging aspects of American society, a vibrant Islam could be a real asset.

Institution-building

The Muslim population of Chicago grew larger and more diverse in the 1970s and 1980s, mainly due to migration enabled by changes in US immigration law. Emigrants from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, India and Pakistan, as well as smaller numbers from Iran, Turkey, Yemen, Afghanistan and Morocco, and a continuing stream of Palestinians made metropolitan Chicago their home. In the late 1970s, pan-ethnic communal celebrations of major Islamic holidays began to be held in large public forums, such as McCormick Place. Then came institution-building. As noted above, the Palestinian-Muslim community was the largest immigrant-origin Arab-Muslim community in Chicago and

developed a residential concentration on the southwest side of the city and in its southwest suburbs. In 1981, they completed construction of a mosque in the southwest suburb of Bridgeview after more than twenty years of fundraising spearheaded by the Palestinian Ladies Society. Unable to complete construction without external funders, community leaders turned to wealthy donors in the oil-rich Gulf States for charitable support. According to the *Chicago Tribune* (Ahmed-Ullah et al. 2004), they received more than \$350,000 from donors in Kuwait, \$152,000 from the Saudi government, and \$135,000 from the government of the United Arab Emirates. Donations from wealthy Arabs or their governments to Arab institutions with fewer resources were common before the Gulf War. This sort of support, for example, allowed secular institutions like Palestine's Bir Zeit University and Al-Maqasid Hospital to pay salaries and remain open.

The Bridgeview mosque was initially a place where men prayed on Fridays, women held meetings on Saturdays and weekday evenings, and children learned Arabic on Sundays. But when a full-time, religiously-trained *imām* was brought from Egypt to provide religious leadership for the mosque, major changes started to occur. The *imām* put spiritual and ritual substance into the practice of Islam. While no one was forced to be religious, those who chose to be were taught to adhere carefully to the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet. This required, in turn, modifications in the behaviour of the faithful, provoking change in the overall comfort level and in accommodation with the normative practices of American society. The isolation of Chicago's Muslim community was over as it was now linked with the global world of Islam—and that world was on the verge of a transformation. The transnational links of earlier migrants had not been enough to give substance to Islam because these migrants had come at a time when Islamic practice was weak and because most had adopted the prevalent community ethos that living in the United States required accommodations to dominant Christian and secularized society.

It would seem normal and natural that persons practicing a religion should be asked by religious leaders at a religious institution to respect and apply the teachings of their religion in their daily lives. But when, for example, the new *imām* required women to wear headscarves in all parts of the mosque, he provoked conflict with women community leaders (who had raised the funds for the mosque), who were not in the habit of covering their hair. (It is interesting to note that the practice of selling alcohol, an occupation held by a large proportion of the mosque's male congregation and supporting a large percentage of families, did not become the object of religious dispute.) A battle over who controlled the mosque was eventually launched between Muslims who sought to

practice Islam as they had in the past and Muslims who sought stricter religious purity. The dispute ended in a court case. The Circuit Court of Cook County decided in 1983 that the mosque's board of directors and the North American Islamic Trust, which now held title to the mosque, had corporate control over it. In 1985, the mosque's board brought a new *imām* to the mosque. Still the *imām* in 2005, Sheikh Jamal is a Palestinian trained in Islamic studies at a Saudi university who initially came to the US to teach Arabic to African-American Muslims.

In the 1990s, the practice of Islam among Chicago's Muslims surged quantitatively and qualitatively, although wide variations continued to exist within the community. The number of Muslims attending Friday prayers at the Bridgeview mosque increased from about 75 in 1982 to more than 800 in 1993 (to nearly 2000 today).⁴ This increase has not been due to migration alone: local experiences and global developments have contributed to a rise in religiosity. By the 1990s, newly-arriving Arab-Muslim immigrants had experienced Islamic revival in their homelands and a larger proportion of new immigrants was spiritually and ritually committed to Islam than in prior times. Some earlier immigrants experienced a change in the meaning of religion in their lives upon return visits to their homelands. Increasingly, the American-born children of Arab immigrants found spiritual depth and meaning in the practice of Islam—many of them despite what they saw as their parents' compromised form of religious living. In addition, there were now a few Islamic schools to which more affluent parents could send their children for an education embraced by Islamic teachings. For these American Muslims, the universal values of Islam and the strength of their religiosity helped them to cope with their particular local experiences as homogenized, dehumanized and voiceless Arabs in America (Ahmed-Ullah et al. 2004). In earlier times, these spiritual needs had been met by the hope, dignity and vision offered by nationalist institutions, but most of these institutions were devastated after the 1990-91 Gulf War.⁵

Objective indicators of the change

Objective indicators of these changes in religiosity among Arab Muslims in Chicago are numerous. They were evident in the mid-1990s and have become dominant since the turn of the twenty-first century. Within the large Palestinian community, some village-based societies still hold occasional functions, however, all but one of the Palestinian community centres have closed and mosques have taken their place as venues for social activities, political discussions, lectures and community services. *Halāl* meat markets and Islamic clothing stores have opened across metropolitan Chicago. A change in values has also become evident at the institutional level. For example, excluding Christian and private gatherings,

liquor is no longer served at public events sponsored by Arab secular institutions. A dramatic play of these values was evident at the Arab American Institute's 1996 Democratic National Convention Gala in Chicago where, at the insistence of local donors, only coffee, tea and soft drinks were served at its late-night (10 pm-1 am) party for political leaders and candidates.

Arab student organizations at local universities have become weak or ceased operation, while Muslim student organizations, especially the Muslim Students Association (MSA), have begun to flourish. Islamic professional associations and social service agencies have increased in number and in activities. Similarly, there is growing demand for social workers with an Islamic perspective at mainstream agencies. At the national level, Islamic civic institutions, such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations, have begun organizing and engaging in advocacy and mainstream political participation. After the 11 September 2001 attacks on the US, these activities grew further and expanded at the local level as Muslims realized the importance of decreasing their institutional and social isolation. Their links with mainstream civil society institutions were deepened as they developed partnerships to forestall further attacks on Muslim civil rights (Cainkar 2004a; 2004b).

I have personally observed hundreds of individuals change from secular to religious since the mid-1990s, while conducting research and participating in the Arab and Muslim communities. Immigrant and American-born women who had never before covered their hair have adopted the *hijab*—once unusual, but now a common sight in the metropolitan Chicago area. These dramatic changes in the meaning, practice, politics and institution-building of Islam within Chicago's Arab-Muslim community have been mirrored nationwide (Haddad and Esposito 1998). Something deeply sociological and critically important to American society has occurred.

Immigration alone cannot explain this dramatic revival of religiosity in the course of the Arab-American community's 100-year history in Chicago. According to Census 2000, while 48% of persons of Arab ancestry in the Chicago Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area are foreign born, just about 25% entered the United States after 1990. In addition, a large proportion of these post-1990 immigrants are Iraqi Shi'a Muslims who came to the US as post-Gulf War refugees and who are not part of the Islamicization trend of Sunni Muslims described here (Cainkar 1999b). This revival also cannot be explained solely as an outcome of transnational family relationships or overseas travel, although these, too, play a role. Nor can it be explained by the increased migration of South Asians, Bosnians, or other Muslims, because contact between these communities and Arab Americans has been infrequent, although increasing.

Neither migration nor pan-Islamic contacts, institution-building nor parental upbringing fully explains why young Muslim adults (ages 18-30) born and raised in the US chose to find comfort, spiritual growth and existential meaning in religiosity. It is more correct to understand the Islamic revival occurring among Arab Americans as an outcome of the increasing interconnectedness of the world intersecting with the spirits, imaginations and challenges of persons who lead very local lives. A growing number of Arab-American Muslims are finding ways to understand the perplexing questions of their locally-situated experiences through Islam. Their knowledge of Islamic philosophies and rituals has been allowed to deepen and flourish through access to books, religious leaders, Islamic institutions and organizations in the US, as well as a global pool of internet sites, list-servs and satellite TV stations; and through international travel and relationships with other Muslims, only some of whom are immigrants. As Islamic revival has surged in strength and momentum globally, the Islam of the East is now more strongly interwoven with the Islam of the West. In the diasporic Muslim communities of the West, Islam is being catalyzed not by the pilgrims, scholars, conquerors and missionaries who led the early global expansion of the faith, but by the experiences of the descendants of refugees, exiles and former slaves, by global technology and by the quest for dignity brought about by racism and inequality. Knowledge of Islam and its institutional growth is dialectically related to contestations faced by Muslims. As Islam and Muslims face more challenges, Islamic revival grows (Cainkar forthcoming).

Challenges to religious institutions

With the rise in religiosity among Arab Muslims in Chicago, community members have sought to build new religious institutions to meet their congregational needs. Their efforts in the southwest suburbs, site of the largest concentration of Arabs in metropolitan Chicago, have met with significant opposition. In 2000, an attempt by Arab Muslims to purchase an abandoned building in suburban Palos Heights for conversion into a mosque was halted due to public protest. The city council voted to pay the Al Salaam Mosque Foundation \$200,000 to back out of its contract with the vendors of the property, but the compensation plan was vetoed by an embarrassed mayor (Martin 2000). The Muslims filed a discrimination lawsuit, which they lost in 2005. In 2004, another group of southwest suburban Arab Muslims sought to build a mosque in an unincorporated area near Orland Park. Opposition raged and the Orland Park city council (which sought to annex the land) was forced to hold three public hearings on the matter.

The issues raised by most opponents to the mosque had little to do with Orland Park; they were global. Opponents invoked the war in Iraq,

international terrorism, the purported violent essence of Islam and homeland security. The following abbreviated quotes provide a sense of these discourses.

We care about America. We care about what's going on because we don't want you to bring it here. We're not saying that you'll bring it, but you must understand that because you're tied in with this religion and a possible mosque in Orland Park, it will come to our doorstep.

Can you give a guarantee to me that these Muslims and their mosque are not going to be terrorists?

A Baptist minister made the following statement:

Now, as a Christian, a Baptist and an American, I'm a firm believer in religious liberty and favour any religious group buying property or erecting a house of worship—but liberty has limits! No group that jeopardizes our personal safety or our national security is deserving of our tolerance. I think, at this point, it would be helpful, fair and important to make a distinction between radical Muslims and moderate Muslims. The radical Muslim terrorists kill people every day. Moderate Muslims do not kill people. Moderate Muslims supply the cash to the militant Muslims.

In September 2004, Cook County Clerk David Orr withdrew the polling license of the Baptist minister's church, citing the offensive and undemocratic character of his public statements as a member of the mosque opposition.

An Arab-American doctor spoke of his treatment of neighbourhood children in the hospital emergency room and his solid membership in the local community. He asked rhetorically: "What have these Muslims done to you?" The audience shouted: "9/11!" Another Arab American spoke of growing up in the southwest suburbs, changing his name to Nick and assimilating into American society. He declared that, after the rancour expressed during the hearings, he was changing his name back to Ibrahim. Surely, this experience will evolve into more than a symbolic name change for Nick. Like many others before him, Nick will be propelled by discrimination and malice into one of two choices: living in a state of alienation from mainstream, white society or building his self-esteem, pride and dignity through Islam. The presence of other Muslims, Muslim institutions, Muslim websites and Muslim list-servs will nurture his spiritual growth, knowledge and faith. But his discovery of religion will be an outcome of his American experience.

The 2004 Orland Park mosque battle points to a number of important post-9/11 paradoxes. The mosque dispute was settled when the Orland

Park city council voted unanimously to annex the land slated for the mosque, thereby approving the mosque's construction permit. Each city council member invoked his or her duty to support the US constitution and the guaranteed right to freedom of religion. The mayor of Orland Park had previously sent letters to all town residents stating his support for the mosque. Contrast these outcomes with the earlier mosque dispute in 2000, when Muslims were openly rebuffed by elected officials and then pressured to back down on their lawsuit. In the post-9/11 context, at the same time as they experienced organized opposition and verbal backlash, Muslims showed greater local power and evoked greater local respect than they had only a few years before (even though the two communities are adjacent and demographically similar). Finally, as preliminary data from my post-9/11 impact study show, increasing hostility and discrimination against Muslims are behind continuing rises in religiosity among (formerly) secular Muslims.

Conclusion: The dialectic has unfolded

Scholars have focused upon explaining the Islamic revival occurring in the West as an outcome of immigration, transnational ties, foreign money and events occurring within the Islamic world. That is, Islamic revival has been viewed as something foreign, allowing an easy leap to the conclusion that it is, therefore, anti-Western and threatening. This study shows that experiences particular to the United States play an important role in American Islamic revival. Much of Islam's appeal is due to its resonance to daily life events occurring in the United States and its capacity to offer meaning and build resilience: consider Hirschman (2003, 26) and Portes's concept of "refuge, respectability, and resources." American-born Arabs, who are neither foreigners nor anti-Western, are increasingly choosing to be Muslim in practice and in name, irrespective of their parents' religiosity or lack thereof. They find strength in the spirituality of Islam and hope in its message of justice and equality. In this regard, the revival of Islam among American Muslims is not unlike historic African-American experiences with Islam. As with African Americans, Arab Americans and immigrant Muslims experience negative and stereotypic representations in mainstream society, discrimination, dehumanization, political exclusion and voicelessness. Their youth experience alienation in the schools and have to combat self-hatred imbued by textbooks, Halloween costumes, video games, talk shows and movies that portray them as barbaric. Although not at the same levels as the African-American experience, these conditions are similar to those out of which Noble Drew Ali, Elijah Mohamed, Malcolm X and Wallace D. Mohammed offered a message of hope and dignity to African Americans through Islam. This is not simply Islam by heredity, force, or foreign invasion.

African-American Islam was contested in an earlier era—by Muslim immigrants for its authenticity, by members of the civil rights movement for its separatism and by the US government because of its effectiveness in organizing African-American opposition to structural racism. Now, however, conflicts with Islam are framed in global terms. When Catholics and Jews migrated in large numbers to the United States, the religious conflicts that they faced were largely seen as domestic concerns. Today, however, the US is a global superpower and American Muslims face challenges of a different sort. Muslims have been represented as enemies of the West, in which case they must be seen as foreigners and Islam as an alien religion. But the embrace of Islam by a significant number of second-generation Arabs (as well as South Asians, Eastern Europeans and Africans) will have, in time, a major impact on the mutual accommodations of American society and Muslims. Because their upbringing and Islamicization are largely American experiences, they are more able than their immigrant parents to cross barriers of culture, race and ethnicity and to forge pan-Islamic relationships. Their knowledge of American methods of organizing will increase Muslim civic and political integration in American society. They will begin to influence events occurring in the broader Islamic world. The complex dialectic between Islam and the West will continue to unfold as Islam becomes institutionally and socially acknowledged as an American religion.

NOTES

¹ An interesting discussion of these and other terms is found in Sadiq Al Azm's *Islamic Fundamentalism Reconsidered*.

² The research on Islamic revival in the United States is funded by a Carnegie Corporation Scholar Award.

³ This number is an estimate and excludes Assyrians, whose origins are in Iraq or Iran. These numbers do not match census data. See Cainkar (forthcoming 2005) for a qualitative assessment of the accuracy of Census 2000 data.

⁴ According to ongoing data collection in a study of second-generation Arab- and South Asian-Muslims in metropolitan Chicago.

⁵ I discuss these changes in more detail in Cainkar 1999a. One outcome of the Gulf War was the expulsion of Palestinians from Gulf countries, including Kuwait. This act seriously depleted secular nationalist financial resources.

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