THE IN/VISIBILITY OF SOUTH ASIAN MUSLIM AMERICANS:
ETHNICITY, CLASS AND 9/11

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For Michael

and my mother
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ABSTRACT

THE IN / VISIBILITY OF SOUTH ASIAN MUSLIM AMERICANS:
ETHNICITY, CLASS AND 9/11

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Dissertation Supervisor: Dan Ben-Amos

Ethnicity can no longer be considered as originating from a culture, homeland, or a heritage, dissipating over a linear progression of time; rather, ethnicity must be interrogated as a strategic manifestation of political, social, and class agendas. An exploration of ethnicity with one South Asian Muslim American community investigates the processes of ethnic identity construction by asking: what does it mean to possess, perform and live ethnicity in an age when terrorist threats and xenophobia lurk underneath the American pallor of civility?

Ethnicity shapes the theoretical framework and focuses the main goals of this research: firstly, to re-evaluate ethnicity, its meanings and its implications, for a group whose identity is emergent; and secondly, to problematize the patterns of creating and maintaining an ethnic identity with a community of recent migrants. The scholarship on ethnicity continues to increase, however a lack of extensive studies on South Asian
Muslims still exist. Ethnicity must be reconsidered in order to navigate everyday complex dynamics and must be reconsidered through the inclusion of class.

Class displaces the contestation of religious versus ethnic identity, allowing the community to negotiate their own individual and community identity in multiple and shifting contexts. The group shares the variables of - families, faith, financial security, and class – which form the foundation for the community’s conceptualization of ethnicity. It is class that allows for the community’s agency in the demarcation of visibility versus invisibility of their ethnic identity. The significance of the community’s education and financial success conveys an ambition for not only a certain lifestyle, but also for the invisibility awarded to those that achieve class status. However, in spite of their advanced degrees, English fluency, and economic success, their ethnicity, culture, race, and/or religion demarcates a separate space and a marked visibility in American society. Marginalization impacts the community’s possibilities of complete assimilation since the members retain cultural and religious difference symbolizing their diasporic identity. This work adds to the developing literature through concentrated efforts ethnographically with one South Asian community, at one mosque, during a socially and politically charged environment against Muslims and immigrants in the United States.
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Introduction

“If you have made the sacrifice to come here, uplift your fellow citizens ... either become a productive member of this society or get the hell out.”

Abbas 2004

Immediately following the days after September 11, 2001, one could witness the tug of war over the placement of the American flag on the door of the mosque in a suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In the evening, the flag was unfurled and its placement announced itself in solidarity with the rest of the country’s grieving citizens over the tragic events in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. However, by morning, the flag was gone and the mosque assumed its regular appearance as a house of worship seemingly with no awareness of space or time and the social and political milieu. Within the walls of the mosque itself, quiet yet impassioned debates divided the members. These divisions included those that opposed the flag over the mosque because they believed in a primary religious identity; those that agreed with a religious identity but wanted a flag over the mosque out of fear of retaliation; and those that wanted the flag to symbolically represent their American patriotism. This tug of war over the flag was not a mere dispute over decorative issues or even symbolic gestures. The debate over the flag embodied deeper, more complex questions of representations of American identity, South Asian ethnicity, and Muslim practice. These three components, all part of a larger ethnic identity, piece together in overlapping and sometimes conflicting patterns; moreover, each is affected by a critical moment in time, that of terrorism.
The issue of the flag served as the impetus for this dissertation as it engaged the nuanced and stratified layers of the community's identity. The same issue also frames the narrative of ethnicity; an identity based upon the tensions of negotiating these stratified layers. As scholars begin to address the issues surrounding the everyday lives of immigrant Muslim communities post September 11, the processes of ethnic identity necessitate a re-evaluation, particularly as they relate to South Asian Muslim Americans. More specifically, this dissertation will investigate the processes of ethnic identity construction by asking: what does it mean to possess, perform and live ethnicity in an age when terrorist threats and xenophobia lurk underneath the American pallor of civility?

This dissertation has two goals: firstly, to re-evaluate ethnicity, its meanings and its implications, principally for a group whose identity is emergent; and secondly, to problematize the patterns of creating and maintaining an ethnic identity with a community of relatively recent migrants. Ethnicity must be reconsidered in order to navigate the complex dynamics in the lives of South Asian Muslim Americans and must be reconsidered through the inclusion of class. I propose that it is class that displaces the contestation of religious versus ethnic identity, allowing the community to negotiate their own individual and community identity in multiple and shifting modes. Ultimately, I argue that it is class that facilitates the strategic visibility and invisibility of ethnicity for this community. Furthermore, the close examination of ethnicity with one South Asian Muslim community addresses the issues impacting their lives but has largely been unaddressed in scholarly works. This work adds to the developing literature through concentrated efforts ethnographically with one South Asian community, at one
mosque, during a socially and politically charged environment against Muslims and immigrants in the United States.

By working with the South Asian American community, who is primarily Indian and Pakistani, through the Islamic Society of Pennsylvania\(^1\), I examine the processes that groups and individuals enact in order to create and sustain what I believe to be a continuously changing and emergent identity. How this emergent identity is defined by the communities is a key point of the study that seeks to answer: what are the processes of ethnic identity construction that one suburban immigrant community in Philadelphia employs in order to be identified as South Asian/American and/or Muslim American? And lastly, in what ways does class impact issues of ethnic identity and assimilation? In positing folkloristic ethnographic analysis with theoretical models of ethnicity, this dissertation seeks to identify if and how previous ethnic identity theory is meaningful, framed against the current socio-political climate of fear and lack of understanding.

*Motivations for the Study*

I have had a long fascination with ethnicity. The desire to study and work with cultures and communities, both my own and others', drives all the inquiries for my research. Migrating to the United States from Pakistan as a young child I experienced first hand through my parents many of the same struggles faced by the individuals I interviewed. As an adult, I have witnessed the difficulties in creating a community and a home in a starkly dissimilar environment forcing me to recognize the courage and the

\(^1\) All names have been changed in order to protect the identity of the Society and its members.
tenacity of the families I had known for many years. Consequently, as a graduate student in Folklore, I worked on developing the conceptual and the methodological tools needed to explore more deeply the creation, preservation, and maintenance of ethnic identity. The dynamics of ethnicity remained the critical issue as I worked with the Arab American community and the South Asian American community on different projects. For me, ethnicity underscored all research questions.

In 1978, Roger Abrahams and Susan Kalcik, urging folklorists in the study of ethnicity, wrote,

Ethnicity involves a range of behavior or performance, involving the conscious and the unconscious, as well as the public and the private … The study of one extreme may shed light on the other, and the study of the continua can help us see at what point and in what situation ethnic performance was and is permitted or encouraged by the larger culture.

(Abrahams 1978: 226)

While Abrahams and Kalcik wanted to discourage any predilection towards an idealized ‘pureness’ in the study of ethnicity, this early article also encourages folklorists to consider the varied composition of ethnic identity.

Nearly thirty years later, in 2005, Abrahams readdressed the issue of ethnicity by stating,

Ethnicity is a comfortable term for discussing an uncomfortable condition: the persistence of potentially unpleasant confrontations over the allocation of scarce resources. This set of divisions opens up a discussion of differences
that can be co-opted in order to rationalize a system that in the main wants
to get rid of difference, although not of inequality. In vernacular usage,
the word *ethnicity* still has a ring of "minority issues" and "race relations,"
but in some semantic environments it has been transformed into a social
good (Abrahams 2005: 180).

He contends that the performance of ethnicity as noted in cultural festivals and
parades places ethnicity on display in order to educate non-members, but also to mark
difference. This difference is manipulated and clarified even though many of the rituals
performed at such events may not entail the group’s everyday, private practice.
Moreover, Abrahams states although some groups may have assimilated politically and
economically, they may maintain very distinct social and cultural lives.

Undoubtedly, to study ethnicity today entails the understanding of a diverse range of
practices, each particular to its community. As ethnicity manifests differences, the
examination of its practice reveals the overt and the subtlety of distinction and of
assimilation. An examination of the mundane practices reveals the most intimate aspects
of how ethnicity is enacted, how it is lived. Daily practice also unlocks often overlooked
mechanisms of communication for members within the community as well as for those
outside its membership. Through this dissertation research I examine the daily
mechanisms of the South Asian Muslim community in America hoping to learn more
about practices of assimilation as well as the active social disengagement from the majority society.²

The xenophobia, which occurred in the aftermath of the terroristic events of September 11, 2001, altered the very meanings of immigrant, citizen, Muslim, and American. A complex tension has since developed regarding the manner in which South Asian Muslim Americans create and maintain their ethnicity and the manner in which they are perceived. The tension further underscores the external societal forces of education, politics, and economics upon ethnicity suggesting that the agency of ethnicity is disconnected in part from the individual. The misconceptions about Islam and immigrants emerge from issues of ethnicity and ethnic identity as critical questions requiring more intense study and analysis. For South Asian Muslim Americans, questions are raised concerning their ethnicity, race, religion, and nationality.

In this research I hope to problematize the processes of ethnicity given a sensitized atmosphere by unraveling the multiple threads that surround the concept of ethnicity. Through unraveling the threads of ethnicity, the foundation of ethnic identity simultaneously is dislocated from a singular source and becomes further complicated by societal forces and political agendas. Ethnicity can no longer be considered as originating simply from a culture, homeland, or a heritage; ethnicity must be interrogated as a strategic manifestation of political, social, and class agendas. I believe that an exploration of ethnic identity with a South Asian Muslim American community will

² Assimilation is defined in this dissertation as based upon the classic works and more recent interpretations which understand a processual characteristic of adopting a host society's customs and the resultant change in native practices (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Gordon 1964; Park 1928; Gans 1979; Alba 1997; Purkayastha 2005).
produce a deeper understanding of ethnicity, but it will also foster new theoretical perspectives.

The motivation to work with the South Asian Muslim American community stems from several factors that overlap and intersect in their lives. First, this population contends with a South Asian heritage that often is conflated with India. While it is true that India comprises the most populous nation within the group of South Asian countries, the sheer numbers disguise the numerous religions, languages, and cultures that the region of South Asia incorporates. South Asian identity is often misinterpreted as Indian Hindu identity. As scholars have indicated (Helweg 1990; Hess 1988; Daniels 1989; Takaki 1998) nationalism was an important unifying force for all Asian Indians against the British colonial forces. However, as the Partition of the Subcontinent divided nations along religious lines there is inadequate discussion in the literature as to how this may or may not affect ethnic identity in the diaspora. The majority of those who have migrated from South Asia post-1947 have been from the modern nation-state of India, although there is a dearth of material that justly investigates migration from other areas in South Asia. Such an irregularity in the scholarship appears to equate South Asia with India as if the two were geographically and ideologically one. Edited volumes such as The New Ethnics: Asian Indians in the United States and Tradition and Transformation: Asian Indians in America focus exclusively on the Indian population paying no attention to the other South Asian nations or the diversity within India itself (Saran 1980; Brown 1986). Vijay Prashad clarifies the appropriation of India and Indian-ness in claiming that, “the stain of ancestry and the hegemony of the word ‘India’ remains with us as we seek
to make our own way through the morass of the contemporary world" (Prashad 2000: 2). Given the dominant discourse of India over South Asian American research, it is imperative to broaden the scope and to interrogate this homogenizing effect upon the literature.

Second, misinformation from a variety of sources, including the media in the United States, promotes a popular conception that conflates the nation of Pakistan, the Middle East, and Islam because the community is Muslim. In the US context of discrimination and violence, Muslim has become synonymous with those from the Middle East (Singh 2002). The misunderstanding connotes more than merely lack of information; rather it derived from cold war academic schemas and as the special edition of the Journal of Asian American Studies co-edited by Maira and Shihade on Asian/Arab American Studies details the continuation of the U.S. Empire. Maira and Shihade propose that academic disciplines and area studies define, divide, and determine how we think and study Asian Americans and Muslims, and that the fields of Islam, South Asia, and Asian America Studies have become isolated, separate, and disparate (Maira and Shihade 2006: 121). For this work, such a demarcation places the study of ethnic identity of a particularly Pakistani Muslim American community into distinct categories without a comprehensive examination questioning: how can one be South Asian at one event, American at another, and Muslim at both?

Given the cultural and religious factors shaping the community’s ethnic identity, the third factor is determined by the time period of migration that also influences the conceptual framework of ethnicity for South Asian Muslim Americans. The most
important legislation was the Immigration Act of 1965, which forever changed the face of immigration in the United States. Whereas previous immigration had stipulated fixed quotas by country allowing the vast majority of immigration to come from Europe, the 1965 Act was based on a dual hemisphere allocation opening up the gateways for people from Asia, South America, and Latin America (Daniels 1989; Helweg 1990). In addition to the eradication of quotas the Act also welcomed skilled persons who could fill labor shortages in the U.S. Because the majority of the community migrated after the immigration Act of 1965, the United States welcomed them and their technical expertise. These new educated immigrants arrived at a time when the country was in need of technical and proficient labor and this need marked their racial, religious, cultural differences as immaterial.

The combination of the cultural and religious aspects of South Asian Muslim American identity, joined with the particular point of migration history, drives my motivation to explore the issues of ethnicity with this suburban Pennsylvania community. These different factors of culture, religion, and assimilation assist in shaping an atypical immigrant experience and one that is underrepresented in the literature on ethnicity. Most importantly however, I believe that the socio-political climate in a post 9/11 “war on terror” constitutes an urgency to further critique and elucidate what ethnicity signifies for South Asian Muslim Americans. The study delineates the import of ethnicity on a group whose agency in creating identity is mitigated by global socio-political forces. How does a community whose cultural, religious, and ethnic identity remains under constant scrutiny negotiate a life in the United States? This question involves a
two-pronged inquiry investigating: first, how the manner in which the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have had a negative impact in multiple forms on the community, thereby necessitating a re-examination of the processes of ethnicity that have been altered or subjected to the current age of terrorism; and second, how the timeline of migration after 1965 affects the strategic creation and maintenance of ethnicity again in the current age of terrorism.

*Post September 11 America*

In “Nothing to Write Home About,” Amitava Kumar expresses his concern and fear as he drove on a highway with his wife a few days after the attacks on September 11, 2001. As they stopped for coffee, his wife noted angry graffiti in the women’s room: “America Love It or Leave It” and “No Freeloaders.” Returning to the highway the beauty and calm of the day belied the reality as Kumar noted, “This serenity, so becalming, was deceptive. Like the language of the graffiti, tinged with innocence, it hid a deep disturbance. This disturbance can be given a name: it is nationalism laced with grief and anger. Its assertion of pride is underlined with menace. It serves as a warning to those who would dissent” (Kumar 2002: 48). His account narrates an experience similarly faced by other Muslims in the United States, that of hidden fear and animosity. According to the information on the Council for American – Islamic Relations, Muslim American have increasingly faced discrimination and harassment and in the years of post 9/11 are more apprehensive about their religious identity (*Council on American-Islamic Relations* 2007). Additionally, a Gallup poll conducted and published in 2006,
revealed that nearly forty per cent of Americans admitted to some degree of prejudice against Muslims in the wake of the 2001 terror attacks and would support the government imposing more restrictions on Muslims as a result (Saad 2006).

For the nearly 900,000 Muslim American immigrants the terroristic acts of September 11, 2001 altered their lives as peaceful, successful, and law-abiding citizens. Muslim immigrants arrive in the United States from all over the world but predominately from South Asian and the Middle East. Most are educated with advanced degrees and live successful financially secure lifestyles. Historically of all the Muslim immigrant groups, South Asian Muslims are likely to be among the most successful groups in American society from social and economic perspectives (Schmidt 2004). A recent report conducted by the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C. maintains the total population of Muslims in the U.S. to be approximately 1.4 million. Having interviewed over 60,000 Muslims in the U.S., the research reveals sixty-five percent of the total population of Muslims are immigrants, including eighteen percent hailing from South Asian countries. The majority of American Muslims are financially secure in American society with approximately thirty-five percent per cent of Muslim Americans located in the low income range (earning less than $30,000 annually). Sixty-four per cent of those surveyed reported that they believed in the American hard work and success ethic (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream 2007). The study found that despite their financial success in America, Muslims claim that their lives have become progressively more difficult with government anti-terrorism policies after September 11, 2001 and the rise in the incidences of hate crimes (Singh 2002).
The migration experience alters religious identity in the Islamic community through the addition of national and ethnic fragmentation. A lack of unity divides the black Muslims from immigrant Muslims often creating a tension on issues of authentic Islam (Haddad 2000; McCloud 1994). Ethnicity and religiosity merge in the daily lives of immigrant Muslims creating a space that Schmidt argues is inextricably linked to culture, homeland, language, and nostalgia (Schmidt 2004: 191). Adaptation to a new country and its norms becomes more complicated, if not more difficult. For South Asian Muslims, identity through ethnicity or religion is underscored simultaneously and discriminated by growing tensions on the political landscape. Ethnicity and religion bear the mark of “the other.” When George W. Bush and his administration declared a “war on terror,” life as a Muslim in America was irrevocably changed.

Immediately after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, hundreds of cases of misunderstanding and misidentification reported the abuse, hate crimes, and the wrongful arrest of South Asians, Arabs, and other Muslims (Hate Crimes Up in Wake of Terrorist Attacks 2001). According to the non-governmental group, Human Rights Watch, a long history of violence against Arabs and Muslims existed in the U.S. prior to 2001, however the attacks in September aggravated the intensity and increased the number of incidences (Singh 2002). In many instances, Muslim as category became blurred as a racial marker (Bayoumi 2002: 85 ; Singh 2002). Little or no differentiation was made by the perpetrators of such crimes and instead fear and hatred instigated such attack on individuals disregarding citizenship or faith. The hostility based itself on retaliation against anyone perceived as Muslim and that very often also meant
immigrant and racially non-white. How do we then reconcile the blatant xenophobia in a country whose history was built upon the civil liberties of individual difference, but is stained historically with racial discrimination?

Ideals of the United States from a historical perspective evoke images of immigrants, of diverse backgrounds and unequal stature, bonding together to follow the American dream of freedom and prosperity. Yet, as Behdad argues such historicization of America as the land of immigrants includes an affliction that he terms, ‘historical amnesia’ (Behdad 2005: 2). Behdad claims that the United States engages actively in a project of forgetting – forgetting the limitations of immigration, the economic goals of the state, and the history of race, in order to promote one ideal of national identity.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the first Muslim immigrants, from both the Middle East and South Asia, were targeted as the “other,” and marginalized in a predominately Judeo-Christian constructed society (McCloud 2003). The outsider role combined with a racialized immigrant, foreigner status profoundly impacts the perception of and the creation of an immigrant Muslim identity in the U.S. (Haddad 2000: 23). In addition, events in the U.S. such as the 1985 Oklahoma bombing brought about negative repercussions for Muslim American citizens who faced blame prior to the results of investigation of the guilty parties responsible for the crime was made known (Singh 2002; Haddad 2000). For their part, many Muslim Americans criticized U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East as well as in other parts of the Muslim world for what they interpreted as unjust actions (Haddad 2000; Mamdani 2005).

After 9/11, Behdad notes the swiftness with which the Patriot Act was passed
through legislation and the American public support that it received despite the enormous power it granted the government to interrogate the personal lives of its citizens. Noting the parallels with the Japanese internment during World War II, Amitava Kumar also questions the curtailment of civil liberties in the U.S. inquiring, “should we use race or ethnicity as a substantial factor to subject someone to a search or special surveillance?” (Kumar 2002: 57). Nevertheless, Behdad states that what is remarkable is, “how powerfully the figure of the immigrant-foreigner once again provided the differential other through whose threatening presence a state of emergency was declared” (Behdad 2005: 170). Ultimately, he further claims, “The rhetoric of the immigrant and the foreigner as a threat to democracy and freedom suspended the myth of America as a nation of immigrants until further notice” (171). Mamdani extends the argument by noting that Bush’s remarks about Muslims, he “seemed to assure Americans that ‘good Muslims’ were anxious to clear their names and consciences of this horrible crime and would undoubtedly support ‘us’ in a war against ‘them’” (Mamdani 2005: 15). The U.S. media and its coverage of the terroristic events heightened tensions and demonized Islam distorting facts about the faith (Magliocco 2004). Muslim Americans had to now contend with the justification of their religion alongside their ethnic identity and immigrant status in a society doubtful of their true allegiances.

Nonetheless, for this South Asian Muslim American community primarily from Pakistan, middle and upper middle class life in the birthplace offered limited resources for advancement and many pursued the fulfillment of their dreams overseas. Having migrated shortly after the Immigration Act of 1965, many in the community
persevered in their professional jobs and were able to achieve financial success. With the successes of migration ensured, individuals sought others like them, South Asian and Muslim, and began bonding into a community desiring to raise their children as Muslims religiously and South Asian ethnically. This community desired to maintain a specific identity as South Asian Muslim American, despite the obstacles that identity bore.

**Diasporas and Transnationalism**

This study essentially concerns a group of immigrants who have actively created a community and a life for themselves in America. Such an examination of ethnic life of a South Asian immigrant community necessitates a discussion of their lives in the diasporic and transnational context. However, in the literature on diaspora, an unclear confluence of ideas occurs in reference to ideas of transnationalism, immigration/migration and globalization raising the following questions: *How is the transnational community different from the diasporic community? And can people in the diasporic context be referred to as immigrants?*

The movement of peoples has long been analyzed and the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois with his concept of ‘double consciousness’ and Randolph Bourne both reflect the plurality of identity that is produced from the interaction of multiple locales (Du Bois 1996). Bourne, in particular, is perhaps the first to use the term ‘transnational’ in his essay *"Trans-National America"* discussing World War I. First published in *Atlantic Monthly* in July 1916, Bourne opposed the idea of the United States (a predominately Anglo-Saxon nation at the time) as the melting pot and maintained that immigrant
differences should be used to benefit the nation. Although he only considered European immigration, he urged America to “make something of this transnational spirit” (Bourne 1999: 122) since it is “our lot … to be a federation of cultures” (115).

Bourne's early ideas of transnationalism engages movement of groups from one place to another and along with much of the scholarship following nearly a hundred years later, the core of the discussion focused on the nation. Most authors theorize the difference based upon the conceptual frame of the nation arguing that diasporas form a key juncture on which multiple nation states and their identities can be articulated whereas transnationalism thus can be a medium for redefining diasporas beyond the movement from one nation to another (Smith 1987; Safran 1991; Schiller and Fouron 2001).

Diasporas remain distinct communities in their host nation with continual interactions, political and/or metaphorical, with their previous home. A historicized past (one that can be given specificities of time) and "a strong tie to the past or a block to assimilation in the present and future must exist in order to permit a diasporic consciousness to emerge or be retained" (Cohen 1997: 24). Therefore, the consideration of the South Asian Muslim American community as a diaspora delineates their ethnicity from a religious perspective, one in which the Islamic nation is state-less and borderless, but does possess a historicized heritage. The claim to belonging to a religious diaspora does not imply forced dispersal in the case of this community; rather the religious heritage shares a cultural legacy that is both South Asian and Muslim.

Diasporas are groups with identities based on past histories and futures that are connected to each other in a cyclical manner, but the very reasons that mark a group
diasporic from other groups also distinguishes them from within the diaspora category. Diasporas may move from one nation to another; however the impetus to leave is unique for every group. Floya Anthias critiques diaspora literature in her 1998 article, “Evaluating Diaspora,” in which she argues that diasporas, “are not homogeneous for the movements of populations may have taken place at different historical periods and for different reasons, and different countries of destination provided different social conditions, opportunities and exclusions … the diaspora is constituted as much in difference and division as it is in commonality and solidarity” (Anthias 1998:564).

Because the nature of leaving can be forced or voluntary, for persecution or for economic gain, the end result as diaspora is not enough to establish similarities between groups. Such a notion presupposes that all diasporas are essentially the same despite the histories and reasons for dispersal and overlooks the processes of becoming diasporas (Anthias 1998; Clifford 1994; Gilroy 1993).

A critique of recent literature indicates a lack of adequate analysis of diasporas along gender, race and class lines. Such an absence leaves the reader with a specific understanding of diaspora that of the male-centered lower class. Class, in socio-economic terms, not only differentiates diasporas from each other but also regulates the receptive climate from the host nation. Anthias pointedly asks, “what are the commonalities between a North Indian upper-class Oxford-educated university teacher and a Pakistani grocer or waiter?” (Anthias 2001: 270). The question centers on not only the difference between the two individuals but also on what their relationship is within the host society and hence, within a diaspora.
Taking into account the multiple layers of diaspora, we can begin to conceptualize a definitional frame for diasporas based on the issues of the group’s origin, memories, identity, gender, and class. New scholarship continues to re/define the boundaries of diasporas as economic and political events reverberate changes in our social climates. However, it is critical to take into account the fluidities of each characteristic within and among diaspora communities. The Boyarins underscore the multiple layers of meaning for diasporas: “Diasporic identity is a disaggregated identity … it is not national, it is not genealogical, not religious, but all of these in dialectical tension with one another” (Boyarin 1993: 721).

For this community, predominantly from Pakistan, migration occurred in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. During these years General Ayub was in power and Pakistan had close ties with the U.S., but the country had been defeated by the civil war between East and West Pakistan. As a result, the government was overwhelmed politically and economically. As Ziring points out, “Post-civil war Pakistan needed recreating” (Ziring 2003:130). As Zulfikar Ali Bhutto took the reigns, an unstable economy and government served as the major impetus for middle class and upper middle class educated elite to migrate. Despite leaving a politically tumultuous nation state on their own volition, many in the community remain ideologically tied to the nation of Pakistan, often retaining dual citizenship.

In contrast to the concept of diaspora, transnationalism indicates larger forces of movement and globalization resulting in a more nuanced approach to people and the nation state. In a transnational context, immigrant groups have the potential to
undergo the process of assimilation in a manner that is distinct from diasporas (Gabaccia 1999). With economic and familial links and advances in telecommunication technology and travel, South Asians in the U.S. remain tied to their birthplace, culture, and religion. The South Asian Muslim Americans in suburban Philadelphia also constitute a transnational community simultaneously based upon their national solidarity and connectedness to Pakistan primarily but to India as well. As Arjun Appadurai argues, the global economy is negotiated through a set of disjunctures, or –scapes, that flow and are shaped by various contexts (Appadurai 1996). These ‘–scapes’ form the foundation for the imagined world, one that anchors social practices and social agency and in the situation of an immigrant community, plays a critical role in the production of ethnic identity. Critical to this theory is the decentralization of community; immigrants’ lives can no longer be considered fixed or essentialized, rather their identities are emergent and nuanced (Raj 2003).

The location of the South Asian Muslim community life in suburban Philadelphia thus places them as skilled and educated individuals, culturally linked South Asians, and American citizens. Islamic culture, frequent travel, social practices, language, dress and with the nations of India and/or Pakistan substantiates their status as both a diasporic and a transnational community. The claim to an Islamic legacy, and one that is specifically a South Asian Islamic heritage, connects many of the community’s members in a Muslim diaspora. Within the diasporic space, everyone is united as Muslim brothers and sisters and Arabic serves as the lingua franca. Yet, a globalized economy and advanced technology collapse spatial distances creating a transnational community.
simultaneously. As distances are abbreviated, one can negotiate multiple identities – Muslim, Pakistani, Punjabi, American, etc. all on the same transnational landscape. While it may appear to be conceptually and theoretically problematic to be a diaspora and a transnational people concurrently, I suggest an examination of ethnic practices holds the key to disclosing the nuanced variation of the strategic negotiation within the community as it also reveals the nuanced and stratified layers of the community’s identity.

**Methodology**

The research was conducted over a period of fifteen months and was divided into two sections of personal interviews and participant observation. The interviews were scheduled with individuals or with couples in advance and often occurred in their homes. After basic information was obtained concerning the history of migration, i.e., date of migration, motivations for migration, occupation, etc., a series of open-ended questions was asked in order to focus more on individual aspirations and outlooks. These questions often centered on how people maintained their ethnicity by discussing practices related to religion and/or culture. Plans for the future and questions on raising children in the U.S. were also asked. Each individual was also asked to detail any incidents of discrimination after 9/11 and to discuss any changes in their viewpoint or any changes in their religious or cultural practices. Each individual was also asked to describe their ethnic identity which often juggled the terms American, Pakistani, and Muslim. A total of fourteen interviews were taped recorded and transcribed and notes were taken during the
other 31 interviews. English served as the medium of communication primarily, with the majority of interviews alternating between English and Urdu. A few interviews were conducted entirely in Urdu during which notes were handwritten.

Participant observation occurred at two sites on a regular basis: at the mosque on Sundays during the sessions of Islamic school and the home of one of the women in the community when the weekly Quranic study was scheduled. At Sunday school, when the children were in classes I would observe the lessons and talk with many of the parents waiting at the mosque. These conversations often centered on issues of the day, politics, family, community life. Men and women equally participated in the Sunday school as well as general mosque activities allowing me the opportunity to speak with both genders. All notes taken here were handwritten. The second site of observation was the weekly Quranic Study group that took place at the home of Hafsa and which forms the central theme of Chapter Four. After an initial meeting with Hafsa, I gained permission from the rest of the group to attend the meetings as a researcher. Here I was strictly observing and taking notes and did not participate in the discussion with comments or with questions.

_Framework of Study_

The dissertation consists of four chapters that separately address key aspects of the South Asian Muslim American experience in suburban Philadelphia and collectively offer an overview of the community. Each chapter begins with the personal narrative of one of the Islamic Society's members. These individuals and their struggles and
accomplishments reflect and highlight the universal moments shared by everyone in the community. Chapter One details the community history through the migration narratives of both those who were among the first to arrive in Philadelphia and the central figures of the community, those individuals and families who organized the foundation of the mosque. This chapter begins with an overview of the broad migration patterns and ends with individual narrative in order to emphasize the similarities within the community in terms of history, education, motivations, and future goals. The main themes of family, education, and financial security link the separate families within the framework of ethnicity signifying the practices important in their lives. Chapter One also serves as the introduction to the central question of the dissertation, namely: what does ethnicity mean in the lives of South Asian Muslim Americans?

Chapter Two engages the study of ethnicity from a historical perspective and from its current sources. By rethinking what previous studies on ethnicity have taught us and to where we now need to turn our attention, this chapter takes account of the literature on ethnicity in Folklore, Sociology, and Anthropology. Chapter Two also suggests the strengths and weaknesses in the literature as it relates to the South Asian Muslim American community in general and in the post 9/11 socio-political climate of terrorism.

With Chapters One and Two establishing the history of the community and the literature review of ethnicity, Chapter Three examines ethnicity in the community’s daily lives through an examination of the practices in which they engage. The theoretical framework developed in this chapter follows Pierre Bourdieu’s consideration of society and the role of class. The theoretical analysis of the forms of capital and power
revisit the main themes of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage in practice as
detailed in rituals of dress, food, language, and religion. Chapter Three presents an
alternative method for rethinking practices in ethnic identity creation through the lens of
acquiring capital on the fields of home, mosque, and the public sphere vis-à-vis the
significance of class.

Chapter Four combines theoretical analysis with ethnographic research by closely
examining one practice that many of the community’s women participate in, the dars.
The dars, or Quranic study, unites the women each week for religious education and
serves a space for narratives of ethnicity while the women share and correlate the
teachings of Islam with their lives as South Asians in America. A more careful
consideration of the group proposes an intimate look at first generation immigrants, while
a folkloristic approach explores the stories shared among the women as they establish a
life and raise their children in the United States.

The concluding chapter summarizes the work highlighting the individual components
and connects the work through the main theoretical themes. In addition, the conclusion
begins the discussion of assessing its place in the current field of folklore research on
ethnicity and South Asian Muslim Americans.

Self in Fieldwork

“They grilled me about my motivations and purposes, questioned my relationships
with informants, and demanded to know how I would use the data,” Patricia Zavella
writes in Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork (Zavella 1996: 150). In her essay she
details her struggles as a Chicana woman working with other Chicana women arguing that what she thought would be a privileged role as insider, actually had more problems than she expected. In the same collection, Jayati Lal also works with people of her ethnic heritage for her dissertation research, discovering that as she asked more questions of others she continuously needed to ask herself, “How do I know?” (Lal 1996: 188).

I read both articles while writing my proposal for this dissertation and while many questions were asked, they were mostly by me to myself. The research forced a reflexive critique of my position(s) within and outside of the community. My own immigration narrative trails the footsteps of my father whose career and educational aspirations led to him to the United States in 1973. He desired a more ambitious career and better education for my sister and me. His unexpected death did not cut short his dreams as my mother struggled to ensure our future and our education in America.

My mother is a very well respected member of the Islamic Society. Not only is she an admired, well-liked and active member of this mosque, but since we have lived in the Philadelphia area since 1976, she also knows and has relationships with a large portion of the suburban South Asian community, both Muslim and non-Muslim. She raised her two daughters, myself being the eldest, by herself after the death of my father in 1979 and received a great deal of support from the community. As an active member she hosted the weddings of her children herself inviting several hundred people to each. Her role and place in the community is of utmost importance to her as exemplified by her initial disdain when I married a non-South Asian, since her concerns centered on what the community would think.
All of these details attest to the fact that she is a prominent member of this Islamic society and the larger community as well. Therefore, my position within the community is first and foremost as that of her daughter. Even when my marriage to a non-South Asian, white, American man took place, the community rallied around my mother and hosted showers, and henna-parties in celebration. The underlying text was that the obligation existed to support my mother, Saboohi, despite personal opinions. That was nearly thirteen years ago, however, and when she more recently planned my sister’s wedding to a Pakistani, the community again hosted wedding showers in addition to henna parties, with the same underlying intentions. This time though even as my sister married within the community, the festivities were more to celebrate my mother’s accomplishments in finding a suitable spouse for her daughter and to fulfill social obligations to her, not necessarily to my sister.

As my mother’s daughter, I received considerable support from most members, if not all. I conducted my research through personal interviews and through participant observation of mosque meetings, weekly religious and social gatherings, and the Sunday school at the mosque. With my ability to converse in fluent Urdu/Hindi, I was able to maintain dialogue in interviews and to follow conversations during participant-observation sessions, which additionally provided a level of familiarity and intimacy.

The problems that I encountered centered on gathering information that people considered personal, such as issues regarding marriage, children, dating. I often felt that perhaps I would be able to learn more if I were not a member of the community or my mother’s daughter. Specifically, there have been a few divorce cases and
unaccepted inter-racial marriages among individuals with whom the members of the community no longer keep contact or even discuss openly. I also was unable to adequately address second generation issues within the community due to a shortage of available second generation individuals despite my attempts to meet them and contact them by telephone and email. Although I could not otherwise prove it, my sense was that the second generation did not want to speak with me because I had already met with their parents, which in turn could have provoked some apprehensions about my project.

Zavella and Lal both call attention to issues of gender, class and power within the framework of ethnography. My gender was a great aid in my dealings with women and at the same time did not prevent me with meeting with the community’s male members. Since the majority of the members of the community and I share similar education and class backgrounds, there was no discrepancies in our histories to work through in my contacts with them. The dynamics of power presented me as the younger person, my mother’s daughter, and I was expected to follow the protocols of age order to prevent an imbalance in power from some who were not familiar with the dissertation process.

Ultimately, my position as a Pakistani Muslim American and a married woman with children from within the community allowed me preferential access and a level of intimacy that otherwise may have been difficult to obtain. I was sensitive through the process of fieldwork of the ways in which my position impacts the narratives of migration history or the stories of ethnicity and I this in the final conclusions. The ethnographic process was one of joy and excitement as everyone supported my work with pride, as I was the daughter of this community.
Conclusion

Beginning with an examination of the field of ethnicity presents a strong foundation for current and future research; however, as this study indicates past research falls short of theoretically and practically engaging the South Asian Muslim America community. Not only does the dearth of literature hinder our understanding, it fails to complicate the precarious position of South Asian Muslims within the post-cold war academy. Not entirely South Asian under the dominant Indian classification, not Middle Eastern by culture or language, but Muslim by faith and American by nationality, this community blurs simple definitional categories. Further obscuring matters is the issue of class; the lack of a comprehensive class analysis only promotes the analytical gap and ignores the fissure within the South Asian Muslim immigrant community in the United States. This dissertation adds to the field of ethnicity studies and folklore, as well as area studies, through its attempt to weave together disparate threads of religion, ethnicity, and citizenship. The current environment in the United States that is rife with political tensions of a war on terror necessitates a re-examination of the meaning and implications of a South Asian Muslim American’s ethnicity.
Chapter One: Community

“As the longer we stayed (in America), the quicker our suitcases got unpacked when we got back (from trips to Pakistan).”

Asif 2004

Asif left Pakistan to study engineering at the University of Oklahoma and by 1969, he had completed his studies and relocated to a job in Chicago. In 1975 he was working in California when he returned to Pakistan to get married and his wife, Ruksana, joined him in the United States. Ruksana had studied medicine in Pakistan and soon obtained a residency position in 1976 at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia. Initially they lived in the city, but by 1978, they moved to the suburbs and started a family. Their two friends from California had also moved east, one to New Jersey and another to New York, but Asif and Ruksana did not know many South Asian Muslims in the Philadelphia area. As practicing Muslims they attended prayer services at Temple University and began meeting other South Asian Muslims. Asif recalls that in the late 1970’s and the early 1980’s, “More engineers from Pakistan and India came to work at the … nuclear power plant” (Asif 2004). Asif was contacted by Mujeeb in 1979, another South Asian Muslim from Uganda, who had searched the phone book and found Asif’s name. Mujeeb then introduced Asif and Ruksana to Jameel, a devout Muslim from Pakistan, who had begun organizing Ramadan prayers in his home basement and
encouraged everyone he met to join him. Within a few years a small network of families formed a community of their own.

When Asif and Ruksana migrated as a couple to the United States, they left Pakistan with the plan of returning once their career goals had been accomplished. As the years went by Asif and Ruksana’s lives became rooted in the U.S. and they no longer wished to go back. Asif stated, “The longer we stayed (in the U.S.), the quicker our suitcases got unpacked when we got back (from trips to Pakistan)” (Asif 2004). Ruksana added, “Now our children are staying (in the U.S.) so we must stay” (Ruksana 2004).

Like many of his peers in the 1960’s, Asif left Pakistan in order to further his education and secure a financially solid future. His, as well as Ruksana’s migration narrative, reflects the shared themes of career and financial aspiration, education and success, family and culture. While the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 facilitated migration to the United States from all over the world, it had a particularly important impact upon South Asian migration with the removal of quotas (Najam 2006). The pull factors of education and financial success fostered Pakistani and Indian Muslim migration typifying patterns of those pursuing the allure of prosperity in a depressed and unstable home economy (Dahya 1974; Oomen 1996). As a result professional and skilled South Asian immigrants moved abroad in record numbers and their dreams of success paralleled those of other immigrants in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s such as the Jews, the Irish, and the Polish (Cohen 1997; Sanjek 1998). For South Asians post 1965 immigration was a desired goal and was not an outcome of forced expulsion, oppression,

3 Many South Asian Muslims perform additional prayers, known as taraweeh, in the evening during the holy month of Ramadan in the Muslim calendar.
or war, yet all immigrants share the hopes of better futures (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Cohen 1997).

In more recent years, the United States witnessed the arrival of immigrant healthcare professionals from the Dominican Republic, South Korea and Taiwan that arrived in soon after Medicare legislation was signed by President Johnson in 1965 (Sanjek 1998; Daniels and Graham 2001). Similar to the South Asians, these immigrants also came to the U.S. anticipating financial stability and success. As Hing notes, immigration policies reflected the needs of the United States which shifted the quota numbers for visas from the years of 1965 to 1990 (Hing 2004, 1993). However, for the first time, the Immigration Act of 1965 made allowances for family reunification which enabled a continued chain of migration. Both the change in visa quotas and family reunification impacted who migrated from South Asia as well as their motivations for migration.

The community is united collectively through their past experiences but also their future hopes. Individuals seeking the familiar connected with each other on the juncture of religion, culture, and migration to form a community that was distinctly South Asian Muslim American. Therefore, in interviewing the members of the Islamic Society on their migration histories, the set of questions centered on their motivations to leave as well as their motivations to settle in America. In other words, what motivates an individual to leave voluntarily a life with family and friends and to embark on a journey to a foreign land with many unknowns? What motivates an individual to remain in a new land and to rebuild a life despite harsh difficulties?

Chapter One introduces the community through their own accounts of relocation and begins the discussion of ethnicity, migration, and the South Asian American Muslim
community in suburban Philadelphia. The narrative of migration that belongs to Asif and Ruksana and their friends resonates within the Islamic Society, shaping the history of the community. The histories chosen exemplify the experiences of those that were the first to arrive in the U.S. and those that were critical in forming the Islamic Society. The combination of narratives sketches a historical frame of individual and community migration while presenting the main themes of ethnic identity creation and preservation. These themes, embodied in such practices as socializing, praying, and raising children together are introduced here and resonate with other Asian American immigrant experiences in the United States. The subsequent chapters provide discussion and analysis at length and offer insight into the unique characteristics of the South Asian Muslim migration history. The detailed histories are written in order to bring alive each individual whose thoughts and words will be developed throughout the dissertation. Lastly, I have changed each respondent’s name to protect his or her identity and to maintain confidentiality.

Divided into three parts, Chapter One concentrates on the theme of migration. Part One offers an overview of the global movement by South Asians with a concentration on U.S. immigration post 1965. By contextualizing the migration patterns historically, I initiate the discussion of the impact of socio-political conditions affecting the push to leave and the pull to stay. Part Two highlights the migration narratives of the first South Asian Muslims to Philadelphia and the narratives of those individuals that were instrumental in the founding of the Islamic Society. The narratives are grouped according to time of migration, which also coincides with the degree of involvement with the founding of the Islamic Society. Those that were among the first to arrive in the U.S.,
during the years of 1953 to the early 1970’s, were not directly a part of building the community that is now known as the Islamic Society, whereas successive groups of individuals who migrated in the 1970’s and the early 1980’s were more actively engaged in the development of the Islamic Society. Part Three comprises the development of the Islamic Society and their mosque. This last section details the history of how this community formed their organization and their identity in Philadelphia.

In sum, Chapter One contends with South Asian migration, moving from the broad migration patterns to the individual narrative. The words of community members relay the majority of the chapter presenting an account that strives to remain close to these remembrances of events. This is their story and every attempt has been made to tell it in their words. The importance of maintaining the narrative from the individual’s perspective underscores what Jeff Todd Titon asserts, “The life story tells who one thinks one is and how one thinks one came to be that way” (Titon 1980: 290). This approach allows for a closer analysis of how ethnic identity is created and maintained. Many of the interviews were conducted in English as previously noted in the Introduction’s methodology section, and others were conducted in Urdu. However, even with the interviews in English, it was understood that the respondent and I could engage in Urdu conversation and many times, there would be Urdu phrases mixed in with the English. For clarity, I have translated the Urdu phrases in some instances and in other cases the translation is in a footnote in order to maintain the integrity of the narrative.

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4 In this chapter, I have made note of patterns within the community, however I have also endeavored to preserve the personal and individual nature of each migration narrative.
While the context was initially scheduled to be a formal interview, conversation about migration led to an informal account chronicling their journey to America. As previously noted, the narrative was told and understood within a South Asian migration experience. The context of the narrative in addition to the similarities in the stories reflects the community’s collective tradition. The narratives form a mode of expressing the personal but also the concepts and values the group holds as significant (Brown 1990; Stahl 1977). Thus these narratives embody the cultural and religious values of the community as they relate the story of migration and as Sims asserts, “The narrative itself, the storytelling context, community aesthetics, and the message communicated by the narrative are factors that help us see personal narratives as folklore” (Sims and Stephens 2005: 171).

The stories of migration were narratives which involved both the telling and the listening within a specific contextualized framework (Langellier and Peterson 2004). As individuals told their stories to me, the narrative was framed in the understanding that I too experienced a similar migration account as a South Asian Muslim in America. As a result, themes of personal struggle were detailed whereas issues within the current community were discussed more broadly. Following Wolf-Knuts’ methodology in which she interviews individuals about their emigration experience and states, “When I asked the informants to talk about their emigration, they saw a piece of their lives in their mind’s eye, a piece that they evaluated as fit to be shared with another person” (Wolf-Knuts 2003: 103). Often though, these narratives had not been previously articulated to anyone, not even to their children. One woman thanked me after the interview for allowing her and her husband to revisit a period of their lives almost forgotten. Busy in their work and raising their family, she exclaimed, “We haven’t thought about those days
for thirty years!” (Badar 2004). While no two personal narratives were identical, they shared an overarching outline that spoke of the community’s history and of their present life.

This community’s migration narratives resonate with other immigrant groups chronicling the pattern of struggle, success, and continuation (Myerhoff 1980; Hoffman 1990; Bettinger-Lâopez 2000; Scott 2006; Schely-Newman 2002). Ethnic and religious differences heighten the tensions between assimilation into the majority and preservation of a religious and cultural identity. While working with the Cuban Jewish community in Miami, Florida Bettinger-Lopez examines the shifts in identity over time as the migrants established a space of their own in America. While initially many left Cuba concerned foremost with their national and political identity, once in the United States the establishment of their Jewish identity became paramount. As the years passed and their stay in Miami solidified, “...the Cuban-Jews defined an entirely new space in which they could grow as a distinct community. In that community, their Cuban and Jewish roots melded, shaping each other in intricate and indistinguishable ways” (Bettinger-Lâopez 2000: 35). Like the Cuban Jewish community, the South Asian Muslims in Philadelphia faced parallel challenges also forcing them to strategically negotiate multiple roles and identities particularly in relationship to family, culture, and religion.

Most importantly however, while these narratives echo the difficulties of all immigrants, the stories of accomplishment and continued success are remarkable. The migration narratives of the South Asian Muslim American community in Philadelphia correlate with other immigrants seeking better opportunities in the United States, but unlike the immigrants of previous generations, these immigrants arrived equipped with
education and language. Through their career and financial success, the community actively made their accomplishments visible in American society. Paradoxically, this visibility also assisted the community in preserving religion and culture and a sense of invisibility in spite of the harsh realities of a post September 11 environment in the United States, one that instilled in Muslim immigrants a sense of fear. As the narratives reflect, negotiating identity for this group of South Asian Muslim Americans was facilitated by their point of migration in the years after the 1965 Immigration Act, their education and professional skills, and their placement in the middle to upper middle class American society. Enmeshed within a successful life and social position, the majority of the community members, were able to strategically avoid scrutiny and maintain a level of invisibility.

PART ONE

Overview of South Asian Migration History

Migration all over the world is not a new phenomenon and people have been in motion for centuries traveling and residing in the different geographical areas. Trade and religious proselytism were two main instigators for moving even as early as the 5th century B.C., which is often misunderstood as a period where people lived in isolation. People from the Indian subcontinent have been on the move for centuries traveling and residing in the different geographical areas all over the world, particularly when trade between India and the regions of the Middle East and Africa increased (Helweg and Helweg 1990).
The first major wave of contemporary emigration out of the South Asian subcontinent was not until the nineteenth century when systematic migration arose in the form of indentured labor as a result of the Industrial Revolution. The abolishment of slavery in the British Empire in 1834, and later by the French in 1848 and the Dutch in 1863, led to a shortage of labor, particularly on plantations in the colonies. New sources of labor had to be found and India with its growing population became an optimal site for recruitment.\(^5\) Indentured labor in many ways replaced the losses from the abolishment of slavery (Tinker 1974) and was widespread all over the European colonies including, but not limited to, Fiji, islands in the Caribbean, South Africa, and Mauritius with the highest Indian population (Peach 1994).\(^6\) Although the contract was often limited to ten years of service and the end goal for people was to return to India financially in a better position than when they had left, very often many stayed in the service countries. Leaving for the unknown kept the numbers emigrating from India relatively small and overall, “emigration was never popular; it was always a process fraught with suspicion and peril, both from the standpoint of the emigrant and of society ... even when material prosperity does result from overseas employment it is received by ambivalence by society in the subcontinent” (Ray 1993).

The second major wave of South Asian emigration began with the demise of the indentured system and the rise of the industrialized world at the end of World War II.

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\(^5\) Even though the labor was limited by contract, with specific periods of service, abuse of the contract was widespread and Peach emphasizes the nature of the emigration by stating, “indentured migration must, therefore be seen as part of the imperialist and capitalist core-periphery relationship” (Peach 1994: 40).

\(^6\) How these countries responded to the migration varied from places like Fiji which had exclusive political and economic control in the hands of native Fijians only, or Sri Lanka which placed Indians at the bottom of their social hierarchy to the African countries such as Uganda or Guyana where citizenship and land ownership was possible (Peach 42).
Post-war Britain faced a severe labor shortage, which aided in the immigration of the largest number of South Asians living outside of the Subcontinent. The Helwegs further specify the movement from India to Britain to be based on, “an admiration for their former rulers. Sikh Jats from Punjab and later Patels from Gujarat dominated the population flow from India to England, which was curtailed by the passage of pieces of legislation beginning in 1962” (Helweg and Helweg 1990: 23).

In addition, it is important to note that migration was not always a one-way transition from the subcontinent to countries abroad. In the case of Uganda, many Indians who were living prosperously were expelled by the government of Idi Amin and forced to relocate which many did either to the U.S. or to England (Helweg 1990). Their relocation often labels them as ‘twice migrants’ since the migration history compromises more than one move to different countries, but never back to South Asia. While international migration theories account for multiple motivations and reasons including wages, labor, and individual opportunities, Massey et. al. argue that all market and political forces must be taken into account with individual and household agency. The dynamic relationship amongst all the individual motivations and external influences actually is the driving force of international migration (Massey et al. 1993).

South Asian Migration History to the United States

The migration of Indians to North America was also spurred by the demand for labor in the late 1800’s. Most Asian Indians from the agriculturist or laboring class arrived in the U.S. through Vancouver, Canada lured by work in the Canadian railway and steamship operations (Hess 1988). While many of the migrants were Sikh, there were
Hindus and Muslim men as well that moved from Canada into the U.S. looking for work after Canada curtailed their immigration policies.

In the U.S., regardless of their religious orientation, the South Asians were collectively referred to as ‘the Hindus’ or ‘Hindoos.’ Along the West coast states of Washington and California, jobs were available in the lumber mills and on farms in the first few years after 1900. Even though they were able to obtain work, white workers, fearing they would lose their jobs to the new source of cheap labor, raided the homes of the Asian Indians forcing them to flee for their lives (Daniels 1989; Hess 1988). Such events brought national attention for the first time to Asian Indian immigration and the result was stricter laws limiting the numbers of new immigrants. The problem climaxed in 1907 and the years succeeding witnessed strict legislation restricting the number of new arrivals based on the fear of the ‘Hindu invasion.’ Discussions of limiting the Asian Indian immigration and granting those that were already in the U.S. citizenship rights was complicated by issues of race. A law passed in 1790 had guaranteed citizenship to whites but the question remained if Asian Indians could be considered ‘white’? Since Asian Indians were considered from the Aryan stock, legislation in 1923 had to be reworked in order to specify citizenship for those from European lineage only (Takaki 1998). Denial of the ability to own property was another affront to Asian Indians who worked under exploitative conditions on California farms.

Further anti-immigration sentiment prevented women from India from joining their husbands in the U.S. In addition, laws in California prevented Asian Indian men from marrying white women (Takaki 1998). Some men did form relationships with Mexican women creating a new ethnic community that melded two different cultures together
These circumstances coupled with prejudice and hard working conditions forced many to return home to India and for those that remained the situation changed very little.

Nationalist activity on the part of Asian Indians in the U.S., for those fighting for freedom from the British in India, helped them gain support for their own cause. Political pressure repealed exclusionary legislation allowing an annual quota of a hundred new immigrants yearly and eligibility for citizenship in 1946. After becoming citizens, men were finally able to send for their families to join them increasing the population of the community (Hess 592).

The next major legislation was the Immigration Act of 1965, which forever changed the face of immigration in the United States. Whereas previous immigration had stipulated fixed quotas by country allowing the vast majority of immigration to come from Europe, the 1965 Act was based on a dual hemisphere allocation opening up the gateways for people from Asia, South America, and Latin America (Helweg and Helweg 1990; Daniels 1989). In addition to the eradication of quotas the Act also welcomed skilled persons who could fill labor shortages in the U.S. This clause created the influx of highly talented South Asians known as the ‘Brain Drain’ (Oomen 1996). The trend of educated South Asians continued until a recent decline; the lower figures may reflect the increased number of family members joining those already established in the U.S. (Helweg and Helweg).

*Census 2000 Data on South Asian Americans*
The Census 2000 offers the most recent and perhaps most accurate data on South Asian Americans particularly since for the first time, ‘Asian’ was listed as a separate racial category and respondents had the option of specifying more than one racial group. The census report states, “The term Asian refers to people having origins in any of the original peoples from the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. Asian groups are not limited to nationalities but include ethnic terms as well …” (Reeves 2004). For example, one may choose Asian Indian\(^7\) alone but another could opt for Asian in combination with another racial category. Such distinctions present more information on the various ethnicities of the racial group; however the Census Bureau does not aggregate South Asian as a racial category (Khandhar 2005).

Even though the Census only reflects those that completed the report and does not include undocumented individuals, it remains an important source of information on South Asians in the U.S. The report lists 69.5% of all Asians are foreign born and of that percentage, 71.4% of Asian Indians and 64.2% of Pakistanis fall into the work force age range between 18 to 64 years with close to 67% married. In Pakistani households in particular, 76% were married-couple families with an average of 3.8 people living in one home. The period for the most extensive migration for Asian Indians and Pakistanis came after 1990. When asked about language skills, only 23.1% of Asian Indians and 31.7% of Pakistanis spoke a non-English language at home and had “less than ‘very well’” English abilities. This information correlates to the fact that 63.9% of Asian Indians and 54.3% of Pakistanis had a Bachelor’s degree or more for the population 25

\(^7\) Asian Indian is the designation used by the Census Bureau for people from the nation of India.
and older, with 59.9% of Asian Indians and 43.5% of Pakistanis working in management or professional careers.

Locally, in the greater Philadelphia and New Jersey metropolitan areas, the figures reflect similar patterns according to Khandar’s calculations. The majority of South Asians in Philadelphia and outlying suburbs live in Philadelphia and Montgomery counties. The percentage of South Asians claiming English proficiency is 71.9% and a remarkable 74.5% have had some form of college education. This is in large contrast to 50.6% of all Philadelphia Metropolitan residents who have had some form of college education. Nearly 60% work in professional positions in healthcare, management, and sales with 27% of all South Asians earning an average household income from $75,000 to $150,000 annually.

Even though the Census reports must be read judiciously, the figures do present a profile of South Asians in the U.S. and in the Philadelphia area as educated, professional, and earning above average income. Most are married and have children, adhering to a nuclear family lifestyle. Additionally, The New York Times reported that Pakistanis in the United States prospered economically and culturally and desired to remain as U.S. citizens (MacFarquhar 2006). These patterns correspond to the lives of the members of the Islamic Society highlighting the ambitions of career, finance, and family. Nearly all of the people that migrated from India or Pakistan were married either before they came or married soon after establishing themselves in the U.S. With the exception of one family from Uganda, all of the people that I interviewed chose to leave out of a desire to further their careers and to advance their economic situations. Moreover, all of the
individuals were deeply devoted to their families both here in the U.S as well as the extended family in South Asia.

PART TWO

_Early Migration Patterns of Islamic Society_

The economic outlook in Pakistan in the 1960’s and the 1970’s was uncertain with the country in political upheaval (Ziring 1971). The period was witness to the shifts in power from parliamentary democracy to martial law and from politicians to generals. The end of British rule in the Subcontinent created the nation of Pakistan with two separate physical territories and a populace of divergent ethnicities with little connecting them. By 1971 civil war that erupted between East Pakistan and West Pakistan as well as tensions with India had left the nation with an unstable economy and an angry frustrated populace (Ziring 2003). Pakistan struggled between democracy, martial law, and Islamic Shariah\(^8\) to find its place in the world and against other nations including the United States. As Ziring notes, “Pakistani young people were largely dissatisfied with their lot and heavily influenced by leftist ideas in one side and Islamist callings on the other … While the rich acquired still greater wealth, poverty and illiteracy weighed heavy on the masses …” (Ziring 2003). As a result, many who were from middle class and upper middle class backgrounds longed for economic and financial security and with advanced education degrees began searching for opportunities abroad. The pursuit for

\(^8\) Islamic law
advancement in other countries coincided with the changes in U.S. immigration laws opening doors for those with technical and medical training. Many believed that migration was the way to financial stability - if they could find work and save money in America, they could then return to Pakistan with security.

Unlike the New York City metropolitan area, Philadelphia was not a primary destination for South Asian Americans when the major migration began after 1965 (Gibson 1999). The migration histories of the first people in the suburban outlying regions of the city reveal how few South Asians had settled in the area in the early 1960's. While these new migrants were happy to be in the position of fulfilling their dreams financially, they still faced challenges in rebuilding a life in the U.S. The lack of family support and the struggles raising children in a new country led to feelings of isolation. Sowell also contends that migration bears great difficulties in his assertion that, "among the heaviest costs of all are the severing of personal ties in familiar surroundings to face new economic and social uncertainties in a strange land" (Sowell 1996).

The migration pattern for the members of the Islamic Society demonstrates very similar marks of motivations for leaving and reasons for staying on in the United States. All of the people that I met and talked with disclosed the same desire for advancement - whether that of career, education, or even just of lifestyle. When each one left their home in Pakistan or India, they left to search for something more and frequently many of them thought they would return but never did. Their narratives reflect the recurring themes of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage that center this dissertation.

The following narratives from Hamid, Ghalib, Abbas, and Waleed illustrate the enthusiasm of the first few young Pakistanis to start a new life in America in the 1960's
and the motivations to remain. I detail their migration narratives in this section because they are the earliest migrants and in later chapters return to their words to discuss issues of ethnic identity and the community.

Hamid

Hamid is perhaps the first person to migrate to Philadelphia from the network of the Islamic Society that exists today. Reflecting on migration patterns of Pakistanis in the 1960’s, Hamid offered his views (Hamid 2004):

Hamid: Under Ayub Khan, the general attitude of the government was that we got to retain the people within the country, especially educated, because the country needed development and needs, you know, human resources. And they didn’t encourage it. A totally different attitude. They felt that if Pakistani community develops in the United States, in the long run it will be to the advantage of Pakistan. So he made it absolutely free. Anybody who applied for a passport gets it. Anybody who wants to migrate to the United States: let him migrate. This was his well-considered policy. And then, during his period, people came in droves.

FK: Also, because the U.S.…. 

Hamid: Huh?
FK: The U.S. had an open policy.  

Hamid: Yeah, the laws had also changed by this time. And uh, but even during this, the period of 1970s, um ... the United States government expected those who were migrating to the United States would be trained, professional individuals. They would have preferred. So you began to see doctors, dentists, engineers, lawyers, a few academics migrated. So during the 1970s and the ‘80s, until the beginning of the ‘90’s, Pakistani community was basically a community of very well educated, trained professionals. I remember, and I used to make comment to some of my friends, that in the middle of the 1970s and early ‘80s, whenever we would get together in one room you’d have 15 different individuals and everyone has a Ph.D., or has some profession, you know. It was a very impressive display of talent, you know, in one place that you could see. In the ‘90s, it began to change. In the ‘90s, people who came from Pakistan, working classes and that managed to come in legally and illegally. This was a period when, you know, scandals broke out how passports were not real. They were fabricated and whatnot. But people came. By the end of the ‘90s, let’s say around 2000, the general estimate was that there was something like maybe approaching a million, a million people.

Approaching, not quite, but approaching a million. If you talked to the

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9 The U. S. has never had an open policy towards immigration; however, in comparison to previous legislation, the Immigration Act of 1965 lifted racial barriers against Asian migration. While Asians were now permitted migration in larger numbers and were allowed family reunification, the barriers now centered on class and education (Behdad 2005).
Pakistan Embassy, they would say, well, the number is around 700,000 … 700,000 to 800,000. This was Pakistan government’s guess, the embassy’s estimate.

According to his estimates, he knew only a dozen Pakistanis who lived in the U.S. in the early 1960’s and they were all young men like him who had come for career and education advancement. There were only a few Pakistani students at Syracuse University when Hamid arrived as a young student in August of 1953 to attend graduate school. He completed an MA in Journalism and a PhD in political Science before joining the faculty at a university in suburban Philadelphia.

FK: Okay. So, in 1961, when you arrived in Villanova, were there other Pakistanis here?

Hamid: No. There were no Pakistanis.

FK: Were there other Indian Muslims or anyone from South Asia?

Hamid: Let me think back if there were any. No. After me, people came from India for example - Doctor Raul came to electrical engineering. He died recently, by the way, this last week. He came and then he was a very strong professor and he brought graduate students and he helped people to come in. Um, two years ago, we have now one Pakistani professor in the School of Business, Dr. Chaudry. I don’t know if you have met him or not.

FK: No, no.
Hamid: Yeah. He's here. He's in the School of Business. I can't think of any other Pakistani.

FK: So...

Hamid: There are, there are, occasionally you find students, Pakistani-American students.

FK: Right, right. So in the 60s then, how did you meet, I mean, did you have the desire to meet other people from...?

Hamid: I always had the desire to meet people, you know, of all kinds.

FK: Did you try to get in contact with anyone?

Hamid: You mean the Pakistanis?

FK: Yes.

Hamid: I, in fact, I brought lots of Pakistani students. For many years, I was chairman of the Graduate Committee in my own department, Political Science, and you know, as the chairman of Graduate Committee, it was within my jurisdiction to ... to award assistantships for lowering your tuition, plus stipend. I brought a lot of Pakistani students in those days, um, who earned their masters' degrees. Some went back. One young man is now currently assistant manager of DAWN in Karachi. And another one is the managing director of JANG Publications, who also I had brought him here and he was a graduate student. And so, and some didn't do too well. It works both ways. Yep. And then I gave up this position as the chairman of
Graduate Committee because, you know, you don't want to overload yourself with administrative problems. When I was doing, I was interested in other things to do, you know. Yeah.

FK: Right. So how did you meet other people here?

Hamid: Well, you see, here, you mean the Pakistani community.

FK: Yes.

Hamid: Um, Ghalib, Ghalib whom you have met, he and I were friends in Pakistan. We already knew each other. Ghalib started out his academic life in Lakona College, and from there he moved to his university. So that contact was already there. Then, uh, one Pakistani who no longer lives here, he goes to Texas, he sought me out and all of a sudden called me one day and I said, "Come on over. I'll have lunch with you." An association developed and the idea came up that we should organize local Pakistani community, you know, Pakistan-American Association. So we called a meeting and a lot of people came and the Pakistan-American Association was launched.

FK: And that was in what year?

Hamid: Oh, it's like, easily 20 years ago, 20 years ago. So Pakistan-American Association became the focal point of socializing, you see, for the Pakistanis. All kinds of people began to come in, you know, and participate. So this is how, you know, I got to know quite a few Pakistanis.

FK: Okay, but for a long time, then …
Hamid: For a long time I really didn’t, I didn’t have much contact. But then, in the 1960s, there were not many Pakistanis here to begin with.

FK: Right, right.

Hamid: You know.

FK: Now did you go to a masjid or were you practicing or...?

Hamid: I, I’m not a regular Mosque-goer. I don’t pray five times a day. Maybe I pray once a year, on the occasions I do go to the masjid. You know.

FK: But there was no masjid, right?

Hamid: There was no masjid in those days. And uh, I can’t say that I am really, really a really practicing Muslim, but my roots and my, you know, emotional attachments are to Pakistan and Pakistani Islam is there despite all the years that I’ve spent. Now look, I came in August of 1953. How many years is that? More than 50 years. You see? But despite that, I have kept my contacts in Pakistan. I visit Pakistan once a year. And I have, in my own time I wrote a great deal about Pakistan. You know ... I ... my first book was on Muslim nationalism. Then I produced a book on ..., and then I produced a book on ... You see ... all kinds of things that I have published....

Hamid also was able to keep contact with other students he knew from Pakistan but he stated that he knew of no other Pakistani in the Philadelphia area when he began teaching. By the 1970’s and into the beginning of the 1990’s, Hamid noted that the
increased migration represented changes in the educational and class background. With professional skill no longer the sole stipulation, newer immigrants in the Philadelphia area now have a diverse educational background. Nonetheless, Hamid remains actively involved both socially and academically with the South Asian community even though he is now retired.

Hamid: 1990’s. Toward the end. So in other words, by the end of the 1990s, if you asked me to take a look at the Pakistani community as a whole - how does it look to you? I would say that you have the class structure is like a pyramid. You know, on the top you have professionals – lawyers, doctors, dentists, professors, accountants. You know … you name it, all the professions. And in the middle you could have a few individuals who have jobs here and there, but white collar jobs. And then, at the bottom, a fairly large working class of people who had come. And you know … that, by the end of 1990’s, you could see that the composition has sort of changed, you know. It’s uh, a, not a homogeneous community in the sense there is a definite class structure now. You see? And uh, so with the working classes you begin to have all kind of problems which are associated, you know, with the working class people. Not that they are bad, but you see, where the, where they come from, all kinds of things. You know, people got into drugs and this and that, and you know, cases would appear in the press, so and so arrested and whatnot. In the Philadelphia area, where you are interested, the community that grew,
you’ll find them a fairly sizable number of professionals here. There are doctors, there are dentists, there are some academics, but other professions, business, you know. So it, a Pakistani community has developed here, too, in the greater Philadelphia area.

Ghalib

Hamid’s friend from Pakistan, Ghalib, arrived in the fall of 1958 after winning a scholarship from Rotary International. At the time, he had already started work at the young age of fifteen in journalism for the Associated Press and planned on returning home after the completion of his studies. His pursuit of scholarship took him to Johns Hopkins University where he completed a Master’s and a PhD degree from the School of Advanced International Studies. Ghalib delayed his return in order to finish his dissertation and was awarded a teaching position as a foreign scholar in residence at a college in northern Pennsylvania and a fellowship from the University of Pennsylvania. When he obtained his doctorate, he began a tenure-track professorship at a suburban women’s college in Philadelphia where he has been since and is now a Professor Emeritus (Ghalib 2004).

Ghalib: Well, I came ... 1958, in the fall of 1958.

FK: From Pakistan, or...?

Ghalib: From Pakistan. And I had won a fellowship from the Rotary International. They used to give one to Pakistan and Northern India combined - one person every two years. I think I was the first Pakistani to get it. So I went to Johns Hopkins School of Advanced
International Studies. I was there for two years and I was ready to go back and resume my career as a journalist. I had started in journalism from the age of 15 onward with Associated Press in Pakistan, and then Civil and Military Gazette, the British-owned newspaper, and then Pakistan Times. But then, some people whom I had met here at some international gathering of students, one of them was dean of the college up in the north, in northern Pennsylvania, at a college in Williamsport. They invited me to come and be a foreign student in residence and teach a course or so. I ended up spending five, six years there. Then I went to the University of Pennsylvania and they gave me a good fellowship. For two, three years I take that. Then I came here and joined this college.

FK: So when you, where did you do your PhD, in Pakistan?

Ghalib: See here, see, as a matter of fact I did my masters there at Johns Hopkins, then was ... I finished my PhD work very quickly. But writing of the dissertation, I got the job here...

FK: At this college?

Ghalib: At this college. And the job was in my previous field of Johns Hopkins and diplomatic history of Europe or so. So that delayed and delayed and delayed forever ... my 18-century work on Islam in South Asia, which I wanted to do. And I, they suggested I could do something in the 19th or 20th century. I said my, my interest is way back there and so I've been teaching ever since. They gave me
tenure here, which took away all the sword of democracy you see hanging over people. The job was secure. And eventually, they made me professor emeritus. And so, I have been going back to Pakistan virtually every year - sometimes on my research assignments ... once University of Pennsylvania hired me to initiate an exchange program with Quaid-i-Azam University in Pakistan studies, which I did. And I taught there for a year.

Although Ghalib was busy in his studies, he maintained a religious identity and sought out other South Asian Muslims. Recalling his first year in the United States, Ghalib emphasized the difficulties in finding a place to worship and in organizing a religious community.

FK: So in the ‘60s you came to the Philadelphia area.

Ghalib: Yeah, Philadelphia area.

FK: So how many other Pakistani or, you know, Muslim...?

Ghalib: There were not many at that time.

FK: Indian Muslim or Pakistani Muslims?

Ghalib: Yeah. There were some who were students there and they...

FK: Ten? That must have been a very small community.

Ghalib: Very small community, yeah, a very small community. There were some Arab students and the rest of them ... I remember we got together and we secured a place in the Houston Hall for our Friday prayers.

FK: Right, right. It’s still there.
Ghalib: It's still there? Well, we initiated that. And I was the 
sweeper of the floor, clearing things. And then, we didn't know where 
to get an Imam from so we approached the African-American 
community and we get some Imam from there. Then we got contact 
established with Dr. Faruqi, the late...
FK: Okay, so he was here already.
Ghalib: He, I don't know when he came, but he was probably all at 
the same time he was here, at Temple. So and uh ... so from then on, 
and when I moved to Philadelphia I did not live in University. I lived 
in Rosemont. See, so I was here all these years. And ... slowly, I 
mean, the Muslims would gather at 8 and sometime they will gather at 
the Clara Muhammad Mosque.
FK: Okay, Sister Clara.
Ghalib: Sister Clara.
FK: Uh-huh, uh-huh. That's in West Philadelphia, right?
Ghalib: West Philadelphia, yeah. Sometime we had ... there were 
some places in the city they would go to. And once or twice we had in 
Claremont Park. And then I started going to Baba Muhaiyaddeen's 
house.
FK: Okay, on City Line?
Ghalib: On, a block below City Line, Everbrook.
FK: Right, right.
Ghalib: Something like that.
FK: Yeah, yeah. They didn’t have a lot of South Asians, right?
Ghalib: They didn’t have a lot of South Asians. They had one or two and then quite a few came afterwards.
FK: So who else in this community was one of the first people?
Ghalib: I’d say…
FK: What about Professor Chaudry, who’s at (suburban) University, is he an early migrant?
Ghalib: I think so. I think he is very early, yeah, yeah. Also, Abbas Malik.
FK: Oh, yes. From Villanova.
Ghalib: Villanova, yeah.
FK: Okay. Where does he live?
Ghalib: He lives in Villanova.
FK: He lives in Villanova. Okay. I have to contact him, too.
Ghalib: Yeah, yeah. I can give you his contact number. Yeah, he was here before me. Yeah, that’s right, yeah.

Ghalib never did return to live in Pakistan as he had initially planned, opting instead to take a secure tenured position in the U.S. However, despite the fact that Ghalib never physically returned, he still had strong psychological and emotional attachments to Pakistan. This part of the interview concerning his passport narrates the sense of identity with Pakistan the Ghalib fosters.
Ghalib: Yeah. I waited 25, 26 years. I did not become American citizen until this was possible, that I could keep my Pakistan passport as well.

FK: Why?

Ghalib: When I, I started facing all kinds of problem traveling with a Pakistan passport. But then, I had the green card, which was given to me my second year in America. They gave me ... I didn’t ask for it, I didn’t apply for it. They, when they said, you know, come and be in residence and teach a course, I found out that I could not do it under the law. I didn’t have my visa. My visa was a student visa. But they got me the green card.

FK: That was a different time, huh?

Ghalib: It was a different time, yes. And see, they had a category, “Essential for the Economic and Cultural Development of the United States of America,” ... quota of 100 for the State Department.

FK: So why did you not do the citizenship?

Ghalib: Well, you see, in my case I’m involved emotionally with Pakistan very much, from my childhood onward. My elders were all involved in the struggle for freedom. My father and my uncle, they were both in Indian National Congress. My uncle was president of the Punjab Congress. My father was president of the Congress of the Amritsar District. So growing up, seeing them going to prison and
everything, and then at the age of 11 or 12 I changed ... became in favor of Pakistan.

FK: And your family was still in favor of...?

Ghalib: Family was divided. But then, I think it, my father withdrew on his, the last election of the Pakistan, my father and uncle contested on Congress ticket. And my uncle was elected because he was from a mixed constituency. My father was defeated because he was in a Muslim constituency. But by that time I had converted to Pakistan ... 11-years old. A year later, my uncle, who was president of Punjab Congress and member of the Parliament, he also left Congress and became and joined Muslim League. And the only political movement that ... for Pakistan was launched ... but just before Pakistan came into existence and a lot of Muslim leaders were arrested. I was in it and I was one of the four persons who were handcuffed, taken to prison, and were being tried for treason and all kind of things. There were 10,000 people they had arrested. So my emotional involvement in it and then the moment I came out I was in Quetta College, just joined, met Quaid-i-Azam and got appointed as a correspondent by Associated Press with him until his death. So once again - one thing and then I had been very active in Pakistan movement in Baluchistan when years later they realized - Pakistan government - to honor what they call heroes of Pakistan. So they picked out 49 persons from East and West Pakistan, gave them gold medals and I was one of them.
And I didn’t know. I was here and I got a call, and I didn’t believe it so I didn’t go. But it, I thought somebody was joking, you know.

Why me? I mean, they were all older people and the former prime ministers, former governors, scholars … the historic person, they were all in a group. So my emotional involvement, and then I worked as a journalist there, as a firebrand journalist who openly criticizing, which I did not find possible to do because they … you can’t do that. And so, my emotional involvement with Pakistan was very, very deep and things go wrong and I cry. I don’t cry on my personal things, I don’t have the time. But things going wrong there … destroys me completely. So for me to decide finally to accept American citizenship was a hard decision, although I could keep my Pakistan passport as well.

FK: When did you become a citizen?

Ghalib: I think about five or six years ago.

FK: So, in the 90s? 1990s?

Ghalib: Yeah, 1990s, yeah.

*Abbas*

Abbas left Lahore, Pakistan in 1960 as a young married man after finishing his studies in textiles in Australia. He applied for immigration to the U.S. and Canada while he was still studying in Australia because he believed he could never have the same opportunities for financial growth and education as a middle class Pakistani: “I was a realist even at that time” (Abdul 2004). The U.S. initially denied his wife a visa to
migrate so they moved to Edmonton, Canada but soon after they were both given visas to live and work in America. His wife got a job at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia and they quickly moved and settled in the suburban area of Germantown. They met two other families that lived nearby and became good friends. Together they rented a room for Eid prayers at Temple University in order to celebrate the religious holiday as a group. Abbas changed jobs, first to one in New Hampshire and then one in Albany and he and his wife were now the parents of four children. Since it had always been her dream to finish her medical training that she had begun prior to marriage, she decided to return to Lahore with the four children to complete her studies while Abbas stayed on in Albany. When she returned, they moved back to the Philadelphia area and Abbas began his own textile company while she practiced medicine. However, the friends they had made had moved and now as a young family, they knew no other South Asians. Abbas soon met an Egyptian who started Islamic classes at the local YWCA. Both husband and wife actively took the kids to classes in religious instruction but the group was diverse and only a few other Pakistanis were present.

Reflecting on the South Asian immigrant experience, Abbas emphasized that in general Pakistanis do not assimilate nor are they politically active. In his view immigrants should encourage both assimilation and political participation. He stated, “If you have made the sacrifice to come here (then) uplift your fellow citizens and maintain your cultural heritage.” Abbas further questioned why individuals come to the United States and work so hard asking, “What have they gained from their life?”

Waleed
Waleed also arrived in the U.S. in 1960 as a young married man to begin his PhD studies at Indiana University (Waleed 2004). He knew about twelve other Pakistanis living and studying in Bloomington during that period. After moving back to Pakistan briefly he and his wife returned to the U.S., first to West Virginia and then suburban Philadelphia where he had a tenure track teaching position. At the university, Waleed met two people from India and soon met other students through a Muslim student network at the University of Pennsylvania including Hamid. Waleed joined the small group for Eid prayers through the early 1970's. Waleed and his wife, Shahana, educated their children in Pakistani culture through dress, language, and food. Both stressed the significance of establishing Pakistani Muslim customs with their children by forbidding dating or English in the home.

Despite nearly forty years in the United States, Waleed and Shahana described their ethnic identity as Pakistani. Interestingly however, Waleed had no desire to return to Pakistan to live declaring, “Life was humble there (in Pakistan). Why should I go back?”

Hamid, Ghalib, Abbas, and Waleed were among the first to migrate to the Philadelphia area. All four came to the U.S. in search of advancement - either in education or in career, even though they all came from educated middle to upper middle class families in Pakistan. Through their years in the Philadelphia South Asian Muslim community, each has had varying levels of contact and involvement with other South Asian Muslims, including the members that migrated later and formed the Islamic Society.

Hamid’s reflections and assessment of the community’s history are keen observations of a community that began with a few individuals aspiring for advancement, financially
and academically. Education and social class positions homogenized the group as middle to upper middle class South Asians and despite their different histories, these individuals were determined to seek out each other in America and maintain an identity that was both religious and cultural. Interestingly, while many migrated from South Asia with plans of returning, no one from the group did actually return.

Migration from South Asian was slow in the 1960’s and almost exclusively based on students desiring higher academic degrees in the U.S. However, as a new decade approached and the migration laws changed, more people arrived and the South Asian Muslim network grew. While earlier migration for Philadelphia’s community was exclusively by men, in later years more women migrated although, usually not alone, but with their husbands. The reasons for migration did not change or vary; everyone still searched for more opportunities in their life aspirations.

Mahtab

One notable example of a woman leading the charge on migration during this time was Mahtab, who married with children and trained as a physician, had already lived in Libya and Iraq by the time she and her husband moved to the U.S. They had wanted a better environment for their children than these countries could offer; consequently, in 1972 Mahtab and her husband arrived in New York. She recalls how her skills as a physician allowed her an uncomplicated immigration process and a network for finding a job. She completed her residency and her husband, who already had a PhD in botany but could not find work in his field, began his own business in Oriental rugs. They had four children who attended catholic school because, “of the poor public school system” (Mahtab 2004). The family moved to another suburb of Philadelphia by 1977
and Mahtab started a new job at a local hospital. There were very few other families living in the area at the time and Mahtab taught her children about Islam and culture at home and they journeyed to Pakistan every year to visit relatives. Mahtab stated that she admired “the hard-working simple people of the U.S.” and thus modeled her own life after this philosophy by working long hours and devoting herself to her children. She felt strongly that Americans were focused on the “simple” equation that hard work pays off in success. With this work ethic she marks herself as ‘different’ than other Pakistanis by disclosing, “I am not accepted as a typical Pakistani in Pakistan.” Now she advises young families also to follow this ideal and in particular recommends placing emphasis on education.

When asked about her ethnic identity, Mahtab stated, “First of I am American now ... of Pakistani origin.” She further supported the Bush administration their handling of the ‘war on terror” in the early days following the attacks on September 11. Mahtab expressed her nervousness, “I did not want to stand apart from the crowd after 9/11 ... I was more careful.” Overall Mahtab felt she was not affected by the events and was able to carry on as usual in her daily activities.

PART THREE

The Formation of Community

While there may have been a few families interspersed in the greater Philadelphia area meeting and celebrating religious holidays together, there was no unified or formalized community in the 1970’s. Not only were the numbers of South Asians small, the members were young. For most people in the 1960’s and early 1970’s, they were
either unmarried or newly married and very few had children. As time passed and their lives settled into a rhythm in the U.S. more people began raising families here, which altered the dynamics of considering ethnic identity. Raising children in America instigated the need to establish and perform an identity as a South Asian and Muslim group.

This section offers the migration narratives of the individuals who were key figures in the founding of Islamic Society. In this section, I focus on how these individuals came to the U.S. and on how they began to shape a community out of isolation and I return to their narratives throughout the subsequent chapters. There is a shift in migration patterns by the 1970’s as noted by the fact that numbers of people in the U.S. had increased and networking had strengthened. Nevertheless, despite arriving with advanced degrees and a small network of colleagues, many had to struggle through examinations and licensing boards in order to achieve qualification in their fields.

**Jameel**

No one would argue that one of the key figures in the formation of what is now the Islamic Society was Jameel whose death in 2000 was a terrible loss for the community. I had known Jameel since I was very young through our families and my formal interview was with his wife and youngest son (Tania 2004).

Jameel left Lahore, Pakistan in 1973 in order to pursue advancement in his field of pharmacy. He arrived in New York City, moved to Jersey City, and then to Philadelphia where he found work. A deeply religious man, Jameel immediately wanted to connect with other Muslims and the only way he knew how was to look in the phone book for Muslim names. He met a few students at Temple University and joined them for Friday
afternoon prayers. Jameel worked long hours and studied to pass his licensing exams. In 1975, at a license test for pharmacy, he met another man named Khalil whom he had known from his university days in Pakistan. Jameel was already married to Tania and had two children in Pakistan but she did not join him until that year. They lived in the city where they met a few families and began organizing get-togethers in order to do religious studies. Khalil and Jameel opened a pharmacy together in the city in 1977. After years of saving enough money, Jameel and Tania bought a larger home in suburban Philadelphia in 1981 and enlarged their family to four children.

Khali

Khalil also left Pakistan in 1973 in order to further his studies in pharmacy. He was already married and the father of two young boys at the time. Knowing no one other than a few friends in New Jersey, Khalil moved first to New Jersey. A friend suggested a job in the suburbs of Philadelphia so Khalil moved and found an apartment to share with other young men. The initial years were difficult financially since Khalil had no license to practice pharmacy in the U.S. and no work. He realized he needed a car to get him from work and went to a bank for a car loan. Having no collateral, he was denied the loan. As Khalil proudly relates the story, he went into a bank and as he states, “I begged them for a loan” until he actually got a loan (Khalil 2004). His first job was as a security guard in order to pay his bills and then began volunteering at a local hospital in the pharmacy department. His hours of volunteering added up to the requirements for the licensing exam, which he passed in 1975. Khalil admits that he never let on to his wife or his family in Pakistan that he was having financial difficulties. Instead, he struggled and saved enough money for his wife and sons to join him in 1975. Having already made
contact with Jameel, he bought a house near Jameel’s family in Philadelphia by 1977. He was working at the pharmacy in 1979, which he and Jameel owned when Khalil was shot in a robbery attempt. Although as he states, “I realized by 1974 I would not go back (to Pakistan)” the event was disturbing enough that Khalil left the U.S. with his family and went to Pakistan for a month. Khalil returned to the US with his wife and children and his business grew to include nine pharmacies.

Khalil’s wife was present during this interview but spoke very little. In Urdu, Tahmina said she had supported his desire for migration and was happy to join him in Philadelphia. She claims that her early years were hard for her since she did not speak English and the hours alone with children were long while Khalil worked. Most days she found herself alone with no one to talk to since they did not know any other South Asians in the neighborhood. As the children entered school, Tahmina joined Khalil working in the pharmacy at the cash register. Now that the financially difficult years are behind them and they are grandparents, she has found her place in the U.S. and would not return to Pakistan (Tahmina 2004).

Yunis

Yunis left India in 1968 to study at Brigham Young University in Utah. He met a few Pakistani students who had received government scholarships and a few Indian Muslims like himself. After finishing his medical studies, he returned to India in 1974 and got married. He had decided that he wanted to live on the East Coast and soon got a job in Philadelphia. He found other Muslims celebrating Eid prayers at Temple University, but as he notes, “there were hardly 200 people there” (Yunis 2004). Yunis also went to say prayers at Houston Hall on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania where he met
another handful of Muslims. He remained proud of his Gujarati heritage and began a
cultural group, Gujarat Samaj in 1979. Yunis met Khalil at one of his pharmacies and
Jameel at the prayers at the University of Pennsylvania and the network grew. Yunis and
his wife, Shamsa, had four children and after moving two other times, eventually settled
in an affluent neighborhood in suburban Philadelphia.

Yunis and Shamsa strived to establish a religious community for their children and
regularly took them to Sunday Islamic school. He stated, “We spent 150% of our efforts
for the kids.” Because Yunis and Shamsa both had relatives living in close
approximation to them in the U.S., maintaining family cultural and religious traditions
was more problematic than for others. As was the case with many in the community,
Yunis and Shamsa believed they would return to India after a few years of living abroad.
Now as they plan for their life in retirement in the U.S., Shamsa remarked, “Now that our
parents are gone (in India), the pull (to live there) is also gone” (Shamsa 2004).

Asim

Asim’s migration story followed a different path from the majority who came to the
U.S. for education in the early 1970’s. Asim was already married and the father of three
children when he arrived in September of 1971. He had always dreamed of moving to
America but his wife was opposed to the idea, deciding to remain in Pakistan while he
paved his way abroad. Asim left Pakistan with two friends, one of whom had a friend at
the University of Pennsylvania and together the three arrived in Philadelphia. He only
had one hundred British pounds in his pocket so he began looking for work.10 His first
job was as a shipper in a large packaging company but the hours were long and the pay

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10 There were limitations on the amount that could be exchanged in U.S dollars.
was minimal. Asim was beginning to despair when one day he decided to have lunch at Reading Terminal Market in the city. He sat next to another man who looked like he was South Asian as well and the two began talking. The man was Indian and owned a large importing company; he took Asim under his wings and gave him a secure job in the accounting department. Asim earned $110 a week but more importantly, his contact with his boss and friend reaffirmed his desire to stay on in America. He lived near the university in an apartment he shared with other young Pakistani immigrants who were always willing to help each other. When new students or new immigrants came to the area, the group would allow them to stay in the apartment, which soon earned the title, ‘Pakistan House.’ By 1972, Asim worked three jobs and by 1974, he had saved enough to have his family join him in the U.S. (Asim 2004).

*Mujeeb*

Mujeeb and his wife, Nasreen, were both born and raised in Uganda. They were already married when they fled to England in 1972 after Idi Amin expelled all South Asians from Uganda (Van Hear 1998). Mujeeb found work in the U.S. and they moved to the suburban Philadelphia area in 1976. Both longed to meet other South Asian but there were very few immigrants in Philadelphia and subsequently they returned to England. Mujeeb states, “We moved here to (suburban Philadelphia) in 1976 and there was nobody here we could, you know, meet or be among … But then, we ended up, you know, going back (to England) and then we came back in, … ’83, Spring. I said, ‘Well, this is a mission I want to undertake: I want to find Muslims ‘cause we’re going to live here’” (Mujeeb 2004). He and his wife were now the parents of two girls and strongly wanted to establish a life for themselves as Americans and as Muslims. Because it was
important for Mujeeb and Nasreen to give the girls an Islamic education, Mujeeb was determined to make connections with other South Asian Muslim families. He picked up the phone book and began searching under common Muslim names such as Mohammed. Soon they met a few families who were already living in the surrounding metropolitan area including Jameel and his wife, who by now had lived here for a few years, had begun taking their children to Islamic school at a mosque in the city and offered to take Mujeeb and Nasreen’s children as well.

Asif and Ruksana, Khalil, Jameel, Yunis, and Mujeeb formed a group, perhaps at this point unknowingly, of young immigrant families, who were committed to building a life in suburban Philadelphia for themselves and their families, one that included aspects of being South Asian and Muslim. The brief sketch of their migration histories all share accounts of advanced education in Pakistan and the desire for future career success and economic growth in the U.S. As parents, each was motivated to connect with others more deeply from a similar background because they were raising their children in a new environment, one in which ethnicity and Islam could not be taken for granted. Each family played a key role in establishing a community and helping to create what is now known as the Islamic Society.

*The Formation of the Islamic Society*

The 1980’s brought about many changes, particularly noted in the increase in numbers of South Asian Muslim immigrants to the U.S. and to Philadelphia as well. The

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11 Asim did not live in the same suburban Philadelphia neighborhood as the others and took his children to another mosque for Islamic educational classes.
individuals who had migrated in the 1970’s were now married, parents, and had become established in their careers. A core group, that included Jameel, Mujeeb, and Asif and Ruksana, quickly had found the “American dream” of economic success and prosperity through their advanced degrees and professional jobs. All from upper levels of the socio-economic class in Pakistan with excellent English language skills, these families settled into middle and upper middle class homes in the wealthy suburbs of Philadelphia. While their daily lives took on the routine of any other American family of work and school, Jameel and his friends strived to ensure the Islamic education of their children through a South Asian context. “The story of migration is not only about people who migrate but also about the lands to which they go and their impacts on those lands” (Sowell 1996).

Jameel, a deeply religious man, had contacted a mosque in North Philadelphia to enquire about Islamic education for children. The mosque had a Sunday school program and Jameel gathered his children along with Yunis and Khalil’s children every weekend and drove them to North Philadelphia. Even though the mosque was primarily organized around the Albanian culture, Jameel helped by teaching classes but according to Tania the imam had many disagreements with the “desis” forcing them to find another alternative for religious instruction (Tania 2004). Tania related the beginnings of a South Asian mosque in Philadelphia but claimed that no one wanted to travel the distance. Jameel had been contacted by Mujeeb and soon they began teaching classes for the children in Mujeeb’s basement.

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12 Desis is a common term used by South Asians to mean ‘natives’ of South Asia.
13 Tania’s entire interview was conducted in Urdu as Tania speaks very little English.
Mujeeb recounted the first few weeks, "So, literally we started the Sunday school in ... my basement (with eight children) ... in one month we had 22 children ... from nowhere" (Mujeeb 2004). His investment in the community is evident from his detailed memory of the events, "Now we're turning into 1984. One evening, it was a Tuesday evening, I got a call from somebody known as Asad, and he said, 'I am trying to organize a Muslim community here. I'd like to invite you guys to my home ... come meet with us.' At the meeting, many of the families who were taking their children to Mujeeb's basement for Sunday school were present. Mujeeb continues by recalling that Asad wanted to collect membership fees and to organize a formalized community. Everyone agreed and decided to expand the religious classes by renting a larger space to accommodate all the children. Mujeeb agreed to sign the rental form for a space at the local community center and organized classes. The gathering in Asad's home formalized and gave a name to the small group of families that had been meeting regularly; so began the Islamic Society ... in March of 1984.

Problems erupted with Asad's leadership and his apparently dubious actions with the community's membership dues. Other members confronted him and as Mujeeb declared, "people got disappointed with his remarks, deceptions, his motivations ... we went through a lengthy struggle with the guy ... we sued him and then, finally he came up because he picked up the Quran and said, 'this is my organization and this is my money.' After that you know we reorganized and ... we do not know what happened to him ... but at that point we had a dilemma. The dilemma was we need to organize ourselves, and we said fine. There were eight of us and (we said)"
‘Let’s pick a name,’ picked up the name Islamic Society. And so we started Islamic Society” (Mujeeb 2004).

Even though the interactions with Asad ended negatively, the experience forced the community to band together under a more formalized framework. They had come together finding commonalities in ethnic origin and heritage and now the families wanted to name their group giving shape to community. The new society needed a contact address but as Mujeeb stated, “We don’t have an address. Who’s going to put their name down and their address? And unfortunately, nobody wanted to do that. The fear was we are Muslims in this country. If we associate ourselves with Islamic organization, then the FBI is going to investigate us” (Mujeeb 2004).

Mujeeb offered his home address to the nascent community and the Islamic Society was born.

Asif assumed the leadership role for the Society as the first chairperson of the board in 1984. Every Saturday evening 10 families would gather at the community center for the children to join the Islamic classes that various parents took turns instructing (Asif 2004). The Saturday evening school was also a time for the few families that lived in the area to socialize with each other. After the school session was over the group would partake in an informal potluck dinner. Mujeeb states, “we were there ‘til ’92, but I think from ’84 ‘til maybe ’88, ’89, it was just about twenty families, local families, in (suburban Philadelphia) … back then, because the families were limited we all were teachers … and then, we used to meet on Saturday evenings. Then we had a potluck dinner. Then we turned into Sunday morning, same thing, having lunch there. That’s

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14 An interesting comment made by Mujeeb about fear of the U.S. government even before the events of September 11 indicating certain nervousness had always existed. He did not attribute this to any particular incident.
how we met each other, the few families. It became ten and we started … making each other friends of ours” (Mujeeb 2004). These weekly gatherings solidified the community because they all shared the same motivations for migrating to the U.S. and the same aspirations for their children, which included success in America through school and as South Asian Muslims.

Within a few years the number of families joining the Saturday evening classes grew from less than fifty children to about ninety children (Asif 2004). Arguments that began brewing with the officials from the community centered on several issues including large numbers of people, food, and cleanliness forcing the members of Islamic Society to consider alternative spaces. Asif related that the community center “kicked them out” unfairly but that the Society soon found another space they could rent.

Zahid

The community had grown in part due to the migration of another group of Pakistanis commonly referred to in Islamic Society circles as ‘the dentist group.’ Zahid, one of the first to migrate to the U.S., arrived in New York in February of 1974. He had graduated from dental school in Lahore but wanted to further his studies in America and then return to practice dentistry in Pakistan. He traveled with two other dental students and knew no one except for another colleague from Lahore whom he was going to stay with in New York. Zahid describes his arrival, “I went there (to the friend’s apartment) on a green bus. It was snowing – my first snow. I couldn’t pay for the bus. I had no change. I ended up in Kew Gardens but I wanted to go to 96th Street” (Zahid 2004). Another friend came to pick them up and drove them to Jersey City to stay in a building run by other Pakistanis. The first floor of the building was converted into a mosque. Zahid, a
qualified dentist, had no license to practice in the U.S. so he worked several odd jobs even in a restaurant making coffee in order to earn money. He states, “I had no fear. In Pakistan I said I was prepared to work or do anything.” Soon Zahid found work in a dental laboratory making wax models of teeth but the initial months were difficult. He shared a small apartment with the two other people who had come with him from Pakistan. The cramped apartment had no shower so they had to go downstairs to the mosque in order to bathe. Zahid was part of a network of Pakistani students migrating to America and the apartment was often filled with newcomers. By the end of 1974, his friends from dental school, Mustafa, Daoud, and Ahmed, had joined him in Jersey City and Zahid moved out to share an apartment with them.¹⁵

The four friends learned that the state of California had a licensing exam program that they could enroll in for the dental license. They sold what little items they had, packed their bags, and drove across the country. Once in California they quickly realized they could not get any student loans as out of state residents in order to study; they had moved for naught. They were disheartened but then learned that the University of Pennsylvania was offering a new licensing program aimed at foreign born dental school graduates and that the University would offer them loans. The four repacked and drove back to Pennsylvania to enroll in the program. By 1977, they had all passed the licensing exam and became board certified dentists.

Zahid opened his own practice in 1978 in Philadelphia and recalls that in his first month he had earned $5600 – the most he had ever earned in his whole life. In 1980, he

¹⁵ A formal interview conducted individually with Mustafa and Ahmed but one was not completed with Daoud.
started another office out of a Philadelphia hospital and returned to Pakistan to get married. Later in the same year, Zahid met with an accountant to help him manage his finances. The accountant remarked that he had never seen anyone’s finances jump so dramatically and Zahid remembers feeling that, “I had arrived as an immigrant” (Zahid 2004). Newly married, Zahid and his wife lived in the outskirts of Philadelphia until his lawyer suggested that he should move to an affluent section of the suburbs, known as the Main Line. He and his wife soon saw an advertisement for new homes in a development in Bryn Mawr and bought the property they have lived in since with their daughter.

Mustafa

Mustafa came to the U.S. in 1974. He had finished dental school in Lahore, Pakistan and was working, but had always wanted to come to the U.S. to further his career and for economic reasons (Mustafa 2004). He lived in Jersey City with Zahid and his other colleagues while working at the same dental laboratory since he too had no license to practice dentistry in the U.S. He joined the practice of another established Pakistani dentist, Dr. Uthman, in Philadelphia after passing his dental board examinations with Zahid, Daoud, and Ahmed in 197816. Mustafa had already gotten married the year before and now his wife had joined him. They rented a small apartment in the suburbs of North Philadelphia and had their first child, a daughter. Mustafa and his wife had always planned on staying in the U.S. just for 10 years in order to earn enough money to retire in Pakistan. As the year went on, they bought a house, moved to the same development as Zahid in Bryn Mawr, and raised their family of now five children.

16 Dr. Uthman and his family moved from Delaware to Pennsylvania but were never members of the Islamic Society. He and his wife helped to establish another mosque in West Chester, PA.
Ahmed arrived in the U.S. on July 4, 1974 after graduating from dental school in Lahore also and joined Mustafa and Zahid living in Jersey City. Ahmed had an uncle who lived in New York but he chose to go to Jersey City and live with his friends. He moved to California and returned to finish his licensing course at the University of Pennsylvania alongside Zahid, Mustafa, and Daoud. Upon passing his exams, Ahmed started work in the dental practice of Dr. Uthman. He recalls very few Pakistanis living in the Philadelphia area at the time and he and his friends were eager to be a part of a network system for other students from the same dental school in Lahore. Ahmed returned to Pakistan to get married in 1980 and by 1982 he and his wife, Ghazal had bought a home in the same Bryn Mawr neighborhood as Zahid and Mustafa.

The addition of the dental school network to the suburban Philadelphia South Asian Muslim community expanded Islamic Society. Whether they had had any thoughts of returning to Pakistan after their career or financial goals were met, no one from the Pakistani dental community did return. They chose to remain in America, buying homes near each other and raising their children together. Zahid, Mustafa, Ahmed, and Daoud and their respective families were active members of the budding Islamic Society participating in Sunday school events, fundraising, and its administration.

By 1992, the Islamic Society left the community center space and began renting a space at a nearby college. Mujeeb recalls, “In ’92, yes … that’s when, uh, Bryn Mawr community also joined in and (Mustafa) had made arrangements with Rosemont College that we can use their classrooms and at $200 – some a week. From paying $250 a year, we ended up paying $250 a week. But we really had no choice …” (Mujeeb 2004). His
comments reflect the growth of the community and the frustration of not having their own space. While some of the members urged the purchase of a building to serve as a school for the children and as a mosque, others were more wary of the idea. Mujeeb accounts for the nervousness of job relocation from many of the engineers who were employed by a one company in Philadelphia. In addition, he states, "Our second dilemma was because (Asad) took that $2100 and ran away, the trust element was not there ... with each other." Mujeeb admitted to possessing a stubborn streak and opened an account with $101 under the Society's name, "Yep, with a $101 check (we) started. Al-hamdo-li-lah\(^\text{17}\), that year we collected $4000 ... year two, under the leadership of Mustafa, we collected $28,000. And then, by 1992 we had $120, 000 in that account."

With continued fundraising and more monetary donations, the society purchased a large lot with a small house in 1994. The property cost more than what the account allowed but Mujeeb recalls requesting donations, "I cannot forget my brother, Jameel and Masood and myself; we visited many families, home to home, collecting funds. And people gave, Al-hamdo-li-lah." Purchasing the property was accomplished with greater ease than fulfilling all the zoning laws and ordinances before the community could begin to use the facility: "So we struggled for quite some time, went in front of the board, got the zoning. Our next door neighbor, the Donovans, were very tough ... (the Donovan’s mother) was very tough. Came and fought us: ‘These people are going to have a lot of cars, with bells ... There’s going to be a lot of noise. There’s going to be a lot of smell. Don’t give them zoning.’ But nevertheless ... at the end of the hearing ... they (the Hearing Board) said, ‘Fine. We allow you’" (Mujeeb 2004).

\(^{17}\) Translation from Arabic: “By the mercy of the Lord.”
By 1995, the site was in full use as both an Islamic education center for children and as a mosque. The Society continued fundraising and collecting fees for Sunday Islamic school classes to sustain the mosque. Over the years to follow, membership grew with more families moving into the area from South Asia and from other parts of the U.S.; today the Society remains primarily a Pakistani American center.

**Conclusion**

Asif, now retired, travels with Ruksana and spends time with their children. Once active at the mosque, he continues to be involved although to a lesser degree choosing instead to allow others to lead the community. Reflecting upon his migration story that began Chapter One, Asif’s personal narrative manifests the key characteristics that unite the individuals – culture, migration, education, and religion. Moreover, embedded within his narrative are the themes of struggle and accomplishment, assimilation and preservation. His experiences resonate with the majority of the other individuals interviewed and offer a shared chronicle of the community.

These migration narratives followed patterns of struggle, accomplishment, and continuation that correspond to experiences of other immigrants. However, what is to be learned from the consideration of these personal South Asian Muslim American narratives from a universal perspective? The poignant narratives that emerged conveyed determination and success but also included times of struggle and hardship. Most importantly, the narratives belong to individuals already in possession of a higher education level, English language skills, and middle to upper middle class heritage.
These factors facilitated transition into America society from a socio-economic perspective unlike their Irish and Polish predecessors.

For many migration began as a search for economic and financial security, and once obtained there was little reason to return. The result of migration was the establishment of new lives, specifically new lives that included children born and raised in America. Interviews that were scheduled to last one hour, often spilled into three-hour long sessions with respondents recalling in vivid detail the history of their move to the United States and their settlement in the suburbs of Philadelphia.

The first to arrive in the Philadelphia area came to further their education. Hamid, Ghalib and Waleed all completed their Ph.D. degrees and were quick to create lives in the United States. The U.S. immigration policy which welcomed those with advanced degrees and technical skills consequentially assisted in creating an educated, upper middle class, professional community. As Hamid noted, “It was a very impressive display of talent” (Hamid 2004). Migration patterns accounted for only a few South Asians living in the Philadelphia area in the early 1960’s yet those that were here searched for others like themselves in order to share their religion, language, and culture.

Continued growth in migration from South Asia witnessed more professionals in the suburban Philadelphia area. The increased numbers of South Asian Muslims facilitated the formation of a small community. As the families grew, so too did the realization of rootedness in America; the desire for return to a previous homeland faded with time. Asif and Ruksana, Jameel and Tania, Khalil, Yunis, Asim, and Mujeeb all struggled to establish a community of faith and culture for their children. Their efforts in raising South Asian Muslim children in the U.S. consumed their daily lives and as Mujeeb stated
it was, "a mission I want to undertake: I want to find Muslims 'cause we're going to live here" (Mujeeb 2004). Negotiating a religious life in a country unfamiliar with Islam proved to be challenging as the nascent community sought to create a space of their own.

Difficulties notwithstanding however, this group of individuals was highly educated and financially successful in their careers. With the addition of Zahid, Mustafa, Ahmed, and Daoud and their families the community flourished. It was not long before a public American lifestyle and a private South Asian Muslim practice co-existed for the community. Their early years of hardship had earned their children affluent America suburban lives. Embracing both aspects of their life, Mustafa did not fear a certain degree of assimilation for their children, metaphorically stating, "You can't throw them in the swimming pool and then tell them they can't get wet" (Mustafa 2004). By the late 1990's the Islamic Society was established with regular Islamic school classes, a mosque for worshipping, and a social base for networking.

From these narratives expressed and recorded, we can learn not only the migration experience and the history of the community; rather, the accounts also convey the strategic valuation of assimilation in American society. Situated within the struggles for education and careers is the desire for financial success, economic security, and the attainment of a social class. Thus, assimilation is only desired for the visibility of the procurement of the American dream. Conversely, the narratives relate a strong desire to maintain culture and religion in the U.S. and therefore assimilation is eschewed. The inclination for invisibility in these domains overshadows pressure for assimilation into American mainstream society as individuals and the community endeavor to sustain a South Asian Muslim identity.
In conclusion, the migration patterns of South Asians to the United States witnessed the largest influx post 1965. Arriving in the U.S. with professional degrees, many people struggled in the first few years to establish their careers with examinations and appropriate certifications. They also made great efforts to connect with other South Asian who shared their ethnicity and their religion. In suburban Philadelphia, these efforts resulted in a community with collective desires and hopes for a life in America that included education, career success, religiosity, and culture. The resultant ethnic identity cultivated encompassed elements of varying import of South Asian, Muslim, and American characteristics, but it was one which the community endeavored to pass on to their children.

With the migration narratives of the key figures introduced and the founding of the Islamic Society detailed, the next chapters revisit these individuals as well as additional new members. Ethnic identity is further examined in the proceeding chapters through the practices of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage.
Chapter Two: Ethnicity

"First of all, I am an American now, of Pakistani origin ... I feel I belong here. I am not easily intimidated – I feel like a part of this country."

Mahtab 2004

Anila, a physician, joined her husband Musa in the United States soon after they were married in 1976. Musa had already been in the U.S. for several years studying as an undergraduate in engineering and had become a naturalized citizen. When Anila arrived, they quickly applied for her citizenship as well. As young professionals in the 1970’s naturalization was an uncomplicated endeavor; employers had positions to fill and were eager to hire those with proper credentials by offering immigration sponsorship. Both delved into their respective careers and began a family of four children. In the years that followed both Anila and Musa shared the same vision for their life together in America: a life of hard work, family, and successful children. Together they shared the same outlook and many of the same life experiences, yet their attitude toward and their practice of ethnic identity were very different. While over time Anila stopped worrying over issues of assimilating, Musa continued to maintain a separate identity at work and at home.

The lack of congruency in defining an ethnic identity in their lives appears to be a paradox on the surface, but in fact reflects the contested composition and the tension of defining ethnicity itself. Anila and Musa were not exceptions within their South Asian Muslim American community since they each perceived of their ethnic identity in distinctive ways despite sharing the same circumstances. For the members of the Islamic Society, ethnic identity is an important factor in their lives as each individual actively
maintained various ethnic practices of their own. When questioned about ethnic identity, every respondent had a different definition that prioritized nationality, culture, language, and religion along personal lines. The responses elicited share many commonalities of how other immigrants and/or a religious group define and practice ethnic identity – that of negotiation, adaptation, and preservation. The study of ethnicity is amassed in the literature on diaspora, transnationalism, cultural studies, and Folklore studies. Ethnicity in this chapter is seen as the lens that converges these theories and blurs disciplinary boundaries.

The study of ethnicity within the South Asian Muslim American community specifically during a post September 11 war on terror, however poses its own unique set of issues and concerns. This ethnicity additionally engages the matter of visibility and invisibility, proposing questions surrounding how one maintains a religious and cultural identity while simultaneously creating a new life in a country that largely is suspicious and weary of Muslim immigrants. In order to recognize the complex nuances of South Asian Muslim American identity, I examine the literature on ethnicity that engages the focal theme of this dissertation, the dialectic of visibility and invisibility.

Ethnicity’s characteristics, including language, religion, and culture, historically have shifted in number and in import challenging a consistent definition. Literature on ethnicity also reveals the same ambiguity as studies consider ethnicity through various disciplines and within distinct communities (Yang 2000). While it is true that individuals and groups possess the agency to manipulate the internal characteristics of their ethnicity, more significantly perhaps, is the weight of social and political dynamics that ethnicity bears.
For the South Asian Muslim American community the socio-political component weighs critically upon ethnicity. While the United States actively wages a philosophical and a literal “war on terror”, the climate of fear and hostility towards immigrants and Muslims has risen (Saad 2006; *Hate Crimes Up in Wake of Terrorist Attacks* 2001; Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream 2007). Negative stereotypes and misinformation about Islam has fostered anti-Muslim sentiment, but the claim to Muslim identity first over an American identity remains strong (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream 2007). This represents complex interactions between religion, state, and culture all of which impact ethnicity for immigrants in particular. Issues of discrimination and hostility towards Muslims accentuate the desire for invisibility, the ability to remain under the radar.

Furthermore, academic disciplines also have been defined and divided into area studies isolating the fields of Islam, South Asia, and Asian America placing Indian American Muslims and Pakistani American Muslims into an ambiguous territory (Maira and Shihade 2006; Donnan 1987). While culturally and linguistically, their identification places them in South Asia, religiously they are symbolically marked in the Middle East. Additionally, the lack of clear placement/designation within the American racial landscape that is largely defined by a black or white dichotomy historically has complicated the creation and maintenance of South Asian American identity (Kibria 1996; Prashad 2000; Takaki 1998).

Therefore, an antagonistic socio-political climate, an old post-cold war academic classification schema, and the lack of overlap in the literature necessitates a re-examination of ethnicity as it is understood and practiced by those who carry its weight
and to seek from these individual responses and from the literature on ethnicity the answer (s) to: for South Asian Muslim America - what does ethnicity mean today?

As folklorists, our history has been closely tied to the ethnic study of groups and communities and the ways in which people have chosen to *express and articulate themselves*. Ethnicity still remains of principal interest within the discipline as global migration becomes commonplace shifting, melding, and reinventing ideas of culture and identity. Furthermore, ethnicity and ethnic identity continue to foreground cultural and social issues that we investigate because as Abrahams states, "The study of the folklore of a group opens the possibility of revealing the deepest feelings of its members and, at the same time, of illuminating their ways of testing the boundaries of the community from within" (Abrahams 2005: 182).

In Chapter Two, I will begin the discussion of ethnicity by exploring just these "deepest feelings" of the Islamic Society's members on their own ethnic identity. The lives of Anila and Musa reflect a representative example of the community that is the Islamic Society in suburban Philadelphia. Building their lives and a home for their children as young professionals from a South Asian Muslim heritage, Anila and Musa discuss many of the shared concerns and hopes. Interwoven with the transcript from the interview with Anila and Musa, this chapter reviews the study of ethnicity, both in a general historical outline and in a more specific folklore and South Asian American frame. Throughout the discussion, the issue of visibility/invisibility remains in consideration of assimilation and the role of class. I examine those works in particular that have historically shaped the study of ethnicity briefly emphasizing the issues that relate to the development of how ethnicity is understood and discussed in this
dissertation. More specifically, these works facilitate a conceptual understanding of the variations in ethnicity as individuals negotiate their identities as immigrants, South Asians, Muslims, and Americans on multiple social planes. Recent ethnographic accounts are highlighted that share and underscore the main themes of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage. The analysis follows what Geertz defines as the “native’s point of view” which incorporates the meanings of symbols, words, and practices as understood by those that utilize them. In terms of ethnicity then, I strive to emphasize how the community’s individuals “represent themselves to themselves and to one another” (Geertz 1983:58). The combination of the historical examination and the more contemporary ethnographic studies of ethnicity not only inform the study of South Asian Muslim American ethnicity at the current time, but also reflects the ways in which this community, at a socio-political crossroads, requires another theoretical model. In sum, Chapter Two begins to address the main research questions of this dissertation: What does ethnic identity mean for South Asian American Muslims today? What are the forms of practice that ethnicity shapes and establishes? What is the relationship of class and ethnicity in this suburban community’s life? And lastly, as this chapter discusses - how does the previous and current literature assist in building a framework of analysis towards our understanding of South Asian American Muslim communities?

**Ethnicity**

The etymology of ethnic/ethnicity originates in Greek meaning “nation” but refers to nations as those that are “heathen.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines ethnic as, “Pertaining to nations not Christian or Jewish; Gentile, heathen, pagan” but the usage of
ethnic pertains, "to race; peculiar to a race or nation; ethnological. Also, pertaining to or having common racial, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics, esp. designating a racial or other group within a larger system; hence (U.S. colloq.), foreign, exotic."\^18

What is interesting to note is that inherent in the definition of ethnicity is the evocation of difference, in other words an ethnic group or people are a part of an unified nation but different than that of the majority population, i.e. Christians and Jews (Eller 1997).

Folklore has long been engaged in the study of groups of people and their ways of life dating back to the period of Romantic Nationalism (Abrahams 1993; Bendix 1997). The search for untainted materials reflective of a community untouched by the modern changing world represented an investigation of an encapsulated culture, language, or way of life that highlighted the difference between rural peasant and the industrialized urban dweller. (Abrahams 1993, 4; Bendix 1997). The exploration of groups of people and their beliefs and behavioral attributes that we now study as aspects of ethnicity was set in motion as a byproduct of Romanticism. The Grimm brothers are famously known for collecting tales and recording aspects of culture and history fearing its disappearance (Toelken 1996). This search for a pure and fixed culture was an investigation of an identity and a way of life as it existed in opposition to the prevailing societal norms.

For this dissertation, the implication of difference in the definition of ethnic is not only critical, but fundamental to examining the studies on ethnicity through multiple planes of meaning of social identification and its contextual nature. It is essential since this South Asian American Muslim community strategically uses ethnicity to differentiate themselves against the majority non-Muslim American population and simultaneously

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against other South Asian American Muslim communities as well. Visibility and invisibility of ethnicity is tactically managed by the individual and by the community as a whole.

From definition to a conceptual understanding, there is a need to begin to examine the literature on ethnicity, first from a historical perspective. Studies on ethnicity are considerable in number and diverse across disciplines; what we understand ethnicity to be has been modified significantly in the past 60 years. Nonetheless, a common thread in nearly all of the literature transmits an inherent apologetic undertone and an allowance for error and for ethnicity’s definitional slippages and historical transformations (Sollors 1996; Petersen 1997). Recent works hesitate in defining ethnicity in a bounded and authoritative manner separating them from older works with the realization that individuals, communities and socio-political environments change continuously (Sollors 1989). While we study ethnicity through various disciplines and historical moments, it is critical to remember that the meaning of ethnicity is multifaceted, personal and affected by the current social and political circumstances. Furthermore, in this chapter I assert that ethnicity marks “the other” and as Royce notes, “Dominant groups rarely define themselves as ethnics” (Royce 1982: 3). In turn, the demarcation of ethnicity emphasizes its dependent relationship to class (Weedon 2004). This section overviews the literature on ethnicity from a United States historical perspective and considers the ways in which these inquiries on ethnicity deliberate characteristics of the ‘other’, the boundaries of groups, and the path of assimilation. Here I highlight those works in chronological order that exemplify the shifts in focus of ethnic studies but in addition share a relationship to social class issues. Because the community is composed of almost exclusively upper
middle class and middle class professionals, I feel that the inclusion of class is a requisite tool for analysis.

**Key Developments**

The work of Max Weber provides a suitable point to begin the study of ethnicity from a historical perspective. As one of the few social theorists of his time to write about ethnicity at length, Weber recognized the significance of ethnicity even though it was never a primary issue of his writings (Guibernau 1997: 2). His conceptual understanding of ethnicity impacted later theories particularly on points of descent and the subjective nature of ethnicity. More specifically, ethnic identity, according to Weber, was based on “a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or of both, or because of memories of colonization and migration” (Weber 1978: 389). The idea of descent was important although blood ties were not; but moreover, it was the belief in a shared history that Weber argued would withstand time as the unifying agent (Cornell 1998). He acknowledged the ambiguity on which ethnicity was based emphasizing how the varieties of physical traits and customs or habits can create for a group either an affinity or repulsion towards other groups (388). Weber also acknowledges the role of migration on ethnicity as the force that intensifies sentiments of group identity in a new country and simultaneously, spurs a longing for the old country. He states, “The persistent effect of the old ways and of childhood reminiscences continues as a source of native country sentiment (Heimatsgefühl) among emigrants even when they have become so thoroughly adjusted to the new country that return to their homeland would be intolerable …” (388). Migration not only builds an ethnic identity, it
also instigates a longing for a common, left behind past. Perhaps out of all of the points Weber delineates, the most significant in terms of this dissertation lies with the role of politics. For Weber, ethnicity spurred a group formation that rallied around a political identity: “it is primarily the political community, no matter how artificially organized that inspires the belief in common ethnicity” (389). The implication of the political upon ethnic group formation significantly shapes how South Asian American Muslim identity is created and maintained in an environment of fear and hostility. These early insights of descent, political formation, migration and culture, define ethnicity and have become a major influence on theoretical concepts of ethnic identity and serve as valuable ways to begin an examination of ethnicity during a period of crisis or terrorism.

From Weber, the focus shifts to U.S. based scholars who have developed and furthered the study of ethnicity. In July of 1916, Randolph Bourne published an article concerning the plurality of identity that can be produced from the interaction of multiple locales in his essay "Trans-National America" published in *Atlantic Monthly*. Although he employed the term ‘transnational’ in his discussion of World War I, Bourne still was one of the very first in the U.S. to recognize and write about the variety of people, language, religion, and culture that composed America. As a prominent social critic, he opposed the idea of the United States (a predominately Anglo-Saxon nation at the time) as the melting pot of nations maintaining that immigrant differences should be acknowledged and allowed to prosper in order to benefit the United States. In his writings he only considered European immigration, urging America to “make something of this transnational spirit” since it is “our lot … to be a federation of cultures” (Bourne
1999). Unnamed in 1916, ethnicity still had a presence in American society and Bourne’s writings attest to a difference in majority versus minority cultural life.

The study of ethnicity as it is known today was spearheaded by Robert E. Park at the University of Chicago in the 1920’s. Park, the founding father of the Chicago School of Sociology, recognized overlapping issues of race, culture, and ethnicity in a post World War I America. Park formalized the study of ethnicity while also initiating the consideration of integration of minority groups and the issue of assimilation. Park, with Ernest Burgess, defined assimilation as, “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes, of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (Park 1969: 735). His contribution was important for the founding of the Anglo conformity model of assimilation and ethnic studies in general, but is significant in this project due to his analysis of the processes of assimilation, race and cultural difference, and the ‘marginal man.’ Park, who wrote about Black and Japanese in the U.S., often did not make a clear distinction in his writings between what is now understood as separate concepts of ethnicity and race. For example, his essays on race relations discuss groups such as Hawaiians, Brazilians, and Indians as races with descriptions of culture and physical traits which would in current literature be considered topics of ethnic and racial characteristics (Park 1950; Cornell 1998). Park believed the social communities formed from immigrants seeking others with the same cultural background in the U.S. Once immigrants established themselves as a group with nationalistic ties, they let go of tribal or provincial ties: “What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge – a
common understanding ...” (Park 1969). Park then regarded all such minority communities to be continuously evolving accommodating to the host society and eventually assimilating into the stronger majority’s life style. More specifically his theory was divided into four stages that included contact, competition, accommodation, and lastly, assimilation: “The growth of modern states exhibits the progressive merging of smaller, mutually exclusive, into larger and more inclusive social groups. The result ... has usually been followed, ... by a more or less complete adoption, by the members of the smaller groups, of the language, technique, and mores of the larger and more inclusive ones. The immigrant readily takes over the language, manners, the social ritual, and outward forms of his adopted country” (Park 1950: 205; 1937). Immigrants followed an inevitable pattern of transformation in the U.S. and the sense from Park’s writings is that such inevitability is desired by immigrants as well. In other words, the process of assimilation was naturalized by Park as one that was progressively linear, over time all immigrants in the U.S. would assimilate into the American social and cultural life as “assimilation is central in the historical and cultural processes” (Park 1969).

However, the ease of assimilation was dependent upon race: “... the process of acculturation and assimilation and the accompanying amalgamation of “racial stocks” do not proceed with the same ease and the same speed in all cases. Particularly where peoples who come together are of divergent cultures and widely different racial stocks ...” (Park 1928). Park cites the Japanese experience as an example of racial differences impeding assimilation because of their “distinctive racial hallmark” and stating that, “The Japanese like the Negro, is condemned to remain among us as an abstraction, a symbol – and a symbol not only of his own race but of the Orient ...” (164). While the attainment
of an American lifestyle through residence in the U.S. is possible for the Japanese, complete assimilation is not. Because of their physical traits they are bound to remain as a differentiated group.

Park elaborated on the differentiation of a group and its effects in his essay, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man." Park writes, "It is in the mind of the marginal man that the oral turmoil which new cultural contacts occasion manifests itself the most obvious forms. It is in the mind of the marginal man – the changes and fusions of culture are going on – that we can best study the processes of civilization and of progress" (Park 1928). As Park viewed it, two distinct parts of the self existed in an immigrant that never could meld and always remained separate, that of one's native culture/race and that of the adopted self of the host society.

Today Park's theorization of assimilation no longer holds currency, but it has impacted ethnic studies causing later scholars to rethink issues along racial and cultural lines and to reconsider the processes of assimilation. His work echoes the origin of the term ethnicity through the reinforcement of the idea that those that are ethnic are those that are different. Proceeding from Park, it must be asked if that difference is based on racial or cultural lines and can such differences assimilate? Despite Park's estimation that it would eventually lose its power, ethnic identity remains an influential force impacting social dynamics in the U.S.

Milton Gordon added to the assimilationist model of ethnicity in his work, *Assimilation in American Life* (Gordon 1964). Gordon's theories inform this dissertation not only with his categorization of the types of assimilation but also through his understanding of the role of perception in ethnic identity and his concept of 'ethclass'.
His work demonstrates the shift in ethnic studies towards a deeper understanding of how
groups balance their lives in a new socio-cultural environment and also the manner n
which class affects such adjustments.

New waves of immigration that were non-European had begun to arrive in the U.S. as
Gordon wrote about the three main theories for assimilation: Anglo conformity, melting
pot, and cultural pluralism (Gordon 1961). However, his own theoretical framework on
ethnic groups categorized the processes of assimilation into types of assimilation.
Gordon proposed that in many ways behavioral assimilation had been the focus of those
studying ethnic groups in the U.S. but was in fact only part of the larger picture. His
theory accounted for seven types of assimilation that includes behavioral assimilation or
acculturation, the adoption of cultural practices such as diet, speech or dress; marital
assimilation or intermarriage of groups; attitudinal assimilation or the lack of prejudice;
behavioral perceptual or the lack of discrimination; identificational assimilation or the
sense of group unity, peoplehood; civic assimilation or the unity in social values; and
lastly, structural assimilation, “the large scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions
of host society, on primary group level” (Gordon 1964: 71). Assimilation was inevitable
for ethnic groups, but Gordon advocated for his definition of ‘structural pluralism’,
acculturation but with the separation of social institutions on a large scale (Gordon
1964:159; Alba 1997).

Gordon, like Park, also viewed life in the U.S. for ethnic groups as a continuous
process. Even though assimilation was conceived as a linear and irreversible, and that
many from the second generation would over time lose their ethnicity, Gordon’s work
draws attention to the types of assimilation, its processual nature, and the consideration of
the perception of ethnic identity. In *Human Nature, Class, Ethnicity*, he elaborated with
the suggestion that ethnic identity is based not only on how people identify themselves,
but also how *others* identify them. In what he labeled as ‘bio-social development’,
Gordon argued that society assessed and judged individuals and since, “the sense of
ethnicity, because it cannot be shed by social mobility, ... since society insists on its
inalienable ascription from cradle to grave, becomes incorporated into the self” (Gordon
1978: 73)\(^{19}\) Thus, ethnic identity is not a trait with which one is simply born, but also one
that society ascribes to you. The impact of the host society and the concurrent
implications of difference offer new meaning to the creation of ethnic identity; it is not
just a matter of a combination of religion, race or cultural heritage, ethnicity is also how
others see you and how that perception becomes manifested as part of self identification.
This important delineation, along with the seven types of assimilation, signals that
ethnicity possesses malleable qualities; characteristics that are unfixed.

In addition to the role of perception, Gordon recognized class as a factor in the
development of ethnic identity as he stated, “The picture is made more complex by the
existence of social class divisions which cut across ethnic group lines ... As each ethnic
group which has been here for the requisite time has developed ... succeeding
generations, it has produced a college-educated group which composes an upper middle
class ... segment of the larger groups. Such class divisions tend to restrict primary group
relations even further, for although the ethnic group member feels a general sense of
identification with all the bearers of his ethnic heritage, he feels comfortable in intimate
social relations only with those who share his own class background or attainment”

\(^{19}\) Italics original text.
(Gordon 1961: 280; Cornell 1998). Social class, from Gordon's perspective a difference in economic and political power, intersected with ethnicity through the variable of 'ethclass.' Gordon differentiates the types of affiliation based upon heritage versus behavior. While ethnicity binds people through a common heritage, class binds people through behavioral practice. Gordon identified those that shared the same ethnicity and class, were from the same ethclass. The theory of ethclass positions class as a key element in the analysis of ethnicity which is a central argument for understanding the practice of this South Asian American community in Philadelphia.

Herbert Gans also extended the study of ethnicity with class analysis with his work, The Urban Villagers (Gans 1965). Gans lived in a small neighborhood in Boston researching the daily life of Italian Americans and their businesses and organizations. He attributed class as the more instrumental factor effecting social groups and community life rather than ethnicity and argued that it is primarily the working class that is ethnic (Gans 1965, 1979). His analysis adheres to the straight line theory of assimilation which assumes the inevitability of acculturation and eventual assimilation of ethnic groups into the majority society, but also suggests that assimilation has different rates and challenges for different class levels. Whether or not the reality of this concept holds validity in current social frames is not as central to this investigation as the inter-relationship and interdependence of ethnicity and class of which Gans writes. Does class affect the nature of group identification and simultaneously the nature of assimilation for immigrant groups? Can we look at the practices of ethnicity to determine the answers?

In his key essay, Symbolic Ethnicity, Gans further defined the ethnic identification of later generation as only carrying import when desired such as on religious occasions or
family events. By the third generation, Gans states, "people are less and less interested in their ethnic cultures and organizations ... and are instead more concerned with maintaining their ethnic identity ... and with finding ways of feeling and expressing that identity in suitable ways ... the ethnic role is today less of an ascriptive than a voluntary role ... ethnic are still identified as such by others ... but the behavioral expectations that once went with identification by others have declined sharply, so that ethnics have some choice about when and how to play ethnic roles" (Gans 1979: 7). This statement does not take into account the significant impact that race or socio-political events have upon ascriptions of ethnicity; however it is interesting to note the role of choice in the establishment of ethnic identity. As a South Asian American Muslim living in a society that fears constant terrorism from others that are also immigrant Muslims, what are the choices in how one creates and maintains an ethnic identity? Although Gans fails to address how these practices of symbolic identity may actually be manifestations of a social and/or possibly ethnic identity (Staub 1989), his work does offer another dimension in seeking more clarity in how ethnicity is ascribed, how it is maintained, and how it is influenced by class, generations, and choice.

The most frequently cited names in ethnic studies belong to Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan. Since the publication of their widely read book, Beyond the Melting Pot in 1963, they, together and individually, have written extensively on ethnicity in the United States. Their theoretical push considered ethnic groups as interest groups initiating the instrumentalist school (Glazer 1963). Glazer and Moynihan noted that, "consciousness of one's ethnic background may be intermittent. It is only on occasion that someone may think of or be reminded of his background" (19) indicating that with
successive generations, gradual assimilation occurred but that ethnic identity remained an important linking component for groups to forward their common interests (Cornell 1998; Glazer 1963). However, the authors also clearly stated such assimilation had not yet happened in New York City nor was likely to occur. "Time alone does not dissolve the groups if they are not close to the Anglo-Saxon center. Color marks off a group, regardless of time" (20). In addition, the authors use intermarriage as a marker for integration levels citing low percentages in particular for the Jewish community. Although the claim of the direct relationship of intermarriage and integration into mainstream society had not been precisely analyzed, the point is of interest as it relates to this South Asian American Muslim community.

In 1975 the authors claimed in an edited volume, "Ethnicity seems to be a new term" recognizing the persistence of "group distinctiveness and identity" (Glazer, Moynihan, and Schelling 1975: 3) as a force within American society. The efficacy of this force resulted from ethnicity employed as an interest group; ethnicity was seen as an identity that was comprised of parts that could be manipulated for advancement in given situations. More specifically, groups chose common interests to define themselves and essentially set their agenda socially and politically.

Glazer acknowledges three main shortcomings of his study thirty five years later stating the study was completed prior to the Immigration Bill of 1965 which completely altered the composition of New York City, and complicated assumed upward mobility patterns over generations of all ethnic groups and simultaneously confused differentiations of ethnicity and race (Glazer 2000). In recent publications in fact Glazer,

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20 Chapter three discusses in more detail the few intermarriages that have occurred in the Islamic Society.
still concerned with issues of race, believed strongly that assimilation would have worked but did not because of the failure to incorporate black Americans into the assimilation model (Glazer 1997). Again this point can be debated but nonetheless remains an interesting assertion as it relates to the Islamic Society whose members have emigrated from a non-European, non-Christian, state.

The question has to be asked: can assimilation occur for South Asian Muslims in America? A response to this question needs to include the work of Fredrik Barth. While the early analysis of ethnicity focused more on the traits of ethnicity, his work shifted the concentration towards the complex interactions of difference. The emphasis on boundaries and social exchanges influences the ways in which ethnicity can be considered vis-à-vis the community. Again, the issue of difference comes to the fore and remains a critical factor in the framing of the discourse of ethnicity when coupled with dialectic tension of visibility versus invisibility.

**The Birthing of Ethnicity: Anila and Musa**

In building their lives and raising their children in the United States, Anila and Musa remained determined and conscientious about their identity as Pakistanis, Muslims, and Americans. In the transcript of their personal narrative that follows, Anila and Musa relate the experiences of their early years in America and of their marriage and careers:

FK: Please tell me about when you migrated to the U.S. and what motivated you to come.

MUSA: I was 17-years-old, 1970. I graduated from the school in Pakistan, my A-levels, which was the English equivalent of high
school. And I came here to go to college, so the motivation was our education.

FK: So you came from where?

MUSA: Karachi.

FK: Karachi to...?

MUSA: To, initially to, to Tulane University in New Orleans for my freshman year. And then I transferred to Cornell in Upstate New York. That's where I spent the rest of my education.

FK: Did you have any other family here when you came?

MUSA: No. Well, my brother had, my younger brother had arrived six months earlier, five months earlier, to do the same thing. And so, we were separate in the first year, when he was in North Carolina and I was in New Orleans, but the second year we were together, and have been since then.

FK: Okay. And so, when you finished, then you went on to medical school?

MUSA: No. Uh, once I graduated with a bachelor's in chemical engineering in '74, I went out to work and got a, I was recruited out of school, so went and got a job. Spent 14 months working and during that work experience I applied for and became a permanent resident.

FK: Oh, okay. Now why did you do that?

MUSA: At that time, this is 1974, '75, at that time my parents had indicated that things were not quite conducive to returning to Pakistan
because of the political, economic environment there. So the best alternative was to get the permanent residency which allowed me to stay here and continue to work. So two things, one, the ability to, first priority was that, because of the economy - critical situation in Pakistan, that decision was to stay here. In order to stay here, you needed the appropriate documentation, and that appropriate documentation was permanent residency. Ah, and it was relatively easy in those days to get that and it was, we were sponsored by the employer. It took about six or eight months for us to...

FK: No longer.

MUSA: No longer. But in those days, that’s what the case. And that was the right thing to do, um, so that we didn’t have to… Otherwise, we’d have to leave the country.

FK: Right, right. Was that a difficult decision or were you comfortable?

MUSA: I was comfortable with it because the intent was to secure the ability to stay and work and, you know, pursue further education if you wanted to. Um, but not necessarily to stay here permanently. No.

FK: Okay. And then you continued your education?

MUSA: Yes, after 14 months of, after I got my permanent residency I went back to school to Cornell, to get an MBA. And uh, that took two years. When I graduated from school, I was again recruited, got a job to work in Pennsylvania, in Allentown.
FK: Okay, so you’re coming to visit was because of work.

MUSA: Yes.

FK: Okay. So then you stayed in Allentown for a few years?

MUSA: For, uh, let’s see, six, eight years. But during that time, the first year after graduation when I got my job, I went back to Pakistan to get married. I was 25 at that time. 25. So I first got engaged and then a year later I got married, 25 … 26. About 26, 27, I got married. And I continued my employment for eight years then.

FK: In Allentown.

MUSA: In Allentown, yes. Six years at the same place. Uh, once I got married, I was joined by a wife, then we started to think of a family and what we were going to, and how we were going to live as a family. And so, within a few months, or six months to a year after she arrived, we bought a house so you can see the children was starting to have roots here. And um, my wife, being a physician, wanted to pursue her career education and so we looked for how we can assist her in her thing in the meantime. By this time, I was already an immigrant so we applied for her immigration.

FK: Okay. And then that was fairly straightforward.

MUSA: That was fairly straightforward. As a wife, she had very … - no problem. We lived in Allentown for six years when I was, well, Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton. I think that’s the area, Lehigh Valley, ‘cause I was still working for the company, but we moved physically
because my wife getting her residence in the area of Easton, so we moved out of the house and bought another house in Easton so we could help her be close to her job and I would commute. And during this process, we had our first son - our first child was born in 1981. Um, my wife was going through a residency program that she interrupted and stayed home with the baby for a little while. Then we got some help from home to help us with him.

FK: Family or...?

MUSA: Yeah, family. My wife’s grandmother came over to stay with us. Um, then later she went back to, you know, once the baby was a year or so old, she went back to, she obtained her residency and she got admitted to the hospital here in Philadelphia. So we moved, again, to Philadelphia. And I commuted for a little while to Allentown and then, uh, we, then I started my own business, but ... left their products, started my own business and stayed around Philadelphia area. So 1983 ... and have been here since.

FK: And where have you been? Your business is...?

MUSA: Today is, um, in real estate investments.

FK: Okay. So you came then because of marriage. Were you interested in migrating or was that an active decision or...?

ANILA: I don’t think it was a particularly thought out or active decision. It was kind of, it was just before all our ... that time, a time for getting engaged, a time for getting married, a time for, you know,
completing your studies. And then, I was in my fourth year of medical school, in Lahore, when we got engaged. And so, um, it was more going with the flow. It seemed like fun basically. It wasn’t really any thought out. I assumed, and it seemed like the things that were, may have been focused on were actually ones that happened along the way that I feel would happen along the way. For instance, pursuing residency, passing exams. I assumed that, you know, we’d be obviously have a family. And that was just something that was an assumption. It wasn’t actively thought out that I’d do this and then I’d do this, particular time I’d do this, I’d take certain times off for when we’d have children or whatever. It was kind of going with the flow, seeing how it was. And it was a fun concept, leaving Pakistan and just going to see a new country. And that’s actually how it all began. It was just glamour, I think, at that time when I was about 21-22-- I was just thinking about the good life. And whatever it was, it just seemed like the thing to do.

FK: Did you have any other family in the U.S. at the time?

ANILA: Uh, not immediate family. I was the first in my immediate family to come here. So, uh, it was a total new experience. It was culturally very different. And uh, we were newly married. It was kind of a fun situation.

When Musa and Anila migrated to the U.S. to experience a new life, it was unlikely that they were considering the strategies of the creation of an ethnic identity or the
maintenance and management of ethnicity in socio-political contexts. Yet key facets of their lives as South Asian immigrants, Muslims, and professionals, perpetually marks their existence the "other."

The literature pertaining to the study of ethnicity historically encompasses a considerable range of research and theories but I have chosen to pay particular attention to those works that directly influence the analysis of the Islamic Society's ethnic identity. Weber begins the discussion with his early reflections that provides an initial definition of ethnicity and its characteristics: ethnicity is based on descent but gains strength from the belief in a common heritage; ethnicity is subjective in nature manipulated by groups to unite or to distance from one another; and for Weber, ethnicity is politically charged; it is politics and the political nature of societies that birth ethnicity. Weber's definition of ethnicity is a key point at which to start our analysis of ethnic identity with the Islamic community because it serves to facilitate our understanding that members do share in a belief of a common ancestry and likewise share in Weber's own words, "the persistent effect of the old ways and of childhood reminiscences (which) continues as a source of native country sentiment" (388).

What then is the role of ethnicity in the lives of Anila and Musa? Throughout their years in the U.S., Anila and Musa kept in close contact with their relatives in Pakistan, traveling to visit as often as they could. For this family, their attachment to Pakistan was relived through frequent trips and as Anila clearly voiced that she, "was always nostalgic for the homeland and, um, but we went on with doing what we were doing." For the Islamic society as well the visits to India or Pakistan were constant and the frequency increased with the birth of their children. As Anila remembered the early days of arriving
in the U.S., each discovery was “fun” and joyous although she was conscious of the differences. She describes the issues of difference: “Education, different behavior, different people, different uh, the lingo was different. Um, jokes, food, everything was different, but it had a, the newness of it was fun, but of course there was some negative aspects to it, too, because uh ... One problem, I felt I wasn’t always treated like the others around me, the Caucasians around me.” The recognition of difference paired with the shared heritage facilitated the birth of an ethnic identity, South Asian Muslim American.

Park and Gordon’s scholarship continue the discussion in this dissertation in three spheres: 1. How do we define ethnic identity and the manner in which race and culture play a part in its creation; 2. What is the role of assimilation for immigrants today and for South Asian Muslims in particular; 3. is there validity for the concept of the ‘Marginal Man’ in the case of South Asian Muslim Americans? Both scholars contributed to the processual nature of ethnic identity, its emergent and malleable characteristics.

Anila maintained part-time hours at her practice in order to be home as much as possible with her children when they were very young and took them to the mosque for weekly religious instruction. Anila remembers the early years: “It was always nostalgic [sic] for the homeland and, um, but we went on with doing what we were doing. And as our kids grew older, I guess we got more and more rooted ...” (Anila 2004). I asked what issues were important for them in trying to teach their children about their heritage. Anila felt it was very necessary for her to teach the children about their cultural heritage and religion and states,

Well, the most important thing that I felt was that it had actually not much to do with the heritage. It was actually more that the family
environment was stable ... that's why I never worked more than three
days a week. And that education was very important for us, and that
they should have ... a keen sense of family...

She made many adjustments to maintain a routine in the home especially for meals
and for a few years had her grandmother living with them helping with the children. But
Anila continued talking about the family by adding later,

But the initial period (of moving to the U.S.), they (their extended
family) were either with us or visiting or they were going back and
forth between Pakistan and here. So uh, that was a stability. And the
second thing from the religious pint of view was coming to the Islamic
center ... Every Sunday, they (her two older sons) would come and
they would attend the Center; meet with other Pakistanis and families.
We had a pretty busy social life on weekends ...and that's how they
maintained in touch with the language, the culture, the food, the dress.

When Anila graduated from medical school her passion was to practice obstetrics and
neonatology, but she knew that this field demanded unpredictable evening and weekend
hours. Instead she relinquished her first choice of specialization in her medical career
opting for a field that allowed for more routine hours so that she could be with her
children. In starting her own practice, Anila also made certain that her office and her
schedule accommodated her young children. Conversely, Musa's education training in
engineering and business demanded that he work a regular nine to five day during the
week. Anila remarking on the difference stated,
I feel that my own work environment I created such there are some
things that I would do that Musa wouldn’t agree with. Like for
instance, taking the kids there if they were out of school or they were
sick or something, I’d take them to work with me … that’s one stock
example for instance. He wouldn’t integrate family with work. Work
is work. A babysitter should be at home with the sick child … I felt
that work had to be a place that was very similar for me, in comfort
level, to home.

Despite their busy careers, they both strived to maintain a strong connection to their
religious and cultural heritage through language, dress, food, religious performance of
prayers, etc.; for all four of their children noting that parenting the younger two was in
many ways easier. Anila offered her thoughts,

I think that with the, the major difference between the two sets (of
kids) is that I’m much more comfortable with talking about and living
my culture, our culture, and background, language … I think that’s the
main difference … The second thing is that I’m much more laid back
with the second two. And I think part of it has to do with the outcome
of the first two … And somehow they, especially our daughter …
she’s very comfortable with being a Pakistani-American. She talks
about it in an almost all white girls school, all girls school. And she’s,
she doesn’t feel undermined in any way by the fact that she has a
different heritage.
Musa and Anila’s parenting reflects the shifts in the import of assimilation. Like the majority of the Islamic Society who had children soon after migrating to America, Musa and Anila had a strong desire to instill a religious and cultural heritage to their children. Visits to South Asia along with maintaining food and dress traditions followed religious instruction on Sundays. Anila stated, “Every Sundays they would come and they would attend the center, meet with other Pakistanis and families. We had a pretty busy social life on weekends; there’d be some dinner at someplace or the other, or Quran-khanis. And that’s how they maintained in touch with the language, the culture, the food, the dress. Um, and the other part was going back every, I would say it wasn’t a consistent time, whenever we could do it.”

With ten years between their first two children and their second two, Anila and Musa have become more relaxed and confident in their parenting. They labored in their careers to be able to afford a comfortable life style and private school education for their children. Both felt deeply about instilling strong appreciation and value for education and were proud that their eldest two children had graduated from Ivy League universities and were pursuing graduate degrees.

Musa added,

There are two things that I think are, in my opinion, very critical to achieve the comfort level here. One is the emphasis on education, both husband and wife, Anila and I have an enormous degree of respect for education, for ourselves, for us to have that, and then to impart that to our kids and provide everything we can for them in order for them to have a good life. And the second is money. I think
financially one has to have a degree of security that helps these two, financial and the pursuit of education, will help in building confidence in oneself to achieve and try to secure the security and the comfort level to live here ... (Musa 2004).

Other Islamic Society members such as Waleed and his wife raised their three children with a priority given to education, religion, and culture. The couple made certain never to speak English in the home so the children could learn Urdu. Yet, in the 46 years he lived in the U.S. as a graduate student and worked as a tenured professor, Waleed never had any desires to return to Pakistan. Currently he still did not consider himself as “fully American” (Waleed 2004; Shahana 2004).

Asif and Ruksana each also had divergent responses to defining their ethnicity. A physician by training, Ruksana defined her ethnic identity as “Pakistani first” but substantiated her definition that the identity was with a Pakistan that existed thirty years ago. Now she states that she feels “alien” in Pakistan (Ruksana 2004). Her husband Asif, an engineer, defined his ethnic identity as Pakistani American with no clarifications. While raising their two boys, Asif and Ruksana stressed education and were extremely active in the development of the religious community as well. All of the responses differed on the prioritization of various traits but all shared the importance of education in a non-religious setting and financial comfort.

Moreover, both take note of the role of difference in ethnic groups from the host society and how such difference plays out in the process of ethnicity and assimilation. Differences in race, culture, or religion not only affect assimilation but such issues produce marginality. However, differences in social class can also significantly alter
alliances within an ethnic group creating Gordon’s ‘ethclass’ and is critical for
understanding here since the role of class impresses upon the analysis of ethnic identity
with the Islamic Society to a great extent. Later chapters further discuss the ways in
which this community’s case, marginality and class forge an interdependent relationship,
a relationship that is strategically manipulated in balancing ethnic identity.

As the young community established their lives in America, the members
purposefully marked their personal lives as culturally, religiously, and ethnically
different, distinct from the predominately mainstream western society. Partially driven
by the desire to sustain their past and partially driven by fear of losing religious and
cultural heritage as their children were raised in the U.S.; the community proactively
sustained a visible identity through ethnic practices of dress, food, and Islam. In addition,
it is important to note that the time frame for defining ethnicity for the Islamic Society
was in the 1980’s and early 1990’s and although these years were before the terroristic
events of September 11, 2001 when the socio-political climate was not as suspicious of
South Asians, Muslims, or immigrants, the 1993 bombing of the world Trade Center had
occurred stirring anti-Muslim sentiments. Yet, in tandem with the generally tolerant
socio-political time frame of the later 1980’s and early 1990’s was the fact that the
community was comprised of professionals residing in affluent neighborhoods. Class
and the time period of the 1980’s – 1990’s provided the community with the ease of
creating a visibly different ethnicity.

_The Creation of Ethnicity: Invisibility_
The studies from authors, Gans, Glazer and Moynihan, all offer various ways to reflect upon ethnicity and its relationship to class. All of these interrelated issues of difference serve as theoretical building blocks instrumental in developing understanding of the ways in which and the manner in which this community assimilates into American society. The studies also raise important questions concerning the degree of agency in ethnic identity that groups may possess and the degree of host society dominance in ascribing meaning to ethnic identity. The works noted here collectively represent a scholarly approach to ethnic studies that is based in the United States social and political framework. While the literature illustrates general and often conflicting theoretical models, each of the studies offers a layer of knowledge of the dynamics of creating and maintaining an ethnic identity.

The lives of Musa and Anila represent the complex shifts in visibility that the larger South Asian Muslim American community in which they engage with the negotiation of their ethnicity. Simultaneously maintaining a religious and cultural heritage distinct from the majority society, Musa and Anila as professionals merged their lives into upper middle class daily life.

FK: So in the first ten years, would you say you both tried to just assimilate or...?

ANILA: I would say I would.

FK: Was it conscious or you were so busy with day-to-day life that you didn’t think about...?

ANILA: Both, both. Uh, it was easy because I didn’t have to think about it. I think the busy-ness helped the assimilation. But the
assimilation is not something I would have done voluntarily. Uh, it was almost involuntary because it was a necessity.

FK: You didn’t feel that you had an option to think about, a choice?
ANILA: Yes, yes, yes. I was in it, I was busy, and I went along with it.

FK: Would you agree with that?
MUSA: For her, in her case, yes.

FK: How about yourself?
MUSA: It is different in my case. I, from a business standpoint, I have two lives. One is outside the home and one in the home. Um, outside the home I would be, I would try to be as comfortable as I can at work and not having, not differentiate myself because of my religion or culture or heritage. Um, and I lived with that, even if I had some handicap along the way with something. I lived with it and tried to overcome it. At home I was supposedly all family and the Pakistani mentality and, you know how I was raised.

FK: There’s two different roles that you were sort of playing.
MUSA: Yes, mm-hmm. And to some degree, even today I have the same. I’m different at work. My behavior, my thinking, my work. And at home I’m a different person.

FK: So do you feel you were trying to integrate your two aspects?
ANILA: Very much so because I feel that my own work environment, I created such there are some things that I would do that Musa
wouldn’t agree with. Like for instance, taking the kids there if they were out of school or they were sick or something, I’d take them to work with me. And uh, that’s one stock example, for instance. He wouldn’t integrate family with work. Work is work. A babysitter should be at home to take care of the sick child, or at a friend’s house or whatever, but not bring him to work or her to work. But in my opinion, I felt that work had to be a place that was very similar for me, in comfort level, to home. And the people that worked with me, including my secretary or biller or general manager, all knew that there had to be a kitchen, there had to be a little place where a kid would sleep or whatever. And even the patients knew that there could be a little toddler running around here and there. And I felt that it was important that that whole family of workers were comfortable with it.

MUSA: Would you think of that as a male-female thing? How many, how many males do you…?

ANILA: So um…

FK: So he asked would you say that’s a male-female issue or is it deeper than that?

ANILA: Uh, I think it’s deeper. I think it’s deeper. I think it depends on what your profession is. For instance, I think his training is geared more towards, as you heard, engineering and MBA, and I think that an MBA training or something like that, or a lawyer or those kind of situations would be more business-oriented, more formal, more, you
know, you’re going to a corporate company. That’s how you have to be is separate from… Whereas mine, it could have become, I have an option as a physician in my own practice, rather than academia. Or if I was another subspecialty, this analogy would have been different. So I felt that choosing it was, choosing allergy and asthma was actually a second choice for me. And that was a thought out process in the sense that I felt that I wanted something that would help me take care of the kids alongside my practice. I could never separate the two.

FK: What was your first choice?

ANILA: Uh, neonatology. It was very intensive. It’s a very intensivist by nature.

ANILA: Okay. So then you probably have an idea. It’s a very intense thing. You can burn out very fast, but that was my first love. I loved it, doing medicine, see. And it was an active choice, not pursuing that even though the neonatologist did want me to pursue it doing medicine. She thought - it was actually the choice for allergy and asthma was even more difficult because it was a non-funded fellowship that I was getting. So I actually didn’t get paid for the two years that I did that fellowship. So it was chosen for the future, with the future in mind, with the four kids. So my emphasis was to integrate that feeling of family into the, into my work environment. And that’s why I’m very comfortable with it.
FK: So now, it seems that your, the two children, because there’s a whole decade, between the older children, the younger two.

ANILA: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

FK: What things are different in your parenting, do you think, between the two sets?

ANILA: I think that with the, the major difference between the two sets is that I’m much more comfortable with talking about and living my culture, our culture, and background, language. And uh, with their peers and with my peers, and with their friends. I think that’s the main difference. For instance, with Kasim and Ameer I couldn’t have thought of going to the principal of the little school and telling them that, look, my kid has a hard time because he needs water in the bathroom when he... Uh, with Fuad I did just that. And they made arrangements for it. They said, well, we’ll keep wet wipes for him or something like that. It’s a little issue, but for Fuad as a second-grader, as a first-grader, it was a big issue. He wouldn’t go. And these were little things that we just didn’t deal with and it just made things more comfortable. And that’s the main difference that I feel. The second thing is that I’m much more laid back with the second two. And I think part of it has to do with the outcome of the first two and the fact that, despite everything that they did or did not go through, they still came out in a way that I’m very comfortable and pleased with. So that itself is a big sense of wellbeing, it confers a big sense of wellbeing.
And somehow they, especially our daughter, Malika, she’s very comfortable with being a Pakistani-American. She talks about it in an almost all-white girl’s school, all-girls school. And she’s, she doesn’t feel undermined in any way by the fact that she has a different heritage.

MUSA: There are two things that I think are, in my opinion, very critical to achieve the comfort level here. One is the emphasis on education, both husband and wife, Meher and I have enormous degree of respect for education, for ourselves, for us to have that, and then to impart that for our kids and provide everything we can for them in order for them to have a good life. And the second is money. I think financially one has to have a degree of security that helps both of these two, financial and the pursuit of education will help in building in confidence in oneself to achieve and try to secure the security and the comfort level to live here in this area. And we have worked on both ends and I think we’ve been very successful at it. And today we feel comfortable because of that and, to some degree, secure. I don’t want to say we are very secure, but I think there’s some higher degree of security than most other people because of those two elements.

FK: Security, you mean in American society, like feeling...

FK: comfortable and...

MUSA: Yeah.
MUSA: Yeah. I mean, for her to be able to go and talk to the principal, I don’t think most people in our community even have the guts or the confidence to say that.

FK: No, I would agree with you.

MUSA: And two reasons that stick out. One is because of her academic background, her ability to, you know, she’s a physician, she’s been educated, she’s well-educated, she’s respected, and people have respect for that. And second, that we’re paying our money. And the only way we get that attention is because we are paying the money. If I was sending my kids to a public school, you know, they don’t care how many doctors were parents of kids in that school. They had a certain formula in the school, public schools, and that’s what they’re going to follow. But in private school, they listen to people who are paying the fees for the kids and they give you a little bit more time and attention. And I think both of those two things have helped us in raising our level of confidence in living here and improving our degree of security.

FK: So you think you would never be 100% feeling secure?

MUSA: I think it’s, uh, I think it’s a personal thing. I don’t want to be 100% of anything because I always want to have that flexibility to, or the ability to improve and get better and do it all. So I won’t have 100% security psychologically, or even just personally, even though I
may be, relative to most people, I'm very secure. So that's how I would look at it.

FK: Yeah. What do you think?

ANILA: So much so that now when we think of, even thinking of going back, say, twenty years from now, whatever, ten years from now, I have reached, even though I was the instigator in the late '80s and early '90s, and felt for awhile that we should go back, very, very strongly, and actually felt that it wasn't made enough of an issue of in our household. I have actually, now it's almost as if the scales are even, and it's actually, my niche in this society, it hasn't been altered by 9-11 in any way. I feel very comfortable. I think part of it is my work. Part of it is being a part of Rosemont College and the board, and associating with people who are all American, and feeling very comfortable with it. And part of it is the friendships that I've built over the last 20 years, uh, Jewish friends, American Christian friends, and of course, my Pakistani Muslim friends. And it's just now when I look back, it seems if whatever I went through, which were the hardest years, are now behind me. And now I can actually make an active decision as to what I'd like to do. I'm not in the same situation I was in the early '90s and for ten to 15 years down from there. I'm actually very comfortable where I am now.

The key facets of ethnicity that composed the individual definitions were consistent, and often included that of national culture, food, language, dress, family, and religion.
Again each of these facets, manifested in practice, reflected the main themes of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage. However, like Anila and Musa, all of the community's members interviewed also related a prioritization of education and financial success, both markers of attainment of a particular social class. Musa emphatically noted, “There are two things that I think are, in my opinion, very critical to achieve the comfort level here. One is the emphasis on education, both husband and wife, Meher and I have enormous degree of respect for education, for ourselves, for us to have that, and then to impart that for our kids and provide everything we can for them in order for them to have a good life. And the second is money. I think financially one has to have a degree of security that helps both of these two, financial and the pursuit of education will help in building in confidence in oneself to achieve and try to secure the security and the comfort level to live here in this area. And we have worked on both ends and I think we’ve been very successful at it.”

Mahtab, who arrived in the United States as a young physician, admired the “hardworking people” and consciously began to model her life in America in the same manner. Even though Mahtab did identify herself with Pakistan and Pakistani culture she differentiated herself from other Pakistanis because of her honesty and work ethic, claiming, “I am not accepted as a typical Pakistani in Pakistan” (Mahtab 2004). Mahtab made a distinction between a hard working ethic and a general Pakistani attitude of what she considered indolence. In her life in the U.S., Mahtab adopted an American, educated middle class mind-set exemplified by the fact that she and her husband bought a home in an affluent suburb of Philadelphia to raise their children and influenced them to pursue careers in medicine. She told me in her interview, that she encouraged new immigrants
to move to the same suburb because the location offered job opportunities, large homes, and a prosperous school district.

The significance given to education and financial success relays an ambition for not only a certain lifestyle, but also for the attainment of a particular social class. Therefore, as this dissertation argues it is class that is intertwined with ethnicity that this specific South Asian American Muslim community strategically employs to demarcate their own individual and their community identity. The manipulation of the higher class status awards Musa and Anila and the majority of the Islamic Society community the veil of invisibility. Their class status positions these individuals as integrated/assimilated/enmeshed Americans as they live and work in suburban Philadelphia. Recognizing the importance of class with ethnicity, how then do we approach the combination of the two and what relevance does it have if any in a socio-political climate of terror and terrorism?

The Creation of Ethnicity: Visibility

Musa and Anila acknowledge and appreciate the significance of their education and professions in their lives. Both factors, key components of class, contribute to the couple’s agency in the control of their visibility. When Anila reflected upon the difference in how she and Musa raised their pairs of children that have ten years difference in between them, she recalls:

Things, some things which with the older children you kind of overlooked because we felt it was to our disadvantage to bring up these little points, and with the younger two, which we did bring up
because we were more comfortable with the system by that time. So I would think that Kasim and Ameer probably had a much harder time of it than the younger two did. And there’s a difference of about almost a decade between that process. So the initial years were a period in which I wasn’t totally comfortable with my environment. Even though I was a physician, I wasn’t totally comfortable with addressing my issues as a minority with the majority at large. But it was almost like a, I knew what I had to do and I did it regardless of how I felt about it. But over the last ten years, it’s been almost the reverse. I feel that I’m more entrenched into the society and I don’t know whether it’s because of being a physician or whether it’s I’ve just become more comfortable with it over time.

FK: Entrenched into the American…

ANILA: Yeah. In the sense not of assimilating, but letting them be educated about how I feel and continuing with how I want to dress or how I want to eat or how I think about certain things, very vocal with how I feel and I’m bringing my background and heritage to the community that I associate with. And I think that, in large part, has been facilitated by my older two children, especially the oldest, Kasim, who was so, I feel, being at college at Brown somehow, I felt, brought out the culture that I had tried to suppress in the first ten years of life, trying to get along within this environment.
Time and the privilege of her class status have given way to a more selective assimilation, an assimilation that allows for visibility. This visibility is also noted in the more recent literature on South Asians in the United States. For example, in a broader cultural studies context, there have been several useful studies on South Asian Americans that examine issues of general migration patterns, second generation youths, and popular culture (Kalita 2003; Purkayastha 2005; Maira 2002). The concentration of scholarly inquiry has been on the post 1965 migration consisting of educated Indians coming to the U.S. to further careers since the majority of migration, in terms of sheer numbers, from South Asia has been from the modern nation-state of India. Edited volumes, including The New Ethnics: Asian Indians in the United States and Tradition and Transformation: Asian Indians in America (Saran 1980), focus exclusively on the Indian population while other works have traced the immigration history from a broad perspective highlighting the Indian communities’ religions, languages, and cultural traditions (Israel 1993; Saran 1985; Daniels 1989; Leonard 1997; Chandrasekhar 1982).

More recent studies have begun to consider smaller Indian communities in specific locales, predominately in large metropolitan cities such as New York City (Fisher 1980, 1978; Lessinger 1995; Sanjek 1998). Khandewal, author of Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in New York City, continues the work begun by Sanjek, Lessinger, and Fisher in her own analysis of the New York City’s Indian American population (2002). By concentrating on the post 1965 community, she incorporates issues of class and gender with concerns of religious practice, family and future generations. In a similar vein, Archana Pathak examines upper class and upper caste migrants from India to the United States in To Be Indian (Hyphen) American:
Communicating Diaspora, Identity and Home (1988). Her dissertation on hyphenated identity formation positions itself as part of the globalization discourse as she argues that, "as geographical boundaries are being dissolved and the globe is easier to traverse spatially, people’s identities easily become hyphenated ... as boundaries break down, hyphenation becomes pervasive ... additionally as boundaries break down, there is an increased awareness of difference" (8).

Kalita details the everyday struggles of three families as they navigate their lives through suburban America (Kalita 2003). Her detailed narrative offers intimate details of the difficulties particularly those difficulties faced by the second generation children but, the work fails to forward any theoretical analysis of ethnicity. Suburban Sahibs thus reads more as novel than an ethnic studies work due the lack of an analytical base.

In addition, in the past fifteen years the literature by and about South Asian women offers a rich and multifaceted look at the immigrant experience for women in the first and second generations. Very little is known about the early history of women in the U.S. but these recent works on South Asian women have begun to explore women’s place in the diaspora. Karen Leonard maintains that women have an inherent function in culture making and maintenance, and because roles become synonymous with the home, their experience in the diaspora is different from their male counterparts. This type of gender based responsibility and expectations have complicated the way in which Asian Indian women create their identities within and against the backdrop of the diaspora. Works such as Emerging Voices, A Patchwork Shawl, and The Ethnic Strife, as well as Rayaprol’s article, “Gender Ideologies and Practices among South Indian Immigrants in Pittsburgh” focus on the difficulties South Asian women must juggle as they negotiate
diverse cultural norms in their daily life in the U.S. Additionally, this negotiation has also given birth to other volumes of fictional and poetic literature including *Making Waves, Our Feet Walk the Sky* and *Contours of the Heart* (although this is not exclusively gender based).

Lastly, the folklife of second generation South Asian Americans as witnessed through the forms of popular culture have been under investigation adding to the body of research on ethnicity. One important example is from the work completed by Sunaina Maira on a new expressive musical form born in the combination of traditional Indian folk and religious music with popular Western music in her recent book, *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City*. She asserts that the remixing of Indian movie ballads or traditional folk songs with hip-hop or techno beats is the latest illustration of youth culture. The growing number of second generation South Asians dancing at New York City's clubs to the redesigned *Bhangra* beat combines aspects of one's heritage with one's life in the United States. This example of South Asian American folklife emphasizes diversity of cultures and generations while it simultaneously connects traditions old and new.

The more recent works offer valuable insights into ethnic identity and inform this dissertation through the ethnographic methodology they employ. It is important to recognize that these studies explore the process of ethnic identity with the use of narrative and practice (Khandelwal 2002; Lessinger 1995; Maira 2002; Shah 1993; Pathak 1988)\(^\text{21}\). Examining ethnicity through an ethnographic approach presents a more nuanced

\(^{21}\) This listing is only a small sample of works that use ethnographic methods in working with the South Asian American community and is not meant to be definitive.
approach since it allows for a consideration of extended time in research and an inclusion of personal accounts.

The overwhelming majority of the literature on South Asian Americans focuses primarily on Indian American communities and more specifically on Indian American communities that are Hindu. In searching for works that concentrate on Muslim Americans from South Asia or Pakistani Americans, the availability of literature is scarce. Perhaps there was once a time when studies focused on Indian Americans could stretch and adapt to the issues faced by Pakistani Americans or even more generally by South Asian Muslims, but given the current socio-political conditions of terrorism and fear of Islam in the United States, this is no longer true. More studies are needed that investigate the adaptive and emerging patterns of South Asians Muslims in the U.S.

Overall, these works clarify not only the history of recent migration, but also identify the patterns of assimilation. Similar patterns relate to the issues faced by Musa and Anila and the larger Islamic Society; however, the facet of their religious identity as Muslims in the U.S. posts September 11 presents its own challenges. The strategic negotiation of visibility theoretically builds the understanding of how this community shapes and articulates their ethnicity. In turn, the consideration of visibility/invisibility within an immigrant community necessitates a deeper and more mundane examination of practice of ethnic identity in order to resolve the complex nuances. Folkloristic methodology, sensitive to the variants of the everyday, offers the opportunity to consider theoretically the questions of visibility.

_Folklore and Ethnicity_
Folklorists have worked extensively in the exploration of ethnicity in folkloristics. Core works include W.H. Jansen’s “The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore” and Richard Bauman’s “Differential Identity and the Social Base of Folklore,” both of which articulate identity as a simultaneously social and shifting concept. From their theories, ethnicity possesses a dynamic quality that is dependent on the both the person or group claiming an ethnicity as well as the description of ethnic identity by others. Although these are only two of the many works by folklorists, both articles suggest useful critiques of the ways in which groups share an identity and simultaneously differentiate themselves from others outside of that group. This is particularly significant for the purposes of understanding the manner in which the Islamic Society negotiates a South Asian, Muslim, and American identity in multiple contexts.

In addition, the numerous works by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1990, 1978, 1983, 1989, 1994), Barre Toelken (Toelken 1991, 1996), Shalom Staub (Staub 1981, 1987, 1988, 1989) and Stephen Stern (Stern 1977, 1980; Stern 1991) have furthered the study of ethnicity and ethnic identity through fieldwork with various peoples and communities. *These studies focus on the perspectives of the everyday, of tradition, and of ritual, and offer an intimate, processual account of practice. It is this methodology of examining the process of ethnicity through examining practices of ethnicity that is essential to the framework of this study.* As the subsequent two chapters will detail the daily lives of the first South Asian Muslims in Philadelphia and members of the Islamic Society in their home and work lives, and their community and religious lives, the practice of Sunday school, of women’s prayer groups, and of language, food, and dress are discussed. Fieldwork revealed that all of these practices feature
prominently in daily life and thus are various manifestations of the dissertation’s main themes of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett wrote in her 1978 article that folklorists had been overly concerned with the preservation of traditions when working with immigrant folklore and should concern themselves more with the creative and evolving aspects (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1978). The process of adjustment in their new life and the nature of the “culture shock,” both offer an opportunity for a deeper understanding of how immigrants manage often diverse lifestyles and cultural norms. She states, “we might also view the folklore of ethnicity in terms of multiple cultural repertoires and cultural code-switching” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1983: 43). Such “multiple cultural repertoires” are an intrinsic attribute of the Islamic Society’s ethnic identity given that nearly all of the members arrived in the United States from middle and upper middle class families, highly educated, and fluent in the English language. Because of their specific background, they are a group adept at managing both cultural worlds. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett further asserts in her response to James Clifford on diaspora, that, “new spaces of dispersal are produced – traversed and compressed – by technologies of connection and telepresence” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994: 342). Again, for the Islamic Society who now form and are a part of American middle class and upper middle class society, technologies of communication and travel have indeed promoted a closer bond to South Asia rendering the concept of proximity as one that has to be first substantiated. The Islamic Society possesses the economic power to buy and the educational ability to make full use of technologies through phones, media, and travel thereby reinforcing ties to their cultural heritage. These two concepts of multiple cultural repertoires multiple and new
spaces of dispersal develop the theoretical framework of this research through the
collection of the community’s ability and desire to maintain and alter multiple forms
of ethnic identity.

In 1989, Shalom Staub published *Yemenis in New York City* with the Balch Institute
for Ethnic Studies in Philadelphia, an institute founded in 1971 for research on ethnic
communities in the U.S. The work focused on a community of Yemenis in New York
City and the operations of their restaurants. As a cultural study on a small community,
Staub asserts that ethnicity is an emergent identity and “that individual and groups
continually express and restate their sameness and difference on various levels” (Staub
1989: 31). For Staub, ethnic identity is one that is not simply ascribed, but rather must be
achieved through situational experiences. Staub’s research indicates that context
determines the interactions of individuals or communities who utilize symbolic
interactions in expressing an ethnic identity, one that is “rooted in shared and differential
identities” (42).

Moving beyond a content analysis of ethnic identity, Staub examines the processes of
ethnicity through its performance of esoteric and exoteric theoretical forms while
studying with the Yemeni community. Restaurant menus, background music, décor, and
advertisements are all manipulated forms of exoteric presentation for Yemenis in
America. Each particular factor can be altered to emphasize a Yemeni, Arab, or even an
American experience to suit various palates and situations. In this manner exoteric or
public presentation centers on the crystallization of certain aspects of ethnicity
contextually and yet remains a part of everyday life. The interaction amongst the
workers signifies an esoteric form of communication as distinguished through an increase
in the level of personal interaction, the desire for return, pictures of families in the kitchen, and the consumption of traditional Yemeni dishes. Because this work traces the processes of ethnic identity with a small community through their negotiation of social interactions in the United States, Shalom Staub’s work serves as an important early example of process and practice within Folklore.

While he focused on the spatial markings of ethnic identity in a Yemeni restaurant, Staub also emphasized the emergent nature of ethnicity, one that possessed a relational nature between individuals and between groups engaged in social interaction. In his book, he reaffirms the performative nature of ethnic identity in his two chapters analyzing the esoteric and exoteric ethnic interactions. The performance centered approach validates the situational and contextual aspect of ethnicity, but does not allow for the idea of ethnicity to exist in and of itself. In other words, in considering the lives of the Islamic Society members, ethnicity is a compelling force in the every day sense – in thought and in action – even without a social exchange with others. For this group of people as Muslims and as immigrants, in a post September 11 world, ethnicity is ascribed before any social interaction can occur. Thus, as Staub’s work illuminates the dynamic and situational qualities of ethnic identity, it also raises interesting questions to be explored: does ethnicity only exist in the space of performance? In what ways can the aspects of ethnic identity be meaningful without esoteric-exoteric exchange?

Stephen Stern outlines the influential works in folklore on ethnicity noting the changes in subjects of investigation as well as theoretical responses to theories of acculturation (Stern 1977). He suggests a move away from the sole study of ethnic groups as a folk group and the development of the study of individual ethnic identity
practices. Stern regards his own research on ethnic lore as based on, “a dynamic, developmental model of ethnicity which views ethnic folklore as an ongoing expression of individual identities, roles, and communicative networks” (Stern 1977: 272; 1980). In addition, Stern’s edited volume with John Cicala, Creative Ethnicity, explores the various ways that individuals engage ethnicity in their daily lives (Stern 1991). The work grew from a desire to seek out diversity in the forms of ethnic identity practice in a dynamic manner, a manner that would most accurately reflect people’s experiences. Stern underscores the dynamism factor of ethnic identity in his “Introduction”, by stating that, “ethnicity is precarious. Being in a minority position requires constant reflection on one’s position and place in the ethnic scheme … Choosing an ethnic expression, applying it to diverse situations, and transmitting it through time and space are based on decision-making and community interplay that require a great deal of creativity and inspiration” (Stern 1991: xii).

In the same vein, Barre Toelken studies the meanings behind the dance rituals in Native American powwow. He argues that old customs have not been replaced, but rather that it adapts and changes, integrating new alterations. Toelken describes the powwow dance as one interpretation of the dynamism of ethnicity in that, “ethnic selection and intensification function to preserve cultural values even under the most trying of circumstances” (Toelken 1991: 155). Toelken further developed the nature of dynamism in studying ethnicity with immigrant groups in the chapter section, “Dynamics of Ethnicity” in his own work also appropriately titled, The Dynamics of Folklore (Toelken 1996). Here he cites the example of food shared at a cultural picnic by examining the ways in which certain food is shared or not within a group or with an
outside group thus revealing how food takes on representative cultural meanings. Toelken instructs the reader to take into account how, when, and where people eat what they do echoing the work of Linda Degh who advised a “multilateral” approach to studying immigrant folklore (Degh 1966).

This approach, one that incorporates in its analysis the dynamic and fluid nature of ethnicity, supports the complex and multi layered identity positioning of the practices of the Islamic Society’s members. The research conducted here models itself after the essays in Creative Ethnicity by incorporating detailed ethnography of daily practice with the dynamic analysis of ethnic identity.

Folklore historically has maintained a deep involvement in ethnicity from the period of Romantic Nationalism to today. Culture, process, dynamism and creativity are closely linked to the study of ethnicity particularly through an ethnographic methodology as this dissertation will contend. In Chapters Three and Four specific practices will be examined, following in folkloristic ethnographic methodology and theory, in order to begin the theoretical discussion of ethnic identity and its meanings with the members of the Islamic Society.

**Conclusion**

The presentation of ethnicity given here is a cursory exploration of ethnicity from a historical frame and includes those key works that have impacted the field in their consideration of ethnicity’s dynamism, class and political emphasis, and folkloristic methodology of practice. But how do these key works relate to the lives of Anila and Musa and others from the community?
If we return to the initial underlying connotation derived from the definition of ethnic, there is a sense of difference in being ethnic. In Anila and Musa's life, as one example from the community, difference does exist but a closer examination reveals that their life is one of simultaneous assimilation and alienation visibility and invisibility. The key theories from Park, Gordon, Gans, and others only offer a partial model for analyzing the creation and maintenance of ethnicity for Anila and Musa. The theories involving marginalization, "ethclass", and choice all bear significant import in determining ethnicity. Marginalization significantly impacts Anila and Musa's possibilities of assimilation since in many respects Anila and Musa still retain cultural and religious difference as a marker of their identity. Of course, the issue of choice also factors significantly here as well due to the fact that Anila and Musa desire only to assimilate to a certain degree and in certain ways opting to maintain their home life as one that is based on their own Pakistani families and by adhering to Islamic religious practice such as taking the children to Sunday school, fasting, and maintaining other dietary laws.

There exists a paradox in the lives of Anila and Musa however, that complicates the simple assumption of marginalization based upon immigrant, cultural, and religious status. As the theory of marginalization may hinder or even preclude the straight line assimilation theory of Park, Gordon, etc., for Anila and Musa in their lives as practicing South Asian Muslims, it is the role of class that assists in their ability to assimilate into upper middle class American society and in fact assimilate quite readily. Anila and Musa both furthered their professional careers in the U.S. and because of their financial stability, they were able to have options and choice about where and how to live. They were able to choose to live in an affluent neighborhood and send their four children to
private schools and universities. Both also came to the U.S. fluent in English having studied the language throughout their education in Pakistan. Education, professional jobs, and language proficiency, understood as markers of class, thus positioned Anila and Musa as upper class Pakistanis and later facilitated their entry into upper middle class life in the U.S. A double dynamic exists not only with Anila and Musa, but the majority of the Islamic Society who migrated to the U.S. from middle and upper middle class families, fluent in English and eager to pursue advanced degrees. Their ethnic heritage, culture, race, and/or religion demarcated a separate space in American society, but their language and professional job skills merged them seamlessly into the upper middle class suburban life. An understanding of the early works provides the basis from which to begin an investigation of ethnic identity, but the theories from Park and others fail to accurately represent this South Asian Muslim American community in their life in the U.S. today.

More recent works within a South Asian diaspora frame fill the gap from the previous generation of writing by directly attending to the specific issues of South Asians in the U.S. after the 1965 wave of immigration. Many of the issues examined relate directly to Anila and Musa's experiences particularly as the different authors detail the processes of post 1965 migration and the rewards and challenges faced. In addition, the themes of generational issues, nostalgia for home, issues of recreating home, and maintaining cultural traditions all significantly factor into Anila and Musa's daily life as they juggle their faith and culture in addition to their children and careers. While they push their children to achieve educational goals and in turn economic success, Anila and Musa try also to shape the children's identity by frequent trips to Pakistan, sharing Pakistani food,
and partaking in Islamic Sunday school. In each day they manage the multiple demands of their layered ethnic identity.

Although the literature on South Asians in the U.S. has increased greatly in the past ten to fifteen years, the majority of these works remain about non-Muslim South Asians predominately from India. With the notable exception of the essays written by Susan Slyomovics, Aminah Mohammad Arif, and the edited collection Patchwork Shawl, there is a dearth of available literature on South Asian Muslims Americans in comparison to the literature that covers Indian ethnic identity in the U.S. (Mohammad-Arif 2002; Slyomovics 1995; Dasgupta 1998).

Given the challenges of Anila and Musa’s immigrant experience in relationship to ethnicity, race, culture, religion, education and class, how can we make sense of the complexities of their identity? Utilizing a folklore approach, one that incorporates fieldwork and the analysis of everyday practices, presents the most constructive methodology for work with this community. Folklore theory supports the dynamic and creative characteristics of ethnic identity since it allows for the various pieces or characteristics of ethnicity to shift in importance contextually and temporally. Additionally, following the arguments presented by Berger and Del Negro, identity is understood in this dissertation as an “interpretive framework.” Studying ethnicity and ethnic identity through an interpretive framework allows for the competing discourses of socio-political contexts and audience as well as the agency of the possessor of ethnicity. Anila and Musa and their friends in the Islamic Society can be South Asian at one event, American at another, and Muslim at both. Folklore methodology and theory engages the dynamism of ethnicity and seeks to understand it from the perspective of the individual
and community. However, the area in which Folklore falls short is on the issue of class as it is not fully addressed in the ethnic literature as a demarcating feature or aspect of ethnic identity. The analysis of practice with the Islamic Society requires a discernment of class issues and the manner in which class may affect ethnic identity. Folklore needs to further develop the role of class in its exploration of ethnicity, particularly so that it can address all aspects of community life.

Therefore, while the foundational theories may initiate the analysis of ethnicity with the South Asian Muslim American community in Philadelphia, it falls short of addressing a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics that underlie their multiple identities. Furthermore, in returning to the main questions that this dissertation seeks to concentrate on: *What does ethnic identity mean for South Asian American Muslims today? What are the forms of practice that ethnicity shapes and establishes? What is the relationship of class and ethnicity in this suburban community’s life?*, then the current literature does not sufficiently address all the variables of a South Asian Muslim American’s life thus necessitating a more meaningful and a more sensitive understanding of ethnic identity creation and practice in the Islamic Society of Philadelphia.

Chapters Three and Four investigate ethnicity in detail through an examination of practice. In consideration of how the community lives their ethnicity vis-à-vis their culture, religion, and work lays the understanding of the ways in which this group negotiates the multiplicities of their identity. Furthermore, on a broader scale such an understanding also allows for the analysis of their diasporic/transnational/citizenship space in American society.
Chapter Three: Community and the Practice of Ethnicity

"We are very clannish ... we have not learned to be as one nation, even in Pakistan ... and they bring their hangovers and baggage with them when they come here."

Abbas 2004

It was February 1974 and it was snowing when Zahid first arrived in New York City from Pakistan. At the bus station, a green bus stopped to take him to meet his friends that had arrived just two weeks before. He remembers having no change for the bus and ending up in the opposite end of town, frustrated and lost.

Zahid, a dental school graduate, had dreamed of coming to the U.S., of working hard, and returning to Pakistan to practice dentistry within five years. His friends also had similar plans and together they migrated searching for opportunities. Zahid and his friends followed another Pakistani to Jersey City where the three men lived above a mosque in a tiny apartment. Zahid claimed that at the time he had no fears and that before he had left Pakistan, he had told his family he was prepared to work or do anything. His first job was making coffee in a restaurant. As he worked other odd jobs, he began looking for work in dental labs.

Over thirty years later, Zahid has established himself in his career with a thriving dental practice. Now with his wife and child, Zahid has relinquished the original five year plan of working in America and returning to Pakistan. Instead he has refocused and turned his attention to community activities, including the Islamic Society, the Pakistani American Society, the American Muslim Society and the Pakistani American Congress (Zahid 2004).
In addition to the community commitments, through the years Zahid and his wife Shireen consistently took their daughter as a young child to Islamic Sunday school when classes were at the community centers and later when they were held at the mosque. Frequent trips to Pakistan and the use of the Urdu language at home further ensured a close connection to a Pakistani heritage for their daughter. Currently, all three wear Pakistani clothes and regularly eat Pakistani meals at home. Shireen taught classes at the school and now is also active in a weekly women's religious group that meets to study the Quran (Shireen 2004).

While Zahid and Shireen's extensive involvement may not be a true reflection of the entire Islamic Society, their lives exhibit the many practices that all the Society's members partake in on some level. All the interviews of the Islamic Society revealed similar practices, in particular those pertaining to home life: of dress, food, repeated visits to Pakistan or India, and attendance of the Society's events including Sunday school. The exercise of these practices reinforces ethnicity for the community as they live in the U.S. creating a new life and home. Moreover, the same practices also assist in maintaining a relationship with each other within the community and a link to their place of birth. Engaging in practices of Islamic Society and mosque politics or any of the other community organizations such as the Pakistani American Congress for example, reveals an ethnic identity put into practice on a broader societal level. Such participation in the community affirms both ethnic and religious identity and suggests strategic

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22 The weekly group studies the Quran which is also referred to as the dars. This is the focus of the following chapter.
diasporic/transnational positioning in contrast to American society. As Arora argues in her 2004 dissertation the re-negotiation of the self that all South Asian immigrants must face in the United States is a, “process of inventing and re-inventing a self (that) involves a series of affiliations and disengagements with different groups and issues, the erasure of or selective recall and forgetting of colonial histories and memories, and a simultaneous negation of various identities” (Arora 2004: 2). In examining the practices that immigrants partake in currently and over time, the history of migration can be understood and the core values of a community recognized. Moreover, these practices reveal the strategic negotiations of maintaining and asserting either visibility or invisibility for the Islamic Society community. These practices are the lived enactment of their active participation or disengagement in American society.

All the members of the Islamic Society engage in several practices of ethnic identity in the home as well as outside the home with the main difference of level of participation. However, the community partakes in many varied practices and activities that foster their ethnicity that it must be asked: How and in what ways do theses practices play an important role in the creation and maintenance of an ethnic identity? Further complicating matters is the issue of class. Are the practices named above those carried out by members of a certain class? What significance does the role of class play in the regular occurrence of the practices of ethnicity? To facilitate obtaining a relevant and meaningful answer, there has to be a framework with which to understand the

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23 As previously stated these practices include the more common customs of food, language, dress, and religious observance through Sunday school and ritual prayer.
complexities of ethnicity for South Asian Muslim Americans, a framework that integrates practice with theory and one that remains sensitive to class issues. Essentially, this framework would resolve the question of: how can an examination of ethnic identity practice be understood through a theoretical lens?

In her study on class, Sherry Ortner contends that the discourse on ethnicity and race is fused with the discourse of American class (Ortner 1998). While race and ethnicity dominate the discourse, the three are often inextricably linked, to the point that, “we can never find either in pure form and that each is always hidden within the other” (13). The Islamic society and their practice of ethnicity manifest this analysis as ethnicity and class are embedded within the larger framework of their immigrant identity in the United States. In any discussion of their ethnicity, class must be recognized as a critical component shaping the production of ethnic identity for this Islamic Society. It is the interaction between ethnicity and class that allows for the agency of the community to strategically negotiate the degree of visibility of their multiple identities as South Asians, Muslim, and Americans. Any ethnographic work with this community necessitates the incorporation of class dynamics in reference to their place in the American class structure as well as the ways in which the community strategically reproduces their class status. Lastly, the intersection of ethnic identity and class allows for a deeper examination of the how the Islamic Society largely disengages from the aftermath of the terroristic attacks of September 11, 2001. As naturalized and successful U.S. citizens, each person interviewed acknowledged the political tensions and Islamophobic atmosphere born from
9/11, but most felt disconnected from those that suffered job discrimination or feared repercussions from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Again, class and ethnicity share a complex relationship that shapes the practices of individuals and the community that must be further explored.

Within current literature and theory on ethnicity, it is difficult to find a theoretical model that can contend with the multiple layers of identity from a South Asian Muslim American’s perspective. Ethnicity is composed of numerous variables and I seek to push the parameters of the definitional boundaries to account for the variations as individuals negotiate their identities as immigrants, South Asians, Muslims, and Americans on multiple social planes. Chapter Three begins the discussion of ethnicity and practice by first analyzing the literature on diaspora and its overlapping theoretical counterpart, transnationalism. Purposefully collapsing the two and instead opting to focus on their broader links, I explore the theoretical implications for ethnic practice. This convergence of the theoretical dialogues is critical since the complexities of South Asian Muslim American life necessitate an intersection of the literature so as to best disentangle the multiple nuanced layers of culture and religion, with class in America. In other words, transnationalism and diaspora are the sites in which the multiplicities of being South Asian Muslim American are embedded. Therefore, this analysis revisits the main themes of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage not only in the member’s verbal expressions, but also in practice as detailed in rituals of dress, food, language, and religion. In this chapter, theoretical arguments are paired extensively with ethnographic
accounts which personify the issues of migration and ethnicity. Because no one theoretical frame opens up the complexities of South Asian Muslim American ethnicity, I further suggest a new approach to the production and maintenance of ethnic identity through the diasporic/transnational lens along with the incorporation of Pierre Bourdieu’s consideration of society and the role of class. More specifically, I suggest that for this community whose lives resist the essentialized readings of the other, the diasporic/transnational discourses situate the cultural, religious and national space while Bourdieu’s theories of the forms of capital and power offer a constructive model for analyzing ethnicity as an actively manipulated and evolving presence in the lives of the community’s members.

Ethnicity: Zahid and Shireen

Zahid only had thirty dollars with him when he first came to the U.S. as it was the largest amount the government of Pakistan would allow to be exchanged in the 1970’s. He had no other family abroad and knew no one except his friends from dental school in Pakistan. Arriving in Jersey City as a trained dentist, Zahid worked at several odd jobs until he found steady work at a dental lab making wax molds of teeth. He lived above a mosque in a small apartment with two other young men. The apartment was small, with one bedroom, and no facilities for showering forcing the young men to bathe downstairs in the mosque’s bathroom. The connection with the dental school in Pakistan activated a
strong network of friends coming to the U.S. through New York City and by 1975, Zahid had moved into another apartment, a larger space with his three friends.

Zahid and his friends moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and began to study in order to pass state licensing board exams in dentistry. In 1976, they relocated to California upon hearing that the University of California at Los Angeles had a program for international dentists to obtain licenses in the U.S. But since California only offered loans and funding for state residents, the four friends returned to Philadelphia and soon thereafter enrolled in the University of Pennsylvania program for foreign graduates of dental schools. Zahid’s brother joined him in the U.S. to pursue an advanced degree from a university in the Midwest.

By 1978 Zahid had passed his board exams, obtained his license, and opened his own dental practice. He remembers making $5600 in his first month, the largest amount of money he had ever made in his life. He also made his first trip back to Pakistan. Two years later, in 1980, Zahid opened another office increasing his income twofold. Zahid recalls a meeting with his accountant at which the accountant remarked that he had never seen such a jump in income so quickly. At that moment Zahid said, “I felt I had arrived as an immigrant” (Zahid 2004).

It was also in 1980 that Zahid returned to Pakistan and married Shireen who joined him a few months later once her immigration paperwork was complete. Shireen had always wanted to live in the U.S. and had even applied to universities for education but her parents would not allow her to leave Pakistan. Zahid was quick to add that,
"everyone wants to go out of Pakistan." An unstable economy and an uncertain government often made people feel that their hard work and education in Pakistan would not pay off financially for them thus creating a desire to move abroad (Zahid 2004).

They lived in an apartment outside of Philadelphia near Zahid’s offices. Their attorney suggested moving to a fairly affluent suburban neighborhood in Philadelphia, known to have large homes and a good school district. Zahid soon read about a new development of homes under construction and after looking at one of the homes, he and Shireen decided to buy it. Even after buying a large property in America though, Zahid and Shireen still believed they would return to Pakistan after five more years. Now Zahid stated that he no longer thinks it to be a realistic plan to return to Pakistan. Now that he and Shireen are older and require medical attention, Zahid states that one of the motivating factors for staying in America centers on the fact that Pakistan does not have and cannot provide healthcare for them with the same quality as available in the U.S. Moreover, Zahid believes he would have to start all over again from the beginning to establish a dental practice in Pakistan which he is no longer keen to do. Interestingly, Zahid poignantly claimed he has given up romanticizing about his homeland and memories there since, “that place is not there anymore.” He and Shireen have decided that a happy medium is to travel back and forth every year visiting friends and family. Zahid stated, “Anything other than that is a fantasy.” Both are dedicated to their daughter, who having been born and raised in the U.S., would not consider residing anywhere else. As a result, Zahid and Shireen could not foresee living in another country
away from her. Zahid senses that most of his friends and peers agree with him about not returning to Pakistan and that most will “complete the cycle of life” here in America.

Shireen, for her part, acknowledged that she adjusted quickly to life in American when she first migrated because Zahid had already established himself financially and had a group of friends. Zahid added he had no fear since, “I had my own group of people.” Both also found no difficulties in raising their daughter in the U.S. while instilling an appreciation of her Pakistani heritage and Muslim faith. Their frequent trip to Pakistan, use of the Urdu language in the home, and participation in Sunday school assisted in maintaining a cultural connection. Zahid taught Urdu classes while Shireen taught Islamic topics for two years while the Islamic Society was meeting at the suburban community centers. Despite the enthusiasm for residing in America while raising their daughter, Zahid claims he does recognize a sense of guilt over living away from Pakistan. He asserted that he knew how difficult it was for children to grow up in another country than that of their parents and how often children do not tell their parents of the difficulties they face every day adding, “Kids go through a lot.”

Zahid began to take an active role in the community once he and Shireen felt secure and established financially in their personal lives. Reflecting back on the different moments in his life, Zahid identified three stages of migration that he believed most people of the Islamic Society either went through and/or are in the process of encountering currently. In the first stage when one first arrives from South Asia, Zahid stated, “you have no clue you have to struggle.” In his own initial experience in Jersey
City, he had to just “survive” on a daily basis. He did whatever he had to in order to sustain his life in the U.S. and for Zahid, that meant working odd job, serving coffee, and making wax molds of teeth as a trained dentist.

As one begins to follow the path of their career choice, the second stage is in motion and one has to work. Zahid claimed that in this stage most are on the way to accomplishing their career goals but have to be diligent and persevere through difficult periods. He worked long hours at two separate practices to be able to support the lifestyle that he wanted for Shireen and for their daughter. Specifically, Zahid was committed to working laboriously to ensure Shireen did not have to work and to ensure that their daughter went to the best private schools in the area.

The final stage of migration is the one in which Zahid declares himself to be living. At this point in his life and in his career, he is able to “look around” and see what else is gong on - in his community and the larger American society. Zahid feels he is in the position that he had worked so hard to reach both in his professional life and in his personal life. With a flourishing practice, financial security, and personal wellbeing in his home life, Zahid’s interests have shifted to community and civic activities. He states, “Since 1985, I have tried to broaden my horizons” and has done so by becoming more involved in the Islamic community and in American politics as well. He has noted a population growth within the Islamic Society between the years of 1985 – 1990 and that is when he and many others began to build and organize the community.
The first project that Zahid and his friends executed was the symbolic merging and strengthening of the South Asian community into an Islamic community and their physical consolidation into a mosque. Zahid played a key role in the development of the Society and assisted in its transformation from meetings in a rented community center to the purchase of a mosque of their own. Here the Zahid and the Society's main focus was to create a religious community and space for worship. They had wanted more than a religious gathering site though; they wanted a place where their children could learn about Islam and where they could create a sense of belonging for them in a non-Muslim society.

After the founding of the mosque, Zahid turned his attentions to establishing the Pakistani American Society in 1989. Along with a small group of friends, he wanted to form a cultural group that would promote Pakistani culture and heritage. Zahid planned many events and fundraisers which were often benefits for various charities in Pakistan. This organization also held annual Pakistan Day celebrations whose target audience was the children of Pakistani immigrants. Similar to the Pakistani American Society, was the Pakistani American Congress in which Zahid was an active member. The Pakistani America Congress serves as the umbrella organization for seventeen smaller groups and is part of a larger national lobbying group. Zahid attended the Congress's first annual convention held in Chicago in 1990 but recently has not been so active in the organization.
As the years passed and the decision to remain in the U.S. was no longer a question, Zahid began to promote political activity and involvement within the community. He helped to organize the American Muslim Society, a group whose goal was to find a common voice, particularly a political voice, for Muslims in America. Zahid felt that at this phase in his own life, with career and personal obligations fulfilled, he could concern himself more with civic duties. Moreover, he felt that the members of the Islamic Society had to be more involved in the local issues of school and government and assume a more active position in American society. The American Muslim Society was four years old at the time of Zahid’s interview and he maintained that the most important goal of the organization was to form as a local group engaged in local government politics. Zahid added that he had held political fundraisers in his own home for local Congressmen including Curt Weldon, John Fox, and Joe Hoeffel. Unfortunately, Zahid felt that the community’s response and participation was “pathetic” even though he recognized that the lack of involvement stemmed from the fact that many were still to trying to make a living and few were retired. Zahid was hopeful that in the years to come political participation would increase when the community had obtained more financial security.

However, the lack of participation in local government issues was not indicative of disinterest in political affairs. Zahid asserted that he felt a change within the community after the events of September 11, 2001. Many people he knew were “shaken” and feared losing their civil liberties in the U.S. despite having citizenship. The presidential elections were upon us at the time of Zahid’s interview and he was confident that nearly
all of the Islamic Society’s members would indeed vote. Amongst his peers conversation often turned to politics and the community wanted to be assured the next president would support Muslims as well as Pakistani Americans. Yet, Zahid believed his community and the larger American society shared the same concerns, with the Indian/Pakistani community representing a “microcosm” of the larger American society.

Certainly, Zahid’s extensive participation and contributions to religious and cultural activities were exceptional, not everyone from the Islamic Society was as involved as he and Shireen. Nonetheless, the organizations and interests that Zahid and Shireen participated in represent the main examples of practice in which the Islamic Society’s members also shared. The specific practices of participating in Society events, Islamic Sunday school, dress, food, travel and language, are intrinsic to everyone in the Islamic Society. In this chapter I argue that it is through the examination of specific practices we can better understand the main themes of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage. The analysis of practice offers an intimate, daily, and consistent glimpse at the negotiation of ethnicity as it is enacted by this community of South Asian Muslims.

*Ethnicity: Diaspora / Transnationalism Theory and the Work of Bourdieu*

Arab philosopher and historian, Ibn Khaldun, wrote in his world history manuscript in 1377, “Only tribes held together by group feeling can survive in the desert”(Ibn et al. 2005). As this ancient assertion implies the power of groups and group identity and its heightened character during times of duress, Ibn Khaldun’s words also clarifies the strong
desire of South Asian Muslims to search for each other in the United States. Solidarities flex to accommodate varieties of experiences and identities along national, regional, and religious solidarities in this search for connection. Moreover, in an unexpected manner the statement foreshadows the implications of modern day ethnicity for South Asian Muslim Americans suggesting that a particular ethnic identity is produced as a response to a diasporic existence given the antagonistic atmosphere, perhaps one of intense solidarity.

Diasporas have existed for as long as people have been migrating across the earth forced out of their homes due to wars, invasions and/or fear. Other groups have left their homes in search of economic prosperity or to rejoin family members. They create new homes and lives for themselves in their new country, but remain in many ways distinct from the dominant culture. It is here, between the sites of migration and resettlement, and assimilation that the diaspora exists. The diasporic context establishes a particular identity for a group: temporally in terms of their past history and future goals, and spatially as a group set apart from the dominant culture in which the diaspora resides. Ibn Khaldun claims the necessity for a group feeling for survival in hardship and in an alien land, but what is the basis for such sentiment and how is it maintained? How do groups who have migrated and resettled in another land become diasporas? While the archetypical definition of diaspora has been understood through Judaism, it has recently been re-investigated and expanded; now taking into consideration modern global movements and communities. Using the South Asian American experience as the focus,
this paper will examine the history of the term ‘diaspora’ and assess the recent scholarship. Moreover, the assessment will consider the elasticity of ‘diaspora’ and its definitional inclusiveness to South Asian Americans.

While the archetypical definition of diaspora has been understood through Judaism, it has recently been re-investigated and expanded; now taking into consideration modern global movements and communities. Robin Cohen argues that this Biblical reference for the Jewish people has usurped the actual origins of ‘diaspora’ making its long history forgotten. He specifies that diaspora has its basis in a Greek root signifying ‘to sow across an area.’ Military expansions allowed the Greeks to colonize much of Asia Minor during 800-600 BC and diasporas originally were understood in a positive light (Cohen 1997: 2). History, however, has appropriated the diaspora experience almost exclusively to Judaism imbuing it with sentiments of suffering, loss and the longing for return to a homeland. While the Jews are not the only group, nor the first group to lay claims on the diasporic experience, the Jewish diaspora does necessitate a critical review in order to form foundations for new and divergent understandings of diaspora (Cohen 1997; Clifford 1994; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994; Neusner 1997; Smith-Christopher 1997). The difficulty lies in understanding and incorporating the Jewish experience to definitions of diaspora without essentialization or making it into the normative model by which to compare other diasporic groups.

William Safran refreshed the discussion on diasporas in his 1991 article, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return” (Safran 1991). In this essay,
Safran attempts to qualify diasporic groups with common traits. To paraphrase Safran, he states that diasporas share few or several of the following six characteristics: 1) an original center; 2) a collective memory; 3) alienation from host society; 4) vision of return to the true home; 5) commitment to this homeland; 6) 'ethnocommunal consciousness' forms their identity (83-4). Safran explicates the diasporic nature of various groups, but notes that his list of traits is not comprehensive; rather it is a beginning, which expands on the classic Jewish diaspora. He maintains that diasporas maintain solidarity because of the myth of the homeland and the desire to return to it. Often the homeland does not exist, nor did it ever exist, but more important is how "the myth of return serves to solidify ethnic consciousness and solidarity when religion can no longer do so, when the cohesiveness of the local community is loosened, and when the family is threatened with disintegration" (91). In other words, for Safran diasporas require certain characteristics and all share a desire to return to a past homeland.

Since Safran's opening remarks has forced scholars to rethink diasporas in light of global movements, advancements in technology, and to analyze diasporic groups across lines of gender and class. It has been this re-examination that has opened up new dialogues on diasporas and has stretched the definitional borders allowing, for better or for worse, the classical construction of diaspora to be redrawn. A listing of commonalities can be a useful site from which to begin an understanding of a term that has grown in recent years increasingly slippery as it gains increasing currency. But as even Safran notes, his analysis has its limitations. Categorizing people along lines of
qualities erases the numerous distinguishing features of a group and their history in a particular moment in time. Leaving one nation for another inextricably links diasporas with the nation-state, but this view can cloud the layered nuances of diaspora communities (Gabaccia and Ottanelli 1997). There is no doubt that diasporic groups have ties to a nation, but if the group migrates from one nation to another, how are they different from other immigrant groups? The difference between nation and nation-state must be clarified as well as the confusion about how diasporas are different from immigrant groups. The nation is an idealized concept of hope and desires alive in the imagined sense instead of the political construct that exists in the form of the nation-state. Clifford notes, "whether the national narrative is one of common origins or of gathered populations, it cannot assimilate groups that that maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere", thus demarcating the contrast with immigrant groups (Clifford 1994: 307). Diasporas remain distinct communities in their host nation with continual interactions, political and/or metaphorical, with their previous home. Immigrant groups have the potential to undergo the process of assimilation in a manner that is distinct from diasporas (Gabaccia 1999). A historicized past (one that can be given specificities of time) and "a strong tie to the past or a block to assimilation in the present and future must exist in order to permit a diasporic consciousness to emerge or be retained" (Cohen 1997: 24).

In specific reference to India that can be similarly applied to Pakistan, Amitav Ghosh characterizes the relationship India’s diasporas have with India as a relationship that is
not based on any institution or one that is mediated. The relationship is not based on language since multiple languages plus English are part of the educational system and religion offers no organized medium for connection. Ghosh suggests that India’s diaspora remains connected to her through something even more powerful: “the simple fact (is) that the links between India and her diaspora are lived within the imagination. It is therefore an epic relationship: an epic without a text …” (Ghosh 1989: 76). Moreover, because this epic relationship brings with it the metaphors of space, “India can never be distant or separate in quite the same way, simply because the points that constitute it enter so insidiously into the vocabulary of everyday life” (77). The diaspora carry India, a construct in the metaphorical and ideological sense, with them. Mishra adds, “for an Indian in the diaspora, India is a very different kind of homeland than for the Indian national … Diasporic discourse of the homeland is thus a kind of return of the repressed for the nation-sate itself, its pre-symbolic (imaginary) narrative …” (Mishra 1996: 424). This construct of India has the potential power to blur distinctions of language, caste, and religion at their starting point thus unifying differences in the diasporic context. Blurred distinctions help to create the oneness of origin for Asian Indians. This can be clearly noted since the literature pointedly fails to problematize these differences or to consider the origins of the Asian Indian diaspora.24 All works base their discussion on diasporas moving from one origin or center out toward their destination and focus their investigation on diasporas in the context of the host nation. Thus, while the nation-state

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24 Here I am specifically referring to those groups that migrate out of the subcontinent and not twice migrants such as those from East Africa.
itself may not bear great importance or relevance for the Asian Indian diaspora, the
nation of India as the ideologue continues to be an intrinsic part of daily life.

Moreover, the connection of diaspora to South Asians in the U.S. erases the
multifaceted and complex threads of race, culture, language, and religion that shapes and
is shaped by South Asian identity (Shukla 2001). However, the umbrella definition of
South Asian identity embodies a geographical connection and a shared cultural history
that functions for many as a unifying force in response to difference on multiple social,
religious, and cultural planes in the United States. Further, while concepts of diaspora no
longer necessitate autochthonous claims, there is no doubt a definitive point of origin for
this community that is inextricably linked in particular to the geographic area of South
Asia. As Muslims however, diaspora is theoretically complicated by Islam which
extends beyond the geographical boundaries of South Asia into the Middle East
problematizing their “imagined community” which does not simply fold into the Islamic
religious diaspora (Anderson 1991; Shukla 2001; Werbner 2004). The Islamic Society
shares the national and cultural linkages to India and Pakistan as exemplified in the many
practices that culturally segregates them in their daily lives while they simultaneously
conceptually adhere to the belief in a more global Muslim brotherhood.

Beyond the fundamental placement of origin and nation to the diaspora, Anthias
suggests that ethnicity also operates as a privileged influence in terms of identity

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25 Diasporic identity and formation differs significantly in Britain as noted in the work of Werbner
(Werbner 2004, 1990, 2002) and Shukla (Shukla 2003; Shukla 2001). Such differences are not only
due to differences in racial, class, and economic categorizations but also due to a larger population and
a longer history of migration to Britain versus the United States.
formation. Here ethnicity is read as a critical variable dependent on local contexts and operates in response to variable political projects (Anthias 1998). For the Islamic Society members, meaning in diaspora is primarily derived from an ethnic identity, albeit one that shifts between one that is culturally based and another that is religious based. Their practices of ethnicity reflect the core facets of diaspora – origin, lineage, and an imagined community.26

The ideology of Islam personified in the brotherhood amongst Muslims signifies impacts the character of this diasporic community. Practices of the Muslim diaspora can be noted not only in the pilgrimage trips to Mecca, but also in shared grief of Muslims in Palestine, the earthquake in Pakistan, as well as the horror over bombing in Spain and London. For the Islamic Society, watching these events unfold as Muslims reinforces the imagined community of Muslims superseding agreement or disagreement over the political implications. At the same time, many in the community engage in the performance of a few religious practices reflect more of a South Asian cultural dynamic than simply a Muslim one. Major events such as weddings and funerals bring the community together in practices of singing Bollywood film songs or reading the Quran. Women in the community may gather at someone’s home to recite prayers on dried chickpeas for someone’s personal supplications. In addition, the shared history of the glory of the Mughal Empire in South Asia can be witnessed in the artwork and décor of

26 Many scholars warn of diasporas essentialist claims to ethnicity or the nation through studies of diaspora including Maira, Rajan and Sharma, and (Maira 2005; Rajan and Sharma 2006; Radhakrishnan 2003). I do not disagree with the validity of their argument, however, given the multi-layered identity that constitutes be in South Asian Muslim American, I assert that ethnicity functions as the primary facet in this community’s diasporic identity.
nearly all of the community's homes. Mughal miniature paintings, Islamic calligraphy, pottery, brass handicrafts displayed prominently in otherwise typical American living rooms and dining rooms inform visitors of a religious and cultural bond.

Nonetheless, in examining the contemporary scholarly work on diaspora, an unclear confluence of ideas occurs in reference to ideas of transnationalism, immigration/migration and globalization. As previously noted, Randolph Bourne, a literary critic, was one of the first to use the term 'transnational' in his essay "Trans-National America." Bourne's early ideas of transnationalism considered the movement of groups from one place to another and he emphasized in his writings the plurality of identity that is produced from the interaction of multiple locales (Bourne 1999).

Scholarly works since Bourne have continued to examine transnationalism, with a growing focus on border and the flows of people and commodities across them (Werbner 2004; Basch, Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994; Schiller and Fouron 2001). Furthermore, it is the link to their nation within a historical context that distinguishes diasporas from transnational communities. Linked to a homeland within a historicized moment in time creates a specified space for diasporas which transnational communities do not necessarily have as they maintain a level of fluidity between their multiple national connections. Braziel and Mannur differentiate transnationalism from diaspora by suggesting that, "Transnationalism speaks to larger more impersonal forces – specifically to globalization and global capitalism.” But as Hannerz argues these transnational connections need not be based on large scale interactions but can also be representative
simply of global interconnectedness, the interconnectedness also of Appadurai’s landscapes (Hannerz 1996; Appadurai 1996). Both authors investigate transnationalism as a fluid concept connecting the individual with national forces and the local with the global.

Despite the strong diasporic identity that the Islamic Society possesses and enacts, there exists a transnational aspect of their ethnicity as well. Members from India differentiate their allegiance in South Asia from those whose birthplace is Pakistan. When collecting money for the poor, individuals are keen to send it back to their own nation. Often the design of *shalwar-kameez* or variances in fashion are likened to displaying a “very Pakistani style” or a “very Indian outfit” that can be indicative of a complimentary comment or a negative one. Transnational connections are tied to the fact that all of the members of the community travel to and from South Asia visiting families, donating money to the poor, and bringing back a variety of material goods. Such connections symbolize the significance of their ‘ethnoscapes’ and highlight the particular commitment to a nation state.27

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27 The relationship to the nation is financial in terms of donations and material consumption but in large part for this community there is little investment in businesses or the national economies of India or Pakistan. Shukla also argues that the term ‘diaspora’ needs to be reinvestigated or “reworked” to consider the critical role of the nation-state in the formation of cultural citizenship in tandem with the symbolic role of the “homeland” (Shukla 2000: 24).
Anderson and Lee contend that both diaspora and transnationalism share points of similarity but are unrelated analytical tools (Anderson and Lee 2005). Their edited volume suggests that displacement in its various forms engages the creation of identity in a new place with the conceptual frame of home and nation, in a global framework. The emphasis on ‘place’ is inclusive of migratory experiences of refugees as well as immigrants marking the issue of class. Werbner also addresses the complexities of class upon constructions of diaspora and transnational communities stating that any study of global movements of people or goods must be understood with reference to class dimensions (Werbner 1999). From this juncture of diaspora and transnationalism then, how can the identity of South Asian Muslim Americans be critically analyzed in relationship to their class status?

The theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu and his concepts of capital, and social class presents a useful analytical tool. These theories clarify and assist in articulating the multi-layered and nuanced ethnicities of the Islamic Society by addressing the form of practice and its implications, while simultaneously attending to issues of class.

A prolific author, Bourdieu trained as a sociologist and strongly espoused the marriage of empirical research with theoretical positions. He conducted fieldwork in Algeria, Paris and rural France arguing for the resolution of the subjective lived experience with the objective structures. His work reflects the need to rise above knowledge of the world through theoretical reasoning alone and to incorporate native understanding (Calhoun 1993). One of Bourdieu’s most recognized works, Distinction,
was a study of French society which underscored many of his principal ideas. This work, and many of his other writings, primarily focused on issues in France, and thus was largely criticized for restricted scope of analysis. More recent works utilizing Bourdieu’s theories extend to diverse disciplines including computer information systems (Kvasny 2002), but also continue to critique topical issues in anthropology and sociology as well (Lipuma 1989; Reed-Danahay 2004; Carpiano 2004). Calhoun et. al. argue repeatedly in the introduction of their book for the flexibility of Bourdieu’s work asserting that his theoretical positions cannot be boxed or labeled into rigid categories and instead must be placed and read from within various disciplines (Harker 1990). Bourdieu did not write extensively on the matter of ethnicity specifically, yet like the recent works in new areas, this dissertation incorporates his theories within a Folklore framework and offers an approach that reinterprets new issues with an established theoretical lens. It is this approach, the grounded theoretical methodology, which best serves to initiate the investigation to social questions concerning South Asian Muslim American ethnicity.

Zahid and Shireen and many of their friends in the Islamic Society regularly engage in ethnic identity practices in the home and in social settings that relate to their Pakistani culture, Muslim faith, and even regional traditions. Given that practice awards us insight into the central themes in their life of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage and these themes, in turn, inform us of ethnicity, it is necessary to ask: how can these practices be interpreted and translated into a meaningful framework for understanding ethnic identity creation and maintenance? In other words, in what ways does the practice
of eating Pakistani food relate to taking one’s children to Sunday school and what do both practices convey about ethnicity? This chapter seeks to understand practice as performed by the community and to develop and widen the scope of ethnicity studies to include the multiplicity of characteristics in a South Asian Muslim American’s life.

*Ethnicity and Its Practice*

An initial examination of practice among this specific community would belie the complexities inherent within its meaning, dislocating the act from its implications. Practice of ethnicity must be understood from within the community and simultaneously in relationship to other practices. Since very real differences exist in the practices in terms of *where* it is performed in the home, at the mosque, or in public or *what certain practices mean* to the individual or to the community, practice itself necessitates a framework of analysis. Therefore to accomplish this, meaning must be assigned to the forms of practice. Rethinking the meanings and the implications of practice is that which allows for a deeper insight into ethnicity and an overall deeper awareness of South Asian Muslim Americans.

Engaging in the eating of Pakistani food or enrolling one’s children in Islamic Sunday school, it is difficult to assign meanings to these practices particularly when one is private and takes place in the home and the other social in a public space. Further complicating the analysis is the impact of class which differentiates this community from many others on the level of education, language ability, and profession. So how can we make sense of
the many conflicting and sometimes overlapping spaces of a South Asian Muslim American's ethnic life?

In order to better ascertain the different aspects of the community's ethnicity, practices have been categorized as customs performed in the home, the mosque, and the public sphere. This distinguishes each practice not only by location and by function, but also. In many cases, however, practices spilled into more than one sphere but all directly correlate to the main themes of this dissertation, of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage. I further consider Bourdieu's forms of capital that are intrinsic to the role of class in the Islamic Society's life and the manner in which capital takes on various forms in the economic, cultural, and social areas. The central themes are revisited and clarified through the active and strategic maneuvering of the forms of capital as a mechanism for maintaining class. I suggest that through the analysis of the practice of ethnicity, a more nuanced awareness evolves of the Islamic Society and their life as a particular social class. The analysis reveals a community possessing the agency to simultaneously assimilate and differentiate themselves, a community possessing the agency to make themselves visible or invisible.

For the South Asian Muslim American community in suburban Philadelphia, the practices that are delineated according to relevance to the Islamic Society are many, but I will focus on three specific areas that highlight the main aspects of the community's life: home, mosque, and public.
**Home:** The space of the home centers on family and personal life. A critical facet of every individual’s life, and perhaps the most significant, home is the site for varied practices. The practices overlap with the other fields but if it pertains to the familial or to the personal, then it classifies as home. Cultural or religious practices of ethnicity fall into this domain. For example, within the field of home nearly everyone I interviewed ate traditional Pakistani meals, particularly at dinner time, often considered by many to be the main meal of the day. The first generation parents almost exclusively speak Urdu or other native language to each other and often to their children as well. Performance of religious practice in the form of fasting or ritual prayer is also undertaken in the home. Many in the first generation also opt to wear traditional dress in the home on a regular basis as well as for special occasions. The wearing of ‘shalwar-kameez’ is particularly of import to many women in the community who favor this type of clothing and take pride in purchasing and acquiring these garments. Participation in the Pakistani American Society or the Pakistani American Congress also falls into the domain of the home since both these organizations manifest the practice of ethnic heritage and national culture.

**Mosque:** The practices of the mosque concentrate on issues that relate to the mosque and to religious and to community life. These include the formation of the Society and the efforts to purchase the physical building of the mosque itself. A common practice in the field of the mosque features the regular attendance of Sunday Islamic School at the mosque. Many families bring their children for lessons and a few stay on to teach classes. The parents that bring their children, and who do not teach, often congregate
together, segregated by gender in the mosque, and socialize while waiting for their children. The mosque serves as a prayer hall for Friday prayers, occasional guest speakers, and monthly family ‘dars’ teachings on the Quran. Upon occasions of death, the mosque prayer hall also functions as a gathering space to pray and grieve together as in the case of the death of Shaheen’s husband (Shaheen 2004). In addition, the prayer hall holds the annual elections for the positions of president and Board members of the Society. While the principal function of the mosque as a physical space and as a religious ideological construct, involvement in any mosque activity indicates a practice of the mosque.

Public: The public category involves those practices that the community members engage in including work and career; civic duties such as neighborhood activities, voting in government elections; and participation in their children’s schools. The category also comprises the practices that embody the values of achievement in education, careers, and economic success. Overall, public practice represents that aspect of the members’ lives that can be identified and self-identified as “American”.

These three categories, home, mosque, and public, overlap in the lives of the community. For example, the practice of a religious ritual may be performed in the home as well mosque while the practice of acquiring material goods, such as expensive cars, may fall into the categories of public and home. The issues are additionally intertwined on issues of capital – often practices accumulate capital in more than one area. The categories are separate; however, the extension of one into another and the shared
symbolic value of various forms of capital suggest the multiple ways that the various aspects of the Islamic Society's lives are also deeply connected.

Capital

Because class is central to the production of ethnicity for this community, the work of Pierre Bourdieu on capital offers an analytical tool that can address how individuals operate in any given area with capital, continuously seeking to acquire more capital and advance their positions. As previously noted, Bourdieu identified the social world as a "multi-dimensional space" but he additionally stated that the differences in social space can be accounted for,

"... by discovering the powers or forms of capital which are or can become efficient, ... that is in the struggle (or competition) for the appropriation of scarce goods of which this universe is the site ...

It follows that the structure of this space is given by the distribution of the of the various forms of capital, that is by the distribution of the properties which are active within the universe under study – those properties capable of conferring strength, power and consequently profit on their holder" (Bourdieu 1987: 4).

Individuals maneuver within a given social field in accordance to three 'dimensions': how much capital they possess, the kind of capital in terms of composition, and as a result of the volume and the type of capital, the 'trajectory' of their position or where their position in the field has been and will be over time (Bourdieu 1987). In other
words, the position that someone occupies in a given situation is based upon how much capital one has accumulated as well as the types of capital - economic, cultural, and social. Structural hierarchy or the movement up or down the scale of class explaining by some groups may identify with the tastes or lifestyles of another group they hope to emulate (Wilkes 1990). Class is understood as economically based, objectified, and relational however, when analyzed through forms of capital; class takes on a more symbolic meaning.

The definition of capital is nuanced and all forms of capital accumulate over time. The types of capital fall into three categories: economic, cultural and social. Economic capital, most easily defined and recognized, takes form in financial success and in material goods. For the Islamic society gaining economic capital served as the motivation for migrating to the United States. Once settled here, economic capital remained a motivating force for the individual members to ensure a certain lifestyle, one that sustained homes in upper middle class suburbs, private school education for their children, and financial security to travel to and from South Asia. In addition, economic capital links the members of the community with each other, as much as culture or religion, in that it fostered a common set of values and life goals particularly with relation to education and children. In other words, the shared common aspirations for economic capital reflected mutual social values in residential and educational choices – individual families wanted to live in the same affluent neighborhoods and send their children to the
same schools and colleges. These life choices and life goals reflect a shared value system.

Cultural capital has three forms, embodied, objectified, and institutionalized and range from dispositions or held values to cultural goods to educational institutions. This kind of capital often cannot be transferable particularly in its embodied and institutionalized form, but each is closely linked and dependent upon the other (Bourdieu 1986). Bourdieu further clarifies that, “There is no one Culture with a capital c to be acquired by the socially deprived which will remedy their supposed deficiencies. Cultural capital does not possess absolute value which is quantifiable. It only possesses value in exchange and the exchange is a social struggle as much as a struggle of cultural value judgment” (Robbins 2005: 23).

In terms of the Islamic community, cultural capital is manifested in the practices of language, food, and education to name a few. It can also be readily noted in certain Pakistani values such as the importance of family, maintenance of sexuality within the domain of marriage as well as in organization of the Pakistani American Society. Adhering to the value system self identified as Pakistani or ‘desi’ or practicing language additionally all indicate acquiring cultural capital. The ability to navigate prescribed South Asian or Islamic cultural practices awards an individual cultural capital and in turn, the ability to move upwards in the society’s social scale.

Although Bourdieu understood cultural capital as immutable and unable to be transferred from one person to another, the first generation Islamic Society recognizes
cultural capital as often located and achieved through the practices of others. Here the significant difference rests upon individual versus group identity with family identity having greater consequence within the South Asian Muslim American community. Actions of an individual reverberate throughout the family strengthening the link to the family unit.

In many instances, family identity supersedes individual identity, and consequently cultural capital obtained by one member reflects to the other family members as well. During interviews many parents expressed great pride in how their children were able to speak Urdu or how they chose to dress in Pakistani or Indian clothing on special occasions. Ahmed and Ghazal proudly related the experiences of their younger son, Husayn, traveling to Pakistan for the first time on his own. They commented that after the events of September 11, 2001, he had a strong desire to go to Pakistan to visit the extended family and see the sites. Ahmed said that when his son returned from his journeys he told his father, “I went as a boy. I came back as a man.” So profound was the trip’s impact, that Husayn wrote a lengthy piece article for his school’s newspaper upon returning home. Ahmed and Ghazal further emphasized their delight and surprise over the change in Husayn since he had remained disinterested in his childhood even though their older son had always possessed a strong affinity towards his Pakistani heritage. Husayn’s love of Pakistan and his cultural heritage was cultural capital for Ahmed and Ghazal because others within the community recognized them as “good
parents” who gave their son a proper upbringing. Husayn’s knowledge and admiration of Pakistan also symbolically represented Ahmed and Ghazals’ knowledge and admiration.

Frequent trips to India or Pakistan additionally add to cultural capital as Zahid was quick to address. He and Shaheen felt that yearly trips to Pakistan ensured that their daughter would maintain close ties to her family and her heritage. Zahid recognizes that his daughter, having been raised in America, would not consider moving to Pakistan now as an adult. Zahid and Shireen have no desire to live far from their only child and so realize their life is now in the United States.

Waleed and his wife Shaista knew early on that they would not return to Pakistan and so he and Shaista began instilling Pakistani Muslim culture into their children. He asserted, “Life was humble there – why would I go back?” (Waleed 2004). He is certain that others may have a desire to return to Pakistan and settle there but that is only due to a nostalgic “longing”. In the end, Waleed maintains, “people always return to the U.S.” Waleed and Shaista endeavored to educate their children on issues of religion and language but also through Pakistani culture of speaking only Urdu in the home and Islamic customs of no dating and gender segregation. Waleed stated that while as parents they stressed education, religion, and culture they also emphasized these issues through “living” - they ate Pakistani meals and dressed in traditional clothes. Both were also adamant about maintaining social customs between genders allowing meetings between their children and members of the opposite sex with supervision only. Waleed and
Shaista spoke confidently that if their children were asked about their ethnic identity, all three would respond “Pakistani” due to their upbringing.

When Asif and Ruksana decided not to return to Pakistan and instead remain in the U.S., they both made certain the family was active in the mosque to develop an Islamic identity with American values of hard work achievement. Since they have been involved with the founding of the Society and the mosque building, Asif and Ruksana possess the ability to consider the formative years of the community and noted that everyone involved came from “similar backgrounds” and had the same cultural and religious ideals. During the early years of the community when there were a smaller number of families, the mosque formed the social center of the community as well as the religious. As their children became older, Asif and Ruksana began to participate in organizations such as the Jewish Muslim Dialogue, the Jewish-Muslim-Christian Dialogue, and the Ecumenical Council against Domestic Violence. Both joined the groups in order to encourage further cultural and religious understanding about Pakistanis and about Muslims in America. Their involvement in the development of their mosque community as well as their life in the non-South Asian Muslim community grew into cultural capital for Asif and Ruksana. The participation in religious and cultural activities proved their knowledge and commitment of their identities to everyone in the community. The practice of these activities represented Asif and Ruksana’s cultural capital.

Another source of examining cultural capital comes from Yunis and his wife Kamala, both from an Indian Gujarati background, “spent 150% of (their) effort for the kids”
(Yunis 2004). They considered Islamic Sunday school to be very important for their “first generation” children in America and wanted them to be exposed to all aspects of Islamic culture. Both parents were active in educating the children on prayers in Islam and spoke only Gujarati at home. They visited India often and wore traditional shalwar-kameez to Sunday school and to religious and cultural functions. In addition, often Yunis or Kamala’s parents would visit from India and taught the children cultural games and stories. As the years went on, the family residing the U.S. grew in number and formed the core group of interaction for the children. Knowledge and participation in culture, heritage, and religion were stressed in the home; however, Yunis and Kamala also deemed it necessary for the children to have a social network with strong South Asian Muslim ties. Restated, as they encouraged their children to set high standards in their educational goals through Ivy League universities and graduate school and in their socialization through building a solid social base within the community, Yunis and Kamala were able to acquire cultural capital for themselves as parents, however their endeavors also accumulated social capital for their children.

While cultural capital entailed practices of language, food, and education as well as South Asian values of family, sexuality, and tradition, frequently it was measured through the children of the first generation. As previously noted, family identity often displaced individual identity so that the capital acquired from an individual’s actions is reproduced for the entire family. Parents often reflected upon the actions of their offspring as actions that directly impacted their lives and that were directly due to their
parenting. The frequency and manner of the cultural and/or religious practices of that the second generation engaged in correlated to the scale of what was commonly understood as good parenting. As a result, the primary method of obtaining more cultural capital was through one's children vis-à-vis their success in adopting key cultural and/or religious practices. An individual could acquire cultural capital through the maintenance of any of these practices, but the interviews with the community members indicated that teaching one's children culture, heritage, and/or religion assisted in greater cultural capital. Furthermore, cultural capital reified the community as a diaspora with strong connections to South Asia and to Islam. The recreation of traditions vis-à-vis language, food or dress additionally functioned as a homogenizing force strengthening the links within the community in the United States as well. Understanding the symbiotic relationship of cultural capital as practiced by the South Asian Muslim American community within the framework of Bourdieu's theories reestablishes the centrality of culture, religion, family, and identity.

Social capital, which operates within a network system, plays a significant role in the practice of ethnic identity with the Islamic community. Reciprocity impacts the accumulation of social capital connecting individuals and families to each other and creating a hierarchy of status. In turn, this hierarchy determines the level of reciprocity linking those within the community on a daily basis. Identification or solidarity with a group and subsequent approval or validation from that group can also function as social capital but for this community. Identifying as South Asian Muslim American, the sense
of belonging to this specific community in suburban Philadelphia, forms the fundamental motivating force for social capital: the network shapes social capital. However, as Portes notes, social capital simultaneously restricts membership in the community by filtering opportunities of reciprocity for those outside the network of the Islamic society (Portes 1998). Individuals are more likely to reciprocate for others in the same network, which enables the acquisition of social capital for themselves within that same network. Therefore, social capital only possesses currency when framed by a system of relationships.

Pnina Werbner, in her extensive study on British Muslims and the importance of their social networks, details the manner in which, “Symbolic practices are embedded in social situations ... The spaces they occupy are as varied – and sometimes conflictual – as are the audiences ... Social identity, in other words, is indexical and positioned” (Werbner 2002). Werbner examines social, secular, and religious practice and suggests that British Pakistanis engage in certain practices to receive validation from their own community. Men may play and participate in cricket as a sport and women may participate in elaborate pre-wedding rituals such as the henna ceremony. Werbner focuses on the performative framework of these “South Asian public spheres” however, inherent in such practices is the social capital negotiated through membership in the community network. In her work, The Migration Process, Werbner explores marriage customs and rituals and community gift giving. When an individual is performing “khidmat” or offering donations that individual is also acquiring symbolic capital (Werbner 1990: 309).
Although different than social capital due to its economic predisposition, symbolic capital operates similarly to social capital by its ability to increase social positioning within the community network, i.e., the more that one offers economically or financially, the more symbolic capital acquired, and the resultant higher status thus obtained.

Within the Islamic Society, social capital maintains one’s position in the community as a devout Muslim, loyal Pakistani or loyal Indian, or upstanding citizen. Participation in the mosque, either through Islamic Sunday school or Islamic Society business for example, signals one as a devout Muslim. Maintaining close relationships with extended family in India or Pakistan or cooking elaborate dishes from traditional recipes for guests suggests intimate knowledge of heritage and culture furthering the ability to acquire social capital. Additionally, success in personal careers or positive relationships with one’s neighbors signals social capital. The attainment of social capital from each everyday practice rests on the association with the social network that forms the primary group identification for this South Asian Muslim American community, the Islamic Society.

Ghalib presented interesting insights into the community from a perspective of over forty years since he was one of the first to migrate from Pakistan. He notes that in the first years after migration, most people from this community were interested in music and cultural issues but as many had children their concerns began to center around their Islamic education. Parents worried that educating their children culturally was no longer enough and that they needed to also have knowledge of Islam. Many efforts were made to rent halls and spaces for events or Islamic Sunday school or Eid celebrations and
involvement in these activities helped create a tight knit Islamic Society. Ghalib indicated that many did not want “to engage the larger society” during the early years becoming what he referred to as “so insular”, however now the community was beginning to partake in more civic activities. Ghalib’s interview suggest the Islamic Society’s primary practices concentrated on maintaining culture and religion and in accomplishing these goals, the community developed close ties. He noted that in recent years the migration patterns of the community have changed and a more diverse population is beginning to grow. Ghalib stated, “... the community is a multi-layered community. See, some people, a group of people who are professionals, medical doctors millionaires, they live in big homes, drive Mercedes cars, ... for a long time it continued to be the preserve of this community ... here. And we had a very active life, dinner meetings, lectures, here and there” (Ghalib 2004). This type of cohesiveness indicates how social capital can control social behaviors and prevent non-community members from gaining access or acquiring the same social capital (Portes 1998). In examining the practices that the Society regularly partook in also reflects how social capital could be attained and the manner in which it could happen.

Social capital was perhaps best exemplified in the life of Jameel. Although Jameel’s death occurred in 2000, his role and position in the community has been unmatched. Jameel was educated as a pharmacist, but his career was secondary to his personal achievements in the community. Jameel was the primary leader in initiating an Islamic Sunday school for the children and the primary leader in joining a fledgling community
together. Because he had no hesitation searching a phone book for South Asian Muslim names and contacting strangers directly, and persuading them to join his family for dinner or prayers, Jameel was well known in Philadelphia. After the Islamic Society and Sunday school was established, Jameel continued teaching the Quran, performed wedding rites, and prayer recitations. His religious knowledge and community political efforts gained him a great deal of social capital. His widowed wife Tania still retains the benefits of his accumulated social capital as a well respected, knowledgeable, and active member of the Islamic Society (Tania 2004).

Ruksana also exemplifies social capital particularly since she is not only a successful physician, but also because she maintained the position of Principal of the Islamic Sunday school, actively participated in mosque politics, and entertains the Society with regular yearly Eid breakfasts that she prepares herself (Ruksana 2004). Ruksana, in her multiple roles and activities, acquires social capital as a successful career woman, devout Muslim, concerned mother of two sons, and as hostess of social gatherings.

Riyadh and Badar also gained social capital through their involvement with the Islamic Society. Although they moved to Philadelphia from the Midwest in 1990, Riyadh and Badar were quick to establish themselves within the South Asian Muslim community. Riyadh played an important part of the Society’s politics and held various office positions for several years in addition to his practice as a physician. Badar was an active teacher for many years at the Islamic Sunday school and after giving up teaching there she remained involved by taking her grandsons each week to their classes. Both
were also deeply engaged with the social and cultural aspect of the Islamic Society by attending and hosting dinner parties and religious prayer gatherings (Riyadh 2004; Badar 2004).

Zulfikar and Fauzia also migrated to the Philadelphia area in the 1990's for Zulfikar’s medical career and were quick to meet other South Asian Muslims (Fauzia 2004; Zulfikar 2004). Once in Philadelphia, they moved twice; however, while both participated religiously and socially in the community, Zulfikar and Fauzia made great effort to attend activities and parties of two mosques. While their primary connection remained with the Islamic Society, they still had active contact with their former mosque. This dual allegiance and participation made them unique within the community whose members principally remained involved in one place.

Ultimately, what are the common threads in the practices of each of these lives within the Islamic Society network that attains social capital? First and most significantly, social capital is obtained within this community vis-à-vis one’s profession. It is important to note that social capital is conceptually based upon a network and in this case, membership within the network rests upon the prerequisite of a professional career and the resultant upper middle class – middle class lifestyle which accompanies it. Not coincidentally, Ruksana, Zulfikar, and Riyadh are all practicing physicians. All the people discussed above actively participated in the Islamic Society and mosque through either religious or political/organizational endeavors. Jameel organized and taught Quran lessons, Ruksana was the principal of the Sunday school, Badar taught Islamic history,
Riyadh was a member of the Islamic Society Board of Directors, and Zulfikar and Fauzia attended all religious and social gatherings. In order to gain social capital the extent of involvement is critical, but as long as it is constant the realm of involvement does not differentiate the amount of social capital acquired.

Social capital is also linked directly to social engagements – the attendance of and the hosting of parties which may or may not be religiously associated. When one regularly hosts dinner parties that showcase large amounts of traditional dishes, they obtain social capital. Such dinner parties demonstrate knowledge of cultural values and the status of inviting several people from the Society. The relationship between hosting a party and being invited to a party is direct – the more parties one hosts the more parties to which one is invited and the amount of social capital is dependent upon the frequency of both events. Thus, Ruksana, a busy and successful physician, acquires social capital though attending and hosting many parties, but also because she recurrently hosts an Eid breakfast for the majority of the community. Zulfikar and Fauzia possess social capital from both their social networks and from the very fact that they are able to maintain two social networks with consistency.

These examples of the previously mentioned individuals and their practices indicate only a small piece of the multifarious modes of achieving social capital and are by no account, complete. Chapter Four further underscores the forms of capital as it explores one particular practice of Quranic study. Most importantly however, the study of capital and its attainment through practice serves as an essential methodology for examining the
main themes of this dissertation: education, family, religion, and cultural heritage. The visibility and/or invisibility of the community are embedded within the ways in which capital is strategically managed. Individual possess the ability to engage in practices that can therefore mark one as any one of their facets of their ethnicity or a combination of their South Asian Muslim American-ness.

**Social Class**

In the social realm, Bourdieu considers that space is marked through differentiation of groups. In straightforward terms, groups that shared similar fields and positions within the fields were likely characterized as the same class:

"On the basis of knowledge of the space of positions, one can separate out *classes*, in the logical sense of the word, i.e., sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and subjected to similar conditionings, have every likelihood of having similar dispositions and interests and therefore of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances" (Bourdieu 1985: 725).

Bourdieu further elaborates,

"constructed classes can be characterized in a certain way as sets of agents who, by virtue of the fact that they occupy similar positions in social space (that is the distribution of powers), are subject to similar conditions of existence and conditioning factors"
and, as a result, are endowed with similar dispositions, which
prompt them to develop similar practices” (Bourdieu 1987).

Research with the Islamic Society supports Bourdieu’s theoretical analysis in that the
majority of the members do share the same social space and therefore the same social
practices. As they engage the same desires for economic, cultural, and social capital on
the shared fields of home, mosque, and public, their practices demarcate a defined social
class. Wilkes corroborate in his argument that, “in its essence, social class is
characterised as a social practice” (Wilkes 1990).

In returning to Ghalib’s interview, it can be noted that similar migration patterns
which includes time period of migration, age of migration, level of education at time of
migration, and socio-economic level in the native country all assist in creating a unified
social class for the Islamic Society. Years into their migration, similar aspirations and
value systems further delineate the social class narrowing its membership to successful,
professional, religious, and culturally connected South Asian Muslim Americans. Ghalib
observed that migration and ethnic identity patterns develop from specific needs, “first of
course, always is how to make money, how to have good profession, good career, good
place, things like that. Then the children, their education. They are working very hard
with the children, no doubt about it … the important thing is to develop that what you call
the ‘connect’. That they have some public commitments as well, in addition to the
commitment to their family, they have commitment to the public …” (Ghalib 2004).
Such factors solidify relationships within the community while simultaneously producing a cohesive social space, a specific social class.

Hamid, perhaps the very first South Asian in the Philadelphia area, considers the Islamic Society community connecting with each other based on social cohesiveness and religious conservatism. Having lived in the same area for approximately fifty years, Hamid has contemplated the growth and changes of the community with whom he has had close associations. He isolates five identifying characteristics of the Society: prosperity, social cohesiveness, religious cohesiveness, political activism, and goals for their children. Hamid admitted that the most readily noted marker is that of prosperity. As previously noted, the majority of the community has advanced degrees and professional careers awarding them financial success.

In addition, as a historian by profession, Hamid believes that the historical events of Partition of India and Pakistan resulted in distinct national and ethnic solidarities. He stated, "... Indian Muslims developed a separate point of view. And those Indian Muslims who migrated to the United States, they were watched by the Indian Embassy ... so they have a sense of Indian identity ... The sense of Islamic solidarity which was wrapped up in the nationalism, this had blurred over our linguistic and ethnic differences ... for example, Pakistanis cling together. Arabs cling together ... I mean, it's amazing, you know, how different ethnic groups and linguistic groups stick together ...")(Hamid 2004).
Hamid’s comments do reflect the majority population from Pakistan and its heavy influence over the Islamic Society and community life, but as he continued he argued that religious conservatism also bonded the members together. According to Hamid, celebrating religious holidays functioned only as opportunities to gather with each other to the exclusion of outsiders: “...the religious holidays come along, they get together, socialize together. And basically they socialize among themselves. They don’t socialize with others ... I’ve never seen an American being invited to anybody’s house ... It doesn’t happen.” Hamid added an interesting story about a conversation he had with the wife of a friend, a practicing physician at a local hospital, at a dinner party hosted by members of the Islamic Society. He recalls suggesting to her that their group should meet and get to know others from the American community as well. She responded, “I work all day with them. Why the hell do I have to socialize with them?” He further attributed this solidarity of religious conservatism to a fear of Christian America. He stated, “I see people who, if they had remained in Pakistan, they would be known as modern people, modernized people, you know, westernized. But here, they become religiously conservative.” When asked why he believed immigrants become more religious away from their birthplace, Hamid stated,

“Well ... there a few reasons that I can tell you. The Pakistani community becomes religiously conservative because they feel socially threatened by the Anglo-Saxon culture of the United States, which is fundamentally Christian ..., you see? They feel
threatened. And they feel threatened particularly about their children. Their concern is – ‘I have two daughters. Who are they going to marry? You know if they go to college … they’re going to fall in love with a Catholic or with a Jew. You know? Or a Protestant for that matter.’ … and this has happened, but it horrifies them … You see? So they hope that by sticking together, by culturally and religiously indoctrinating the children into Islam, that they will keep them isolated so they marry among themselves.”

Hamid reflected that the third identifying factor of the Society was the recent interest in political activism. He has noted that the past fifteen years, members have become more involved not only in their on mosque politics, but also in local politics as well. Hamid stated, “Here in our community some of my friends have had fundraisers fro local congressmen … People get together and they raise money ….” He felt that the political involvement was a positive step for the Society in that such contact with Washington, D.C. would assist individuals in situations of crisis.

The last characteristic Hamid specified centered on the second generation. He maintained, “… another thing that I noticed in the community is, especially in the upper classes and the middle classes, a very strong desire for their children to excel. Very strong desire for their children to excel … in education, in professions, in business, in whatever. These are the qualities that I see.” Hamid’s observations on education restate
one of the most significant facets of this community – the importance of their children’s education and future success. In his study on the education levels of young Pakistani men in Britain, Modood critiques Bourdieu’s theoretical analysis of cultural and economic capital. Modood identifies the influence of Pakistani parents and community members who desire upward mobility and the internalization of this influence by their children. Even though Modood argues for a community that possesses little economic capital, his arguments inserts an additional layer to Bourdieu’s framework in suggesting the significance of the family and on a larger scale, ethnicity as capital (Modood 2004). Again, the importance of education for this Islamic Society reveals an identical significance of both parental influence and ethnicity and reiterates the cohesiveness of social class.

Conclusion

Analyzing Ghalib and Hamid’s responses together disclose the practices that are the most significant to the members of the Islamic Society – those dealing with family, culture, and religion – and parallel this dissertation’s central themes of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage. This is a community that is deeply invested in maintaining a separate cultural and religious identity. Simultaneously, a desire for education and professional achievement grounds the instructions for the second generation. Furthermore, the consideration of the shared categories and the types of capital, often to the exclusion of outsiders, proposes a shared social class. This social class encompasses
all the practices in which the Islamic Society members participate not only defining the spheres of home, mosque, and the public but naming the desired forms of capital. While it cannot be denied that the suggestion of a particular social class implies a level of homogeneity and the Islamic Society, as a religious and an ethnic group, does share a collective history of origin and migration, but most importantly, the Society also is composed of individual lives and social relationships. In this manner, the social class of the Islamic Society is in large part consistent, however is one that is emergent and variable (Anthias 2001).

Revisiting Zahid and Shireen and their lives full of personal and social pursuits presents a personification of the main themes of this research while the theoretical framework of diaspora/transnationalism and Bourdieu's analysis of capitalism allows for a deeper understanding. From Zahid and Shireen's life the multitude of practices highlight the practices that embody their cultural and national heritage, their migration history, and their future in the United States. The complex connection to South Asia and to Islam positions their lives as both diasporic and transnational as noted particularly in the practices of self identification as a community and in the practices of educating their children about culture and religion. Examining practices through the lens of Bourdieu's theories also uncovers the main spheres of engagement for the community and informs the types of capital that is valued. The resultant analysis of capital assists in the consideration of social class. In the case of the Islamic Society, the inter-connection between ethnicity (of which religion and culture are a part) and economics proves to be
the critical piece in determining a particular ethnic identity for this community. The practices and the social values embedded within discloses a class based ethnic identity, one that is equally shared by the members and one that is mutually exclusive to non-members. Moreover, within the larger American society framework, class provides the ability and the agency for this community to strategically mark their ethnicity as visible or invisible. In conclusion, this ability to negotiate visibility and/or invisibility provides the key to understanding the ways in which the Islamic Society simultaneously associates and separates their identification with the terroristic events of September 11, 2001. They grieved as Americans, were outraged as other Muslims, but did not connect with those South Asians and/or Muslims that suffered the backlash of the attacks.
Chapter Four: The Dars

“After 9/11, I felt that I was away from my faith. I felt something was missing ....”

_Hafsa on why she began the dars group, 2004._

Every Monday Hafsa unlocks her front door and opens her home to the women from
the Islamic Society who desire and are able to join in on the weekly dars, a Quranic study
group. The invitation is an open one for the members of Islamic Society and while the
attendance waxes and wanes, the number usually amounts to anywhere from ten to fifteen
women. With an occasional exception, the group consists of women who have school
age children and who do not work. The women enter the home, immediately take their
shoes off at the front door, and make their way to the living room. They quietly take their
places in a circle on the floor where Hafsa has spread a clean white sheet on the floor.
Encircling the sheet are various pillows for the women’s comfort. As the women come
into the living room, they cover their heads with a veil and place the Quran that they have
brought with them on pillows on the floor in front of them. The dars begins at 11 am and
often latecomers filter in quietly sitting in open spots in the circle. Once the lesson
commences, it does not stop until its completion. When the dars lesson has concluded,
the women perform the afternoon prayer, and the white sheet is lifted off the ground,
folded and put away. The room shifts in mood and ambiance as socialization ensues with
wide assortment of entrees served for lunch. Conversations also shift from religious
issues to children, food, and the latest designs in South Asian clothes.
A study of the dars offers a multitude of issues to analyze including gender, space, and religious performance. Chapter Four however, is an examination of the dars as a social and religious practice from a folkloristic perspective. More specifically, the focus centers on the dars and in the ways in which it embodies the converging theoretical discourses of ethnicity and narrative. The dars is *intrinsically a narrative event*, one that involves both the religious and the personal, and what is spoken as well as what is written. It is a primary example of ethnic identity practice through which the spheres of home and mosque (or religious life) intersect. Participating in the weekly dars presents an opportunity for acquiring social and cultural capital as the women socialize, take turns cooking for the group, and learn about their religion. The gathering connects the women as South Asians, as Muslims, and as immigrants in the U.S. Thus, this chapter continues with a study of ethnicity through an analysis of the narratives at the dars in order to demonstrate the ways in which this weekly meeting offers a glimpse into South Asian Muslim American life. These narratives highlight the issues the women confront on a daily basis as they navigate their religious and cultural past with their current lives in the United States.

These weekly gatherings are ritualized in customary sacred procedures, with ten to fifteen women drawing together in the home of Hafsa to read and study the verses of the Quran. The meetings include the religious procedures of handling the Quran, veiling the head, performing prayers, and proper recitation of the verses in Arabic. The weekly dars, or lesson, centers on the Quran, but for this small group of South Asian women the gatherings also delineate a space in which conversations can occur about community and
family life in the United States. These meetings appear to focus primarily on Muslim ritual and practice, but a closer look reveals a discourse about the struggles of first generation immigrants. Fundamentally, the conversations and the narratives shared are the narratives of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's "culture shock," the stories recounted about the trials of creating a life anew America (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1978). In the space of the dars, the dialogues also center on the issues and the struggles of living an ethnically South Asian and religiously Muslim existence in an American society as the women establish a life and raise their children in the United States. Moreover, as previously noted, these issues are situated within the context of post September 11 United States, one in which the political and social milieu misunderstood Islam and was wary of foreigners. These narratives may not have focused on the trauma of 9/11 exclusively, but for the women the conversations do contain a certain urgency of protecting their South Asian and Muslim heritage in the U.S. for their children and future generations.

Ethnicity is composed of numerous variables and I suggest reworking the analytical methodology to account for the shifts in ethnicity's components as individuals negotiate their identities as immigrants, South Asians, Muslims, and Americans on multiple social planes. With the dars as a specific practice, the methodology examines ethnic identity through the analysis of narrative. In addition, while Pierre Bourdieu's theories of society and the role of class are incorporated in this chapter, these models serve as a backdrop to generally frame the analysis. Revisiting Bourdieu's conceptual understanding of the forms of capital serves as a constructive model for analyzing ethnicity; however the focus of the dars modifies the focal point of the analysis to center on narrative. This
methodology positions ethnicity to be considered as an actively manipulated and evolving presence in the lives of the community’s members. More specifically, narrative analysis assists in re-emphasizing the negotiation of ethnic identity on a broader level, vis-à-vis the elements of discourse in asking the questions: how does the dars affect the participant’s lives on a daily basis? In what ways has the dars group influenced how the women see themselves as ethnically the same or different from others? A re-examination of the narratives and dialogues facilitates in extending the discourse of the dars from a living room to the larger framework of the South Asian Muslim community in America.

I utilize narrative analysis in the examination of the dars in order to consider how the practice of religion merges into the discourse of ethnicity. In other words, narrative assists in decoding the practice of the dars not only as it is detailed in rituals of dress, food, language, and religion, but the manner in which the conversations at the dars function as a way of making sense of living an ethnic life in America for the members. The dars transforms from a solely religious gathering into a meeting that has social and cultural meaning.

Following the work of Linda Degh, my study of narration focuses on the narrator and the personal relationship developed from long-term fieldwork (Degh 1995). The narrative analysis of the issues discussed by the members of the dars attempts to engage the personal aspects of this community as each narrative is lived and experienced by the women of the Islamic Society. Furthermore, as Bar-Itzhak contends, the most critical aspect of immigrant folklore studies must now be centered on the new manifestations of folklife as a result of the migration experience. She states, “Although the changes in
traditional folklore brought about by the transition to the new culture have also been studied, there has been less attention to the creation of folklore as a direct result of the contact with the new place and new culture” (Bar-Itzhak 2005: 54). Thus, returning to the main themes of education, family, religion, and cultural heritage, the dual theoretical analysis considers not only the member’s verbal expressions, but also investigates practice. *In essence, the discourse of the dars is one of ethnic identity negotiation.*

Therefore, by working with the South Asian American community, primarily from India and Pakistan, through an Islamic Society in suburban Philadelphia, I examine the processes that groups and individuals enact in order to create and sustain what I believe to be a continuously changing and emergent identity. The discussion of one particular example of a religious practice, the dars illustrates the complexities of South Asian Muslim American life and how the practice of participating in the dars mobilizes this group in negotiating its religious and ethnic identity within both the Islamic community of a suburban Philadelphia mosque and the larger American society.

*History of the Dars*

The word *dars* comes from the verb *darasa* ‘to study’ and means literally ‘lesson.’ Islam, based in Arabic, is a monotheistic faith requiring its adherents to follow the five “pillars” belief in one God and the prophet Mohammed, ritual prayer five times a day, fasting during the month of Ramadan, almsgiving, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. The Quran is considered as the word of Allah (God) revealed to Mohammed over a period of 22 years. Muslims also believe that the preaching of the Prophet Muhammad is a
continuation of the beliefs as laid out in the Old Testament and in the Torah. Because the Quran is the last word from God and because it deals with a wide variety of issues in daily life, it is mandatory for every Muslim to read the Quran and to understand its message. The dars format is therefore an ideal method for studying the Quran as a group and for learning how to practice and live one’s faith.

During prayer and any other ritual practice in Islam, women are required to wear a veil over their heads and to dress modestly covering their legs and most of their arms in loose fitting clothing. All of the women attending the dars primarily dress in South Asian dress consisting of loose pants and a long shirt reaching to the knee and a veil five to six feet long. During prayer, and even when one is in a mosque, shoes are never worn so as they enter, the women leave their shoes at the door. When in ritual prayer, Muslims face the direction of Mecca, the holiest city in Islam. As they position their bodies, Muslims also demarcate a prayer space around them with the use of a prayer rug. When the prayer is performed as a group, any large rug or sheet can be used to delineate a sacred space. Hafsa lays a white sheet on her living floor to mark the space as one of

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28 There is a specific verse in the Quran that enjoins women to dress modestly and to safeguard their "jewels": "And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment ..." Quran 24: 31-32. This is a commonly known verse and is often referred to amongst Muslims.

29 This ensemble is the 'shalwar and kurta/kameez' commonly worn in India and Pakistan by men and women. The 'dupatta' is the veil worn only by women and is made long enough to cover a woman's head and chest ensuring modesty. The shalwar – kameez outfit is also the national dress of Pakistan. It should be noted also that the styles of the shalwar and kameez change rapidly with the seasons sometimes with longer or shorter hems for the kameez or wider or shorter cuffs for shalwar. The differentiations in fabrics, colors, and ornamentation through embroidery or lace are vast. Since the majority of the clothes are custom made in India or Pakistan and brought back by the women from their trips each outfit is unique and often elaborate in design. Most of the women do dress for the dars in clothes that would not be considered average daily wear.
worship but the color does not necessarily denote any aspect of Islam. The same sheet used for the dars can also stand in for the afternoon prayer for those that perform it after the dars lesson.

The tradition of the dars has its roots in Islamic education, emulating the teaching tradition exemplified in classical Islamic schools such as Al-Azhar in Egypt where the students sit in a circle around the teacher as he gives his lesson. This method is also referred to in Arabic as ‘halka’ or circle in which the “ancient custom: the students were grouped in a ‘circle’ (halka, literally, ‘circle’, extended to mean ‘course’) seated on the mats (hasira) of the mosque around the teacher” (Jomier 1960). While halka has a broader definition which can also incorporate the study of or the discussion of any religious topic, dars in the South Asian context usually implies the study of the Quran. Lessons and inquiry in this format have ranged from the academic and mosque setting to lessons conducted in private homes.

In order to understand the transition of the dars from Al-Azhar in Egypt to the women of the Islamic Society in the U.S., it is necessary to begin the examination in Pakistan where many women are familiar with the dars format due to the rise in popularity of the Al-Huda organization spearheaded by Dr. Farhat Hashmi. Dr. Hashmi encourages women to study the Quran and her foundation offers several certificates in various levels of study in Arabic, Quran, and Islamic thought. According to their website, “Al-Huda International Welfare Foundation is a registered NGO which is active in the promotion of

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30 Several attempts were made during the data collection and research phase of this dissertation to contact Dr. Hashmi and the Al-Huda organization but all were unsuccessful.
Islamic education and welfare since 1994. The religious perspective of Dr. Hashmi and Al-Huda stem from Maulana Maudoodi, a prominent conservative Islamic theologian. Soon after the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Maudoodi founded an influential political party, the Jamaat-i-Islam, which propagated a strict adherence to Islamic law. After independence, the religious organization gained popular support, particularly amongst the elite of Pakistan, thus also wielding strong political influence (Ziring 2003).

Dr. Hashmi, who obtained her doctorate in Islamic Studies from Scotland, is a prolific author on a variety of issues that pertain to women and Quranic teaching. According to a rare interview conducted for Newsline in 2001, Dr. Hashmi advocates a reformed approach to interpreting the Quran through which she argues that women must learn about their rights in Islam. Although she encourages religious study, she also states that, “My point of view is that a women’s primary responsibility is her home, after she has fulfilled that it is up to her to go into whatever field suits her best … But, peace in the home depends on the woman and that aspect should not be ignored at the cost of working outside the home. A woman’s role as homemaker should not be sacrificed at the altar of ambition” (Wikipedia 2007). The Al-Huda organization in Pakistan has gained influence with increasing enrollments in their many Quran certification programs. Dr. Hashmi’s popularity is readily noted throughout the U.S. and Canada as well. Books and tapes from dars lessons are widely available in religious bookstores or in ethnic grocery stores and her appearances at lectures are sold out. By presenting difficult classical

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31 http://www.alhudapk.com//home/about-us/
32 While there are many articles written about Dr Hashmi, there are almost no articles in the major news media sources or research works that include quotes from her.
Arabic in a simplified Urdu text, Al-Huda offers access to Islamic theology and consequently empowers women from a religious perspective. This type of religious empowerment with such extensive appeal for women just did not exist prior to Farhat Hashmi, yet it is not devoid of provocative and problematic discourse (Jaffar 2005; K.H. 2005; Baabar 2001).

While Dr. Hashmi claims that the conservative religious groups in Pakistan consider her “a feminist,” other women’s organizations in Pakistan and abroad would disagree. In reality, the disputes over Dr. Hashmi are ubiquitous over several internet sites and in the newspapers and magazines on Pakistan or Islam. These disputes are often impassioned over women’s roles as Muslims and in the larger society in general. Simi Kamal, a Cambridge educated Pakistani woman writing for Newsline, criticizes the adherents of Dr. Hashmi as blindly following her every word. Kamal states that these “born again Muslims” are mostly from an upper class elitist background and that many are searching for a deeper meaning in their lives. She further questions why the women who regularly attend dars led by Dr. Hashmi focus on the mundane issues of nail polish or grieving practices failing to address the larger concerns of poverty, illiteracy, and sexual abuse of women in Pakistan. Kamal claims, “The zeal and self righteousness with which her followers conduct themselves is frightening. I do not accept that Farhat Hashmi and other dars-giving individuals have the last word on Islam” (Kamal 2001). Farzana Hassan, writing in Canada, fears an additional wave of Muslim fundamentalism gaining influence through the establishment of a Canadian branch of Farhat Hashmi’s Al-Huda.
organization. On her *Islam Today* website she writes, "Those trapped within such a programmed, brainwashed mentality refuse to recognize oppression to begin with, and if perchance they do, they justify it, citing examples of ‘inherent’ gender differences and ‘male superiority’" (Hassan 2005: 1).

In spite of the intense debates surrounding Al-Huda and Farhat Hashmi, for many women in the United States, the dars is a popular practice that allows them to ritualize the study of the Quran with a group and to determine its content and style in a small and personal atmosphere. Yvonne Haddad highlights how mosques in the United States have encouraged Quran study groups for women and, “in some cases old world customs of women’s weekly visits have been turned into special occasions for learning about Islam” (Haddad 2000, 2000). For the women of the Islamic Society the dars offers not only religious instruction, but an opportunity for socializing. The potluck lunches served immediately following the afternoon prayers were characterized by their informal and festive atmosphere.

The Islamic Society dars for women was initiated by Hafsa whose home serves as the meeting place. During an interview, Hafsa emphasized that it is obligatory for all Muslims to share and promote their understanding of the Quran with others who may not possess the same knowledge. Because the Quran is written in Arabic and most of the

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33 Islamica Community, The Daily Times, and Chowrangi are a few media and literary examples representing diverse organization in Pakistan and North America.

34 It must be noted that the dars practice is not gender based nor is it favored by women over men. This particular Islamic Society holds monthly dars events for the congregation and entire families are encouraged to attend. However, in this community the dars at Hafsa’s home is a popular weekly gathering that many of the women attend regularly. In addition, since the majority, if not the entirety, of men in this community work outside the home and the women remain home predominantly as homemakers; logistically it is easier for women to attend the dars consistently.
dars members speak, read, and write in Hindi/Urdu, knowledge of translation and meanings of the verses is a highly valued and prized ability. She explained that Mohammed also conducted lessons to the first Muslims on the Quran and Islam and so Muslims now are encouraged to continue in his footsteps.\footnote{Here Hafsa specifically referred to the practices of Mohammed that are recorded in the Hadith collections. The Hadiths detail the sayings and actions of Mohammed and his followers in the early years of Islam and Muslims are required to duplicate their actions. The significance of the Hadiths is secondary only to the Quran which Muslims believe are the direct words of Allah or God.}

Hafsa embarked on her own Quranic studies while still living in Pakistan. When she moved to the Philadelphia area with her family in 1995, Hafsa often attended lectures and Quranic recitations at the nearby Islamic Education Center. For a short time, she taught a women’s group on various issues in Islam at the local mosque but the events of September 11, 2001 altered her ideas of being a good Muslim. In her interview with me, Hafsa stated, “After 9/11 I felt I was away from my faith. I felt that something was missing.” These events made her feel that her life up to that moment was not focused on her faith as the primary force directing all of her actions. Hafsa felt that she had been overly concerned about the trivialities of life such as working at a job she did not love and not spending more time with her family and praying regularly. She attributed a wave of religiosity in the community to 9/11 saying, “It jolted us up.” The tragic events and the anti-Muslim sentiments that resulted compelled others to learn more about Islam in order to understand and explain many misconceptions to non-Muslims. Several individuals in the community were also approached by neighbors and/or work colleagues to clarify Islamic beliefs and practices and to give talks to local churches and
organizations. After September 11, 2001 no one felt they could take their religious identity for granted; they needed to educate themselves about their faith.

On a personal level, Hafsa, deeply devoted to her faith, made a point to emphasize her love for Islam and her anger about the distortions perpetrated about Islam in the media. At many times during the dars lesson, she was visibly angry or upset from a news report with wrong information about Islam or Muslims on the television or in the newspaper. Hafsa also felt that many Muslims were only practicing the ritual aspect of Islam without a deeper knowledge of the faith so she decided to start the dars group. It began with a small number of friends because she wanted to maintain a level of intimacy due to the sensitive nature of certain topics discussed. After encouragement from her husband, Hafsa opened the lessons to the mosque community believing that such socialization would be a good idea since, "everyone is away from their family." With the inclusion of more women, Hafsa repeatedly emphasizes to everyone, "to open up (their) hearts" and to "keep an open mind." As a result of going to the dars regularly, Hafsa felt that not only are more women praying five times daily and fasting during the month of Ramadan, but that they now understood why Islam requires them to do so. She stated that it has also helped with other community issues such as "backbiting" and most importantly, it has helped those women who previously had not been able to discuss difficult issues feel more comfortable talking. In regards to her own personal life, Hafsa commented that she feels her attitude about life in general is more positive and open. She also believed that her relationship with her husband and sons have improved since the dars group began meeting. Other women agreed with Hafsa claiming that they too have felt personally
enriched through their regular attendance of dars. Saira, who regularly attends, stated her attendance at the dars has indeed helped her maintain her five daily ritual prayers and that she is very thankful for the weekly gathering.

_The Dars Members_

While there are other dars groups within the Islamic Society, I chose to focus on the gathering at Hafsa’s home primarily because it was the first dars organized in the community, with the largest attendance, and one that met regularly on a weekly basis. The longevity as well as the consistency of the group and their meetings indicates the important role the dars plays in the lives of the participants. The dars is a central and influential aspect of their religious and ethnic lives.

This dars consists of all women who are married and have children. Many of the participants came to the U.S. after they were married and whose husbands desired to further their professional careers and/or academic study. Their migration stories share many of the same trials and tribulations as they all came as married women with their spouses, leaving behind their relatives, and then, having had children here in the U.S., raising them without extended family support. The majority of the women do not work outside of the home and have school aged children. Both factors allow the women the availability to attend the dars regularly in the late morning and to stay until the early afternoon.

These women were educated to varying levels from India or Pakistan and tend to have come from middle and upper middle class families. Most also came to the U.S.
fluent in English having studied the language throughout their education in Pakistan. Their husbands all work in the professional fields as doctors, dentists, or engineers, and as a result, these families possessed financial stability. Thus, they were able to have options and choice about where and how to live and they were able to choose to live in an affluent neighborhood and send their children to private schools and universities. Many of the families travel to India or Pakistan every year or ever other year to visit relatives. Financial stability and school aged children also frees the women to pursue deeper insights into their religion since they are not burdened with the responsibilities of working outside the home and the difficulties of child rearing.

Considering all of these variables, it is not difficult to underscore the key similarities that the women of the dars group share: motherhood, families, faith, class, education, and financial security. The shared roles and desires for religiosity, paired with financial security and time, bring all of these women together week after week. However, I would suggest that while it may be Islam that calls them to the gathering, it is the collective issues discussed and shared that engages the women to return week after week.

The Dars

As previously mentioned, Hafsa opens her home once a week to the women in the community to join the weekly dars. The women enter the home, take their shoes off at the front door, and enter the living room. They cover their heads and sit in a circle around the floor with the Quran that they have brought with them on pillows on the floor in front of them.
Figure 1: Dars member reading the Quran.
Figure 2: The Quran rests on a pillow on the floor as a member reads the Arabic and the translation in Urdu.

Hafsa calls the group together with a brief synopsis of the verses discussed from the previous week and an overview of what the current week’s verses will cover. Each week she studies the verses chosen and prepares a commentary in Urdu with the aid of books and tapes ordered from the Al-Huda organization. A woman volunteers to begin by reciting the verse in Arabic and then Hafsa first offers the Urdu translation followed by the commentary. Muslims believe that the Quran was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed over several years so Hafsa’s commentary details the historical context of the designated verse. Her commentary allows time for others to ask questions or offer their own stories and experiences that relate to the verse. Often these discussions extend
beyond a few minutes engaging many of the women and diverging from the main lesson so Hafsa redirects them back to the Quranic verses until they have covered the ones set on her agenda. After completing the set group of verses, Hafsa ends the dars with a prayer at which time all the women cup their open hands and follow the prayer recitations in Arabic.

Hafsa closes the dars session with the beginning of the early afternoon prayers, the Zuhr, prayer so that those women that wish to perform the prayer remain on the white sheet. Because of Islamic laws prohibiting women from praying when they are menstruating, some women move away from the living room into the kitchen. When everyone has finished praying, the white sheet is gathered and put away. All the women partake of the potluck lunch socializing and talk about their children, recipes, and families in Pakistan. After lunch, tea is served and everyone leaves by 3:30 pm in the afternoon in order to return home for their children.
Figure 3: Women praying after the dars lesson is completed.
The Discourse of the Dars

As the group sits together and reads over the verses in a private home, issues of religion begin discussions, which then allow an opening for other topics. In other words, it is within the framework of a religious gathering that the discourse of the dars emerges. In attending the dars meetings, I looked to the work of Linda Degh as she emphasizes, “Folklorists often speak of meanings and stress the need for interpretation. I learned not to interpret from my point of view but to understand specific meanings that individuals create…” (Degh 1995: 13). Over a period of a year, the discourse revealed the concerns shared by the women on a variety of topics all centering around issues of interpersonal
relationships and issues of being Muslim in an American society. The main themes of the dialogues engaged included concerns of maintaining religiosity and culture, but also how to sustain these connections with their children. Though there are numerous insightful instances from the dars, I want to highlight a few instances that relate the diversity and the complexities of the issues raised and discussed by the women.\textsuperscript{36}

At one of the dars lessons the verses read in the Quran involved the Battle of Uhud in which the early Muslim community was able to defeat their enemies not only with their physical strength, but also ideologically with their strong sense of faith. The members listened quietly and then Hafsa showed a map pointing to where the battle physically occurred. Continuing with the verses on the battle, Hafsa read with the next set of lines and began her explanation of the text. As she discussed how Allah asked the faithful to be disciplined in their actions, Hafsa elaborated upon the role of discipline in personal relationships. The topic of discipline led to the topic of the lack of discipline in everyday life, which then led to talk of excessive materiality in people’s lives. Hafsa discussed the importance of strength and faith in Allah in opposition to materiality and competition amongst Muslims. She emphasized that at times of trouble, such as the current anti-Muslim sentiments in the United States, Muslims should strive to live in harmony with everyone around them.

In thinking about striving for discipline and religiosity, the women began sharing their personal stories of trying to maintain routine in their day to day schedules and of attempts at strengthening their spirituality. Questions that were raised included managing
their household duties and children’s schedules with their rituals prayers, completing all chores in the morning, and efforts at raising their level of religiosity in a non-Muslim country. Hafsa and some of the other women talked further about the nature of humans to constantly want material things and the issue of greediness when Allah has already given mankind all that is needed to survive. Frequently during the dars sessions, Hafsa reminded everyone that life was full of *jihad* or personal struggle, and all of the faithful had to continuously strive to become better Muslims.

The discussion of the Battle of Uhud also initiated a discussion of the Patriot missile. The missile, publicized on news media reports, was touted as having extremely precise aim for its target. Many believed that the missile’s construction was faulty and that true faith should not be in such weaponry but in Allah for guidance and justice. Some of the women had been to the site of the battle in Saudi Arabia when they had gone for pilgrimage or Hajj to Mecca and related their personal experiences.

The issue of faith often developed into the central theme of many dars lessons and ensuing conversations. From the verses on the Battle of Uhud, the women also learned that only Allah knows when their final moment will arrive and several shared stories of their own close encounters with tragedy. Another dars session focused on faith and again the inevitability of death. Hafsa read the Quranic verses and initiated a discussion on trusting in Allah. The commentary and the resultant conversation stressed that no matter what position or class level one has in society, or how much wealth one has accumulated, they will still have to face death. Prior to entrance in heaven, each person will be tested

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*I should note that because all of the women in attendance were born and raised in Pakistan and India, the*
by Allah. The only way to succeed in passing the test is through consciousness of Allah, knowing that Allah alone is the one God. Applying this to life situations, Hafsa continued by appealing to the group to remain patient when confronted by situations that test their Islam. These tests of faith necessitate sabr or patience by avoiding arguments or instigation by others.

One woman told the story of her family during the time of Partition of India and Pakistan. As the nation of Pakistan separated from India, violence erupted in the streets as people moved from one country to another depending on their religion. The woman’s family lived in a predominately Hindu neighborhood where it could have been extremely dangerous for them, but she attributes their steadfast belief in Allah as their salvation. Another dars gathering Hafsa once more re-emphasized the significant relationship between faith and patience. The message here reminded all Muslims that they must believe that Allah rewards those that remain faithful and patient. Many women shared their own personal examples from their past and from their current daily life that involved struggles with patience including relationships with spouses.

All of the discussions on faith revealed the importance of a religious identity for the dars members. Muslim identity and Islamic practice play a pivotal role in the lives of the women connecting them to each other intimately in the United States. Sharing a spiritual connection enabled the women to partake not only in membership of a closely knit community, but to feel less isolated as religious minority.

 majority of the dars is spoken in Urdu.
Relationship issues also shaped several discussions and the women’s narratives. During one of the dars lessons Hafsa chose to play a tape of Dr. Farhat Hashmi speaking on the laws of marriage and in particular on how the relationships between men and women determine who is permissible to marry. On the recording, Dr. Hashmi continued with a commentary on the place of friendships in society and the nature of ‘secret friendships.’ Her emphasis in the discussion framed the issue as unlawful, despite the widespread popularity of mixed gender friendships arguing that in Islam family life and the home is the most important especially for young females. Dr. Hashmi urged her listeners to be firm about limiting male-female interactions and that young girls should keep their boundaries around themselves strictly. As the tape played on many women whispered comments to their neighbors sitting next to them and when the tape stopped, all the women had issues to introduce. The majority of the women were in agreement with Hashmi but did not know how to put into practice the limitations of gender relationships with their own children.

One woman, Farhana, was quick to cite the inappropriate manner of dress that many of the teenage girls wore when they came to Sunday school. Often, she said, their heads were uncovered, they wore low cut jeans, and low cut blouses, in other words “they were dressing like the Americans.” Hafsa agreed and mentioned that she discussed the issue of clothing with her own female students at the mosque imploring them to be more modest in their attire. Farhana continued the discussion with the problem of dress in her own home. Her daughter brought her friends home and according to Farhana they were often inadequately and inappropriately dressed. This posed an issue since Farhana also had a
young teenage son at home whom she did not want near her daughter's friends. Although she discussed the problem with her daughter, Farhana felt it was irresolvable. She then warned her own daughter not to dress in a similar manner with the words, "If you put an ad out, someone will answer it." In Farhana's opinion dressing provocatively was also immoral and her view discriminated between the genders. The issue of dress and morality indicates deeper resistances to what both issues refer – that of assimilation. By maintaining a boundary of appropriate versus inappropriate codes, the community instructs the second generation in manners of religion and culture. Such concern for the second generation is paramount since their interactions largely include non-South Asian Muslims. In her study of Jews in Scotland, Benski examines similar issues of assimilation in relationship to the matter of inter-marriage. She argues that the community's predominant concern with in-group marriage and outside social mixing reveals insecurity with their position in the diaspora. In order to counteract the fear of loss of religion and culture, the community engaged in practices that strengthened their family identity (Benski 1981). Farhana's response and the women's agreement with her concerns suggest a collective belief in the delineation of religiously and culturally sanctioned behavior for the second generation.

Not all of the discussion at dars concerned women. When a Quranic verse forbade the use of images in worship, a debate began about children sketching pictures in Sunday Islamic school. All the women agreed that the children should be taught not to draw

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37 Personal communication.
pictures of animals or of people as it was strictly forbidden in Islam.\textsuperscript{38} Many had personal accounts that shared instances of their children being talented artists and how they redirected them to draw inanimate objects.

Both incidents reinforce the challenges faced by the women in raising their children with Islamic as well as South Asian cultural values. Living in an American society posed dilemmas that the women themselves did not encounter in their youth in South Asia. Furthermore, the desire to maintain religious and cultural practices with their children was heightened from the discriminatory aftermath many Muslims faced in the U.S. post 9/11. The narratives at the dars indicated that the women recognized the difficulties their children encountered as minorities and they wanted to provide them with strong morals and values.

An additional example of the relationships between generations involved the obligations many felt towards their own parents. An unspoken agreement existed amongst the women that they had duties to fulfill for their parents' well-being while they were alive. However, Hafsa reminded the group that even after the death of their parents Muslims should still offer prayers for their parents so that the deceased could reap the benefits from Allah. Some of the women questioned how they could expect their children to do the same for them. Everyone agreed that parental duty and expectation is derived from culture, which for this community stems from religion. Parents and children are cyclically obliged to each other in their lives as parents nurture their children.

\textsuperscript{38} The religion of Islam opposes any pictorial depiction of a human face and in particular that of Mohammed. In order to prevent any inclination towards idolatry Mohammed himself was believed to have destroyed all pictures and representations of the human face and body.
leading to the adult children caring for their elderly parents. The issues raised by the women’s narratives highlight the struggles of the relationships between the generations and signify the desire to maintain religious and cultural mores.

The week after the Easter holiday, Hafsa opened the dars discussion on the differences between Muslims and Christians. Whereas Christians believed that Jesus died for the sins of mankind, Muslims believe that each is responsible for their own actions and ultimately for their own sins. She offered the example of how completing Hajj or the pilgrimage to Mecca did not relieve one of their sins rather everyone would have to “pay for their sins.”

The issue of suicide dominated the conversation during one dars meeting. Because suicide is forbidden in Islam, Hafsa explained that the person would go to hell. She stated that, “Only Allah can give life and therefore only Allah can take one’s life.” A heated argument began on whether or not one could attend the funeral of a person who committed suicide. Questions arose as to why people do not get help before their acts of suicide and others wanted to discuss who bore the responsibility of getting help for the desperate person. The women then debated the issue of depression as an illness that could cause suicide but the discussion was not resolved at the end of the dars. The (Mishra) understanding of suicide reflected differences in cultural conceptions of what is actually meant by depression along with what causes and what relieves the condition. Some argued that individuals have the power to control depression with a loving family and faith in Allah while others understood it as a physical illness. The subtext of all the conversations however, remained that suicide was sinful and against Islam.
Another particular dars meeting focused on the roles of Muslim women. Hafsa’s commentary after the Quranic verse focused on how women should follow the teachings of the Quran and not the teachings of any one person. She continued by adding that women should be stronger “mentally and physically” than men and that women should never complain. Such actions would be emulating the women of early Islam including the wives of Muhammad. One woman, Saira, asked what she should do in situations at home where she feels that her husband is not grateful for all the things she does for him. She stated that he is always yelling at her. Many of the women offered their advice and one woman raised an interesting question, “Do we have greater expectations (from our spouses) because we are in a Western culture?” The group all had their own opinions and began talking to the person sitting next to them. Hafsa, in an attempt to bring attention back to the lesson, related a personal story and linked it back to the Quranic verses. Hafsa claimed that her sister often called her to complain about her husband, but that Hafsa never engaged in the same conversation. Her sister finally asked her one day, “Why don’t you ever say anything about your husband? Doesn’t he do anything?” Hafsa explained to the women that she never complains or talks about her husband, since she knows his positive and his negative attributes. As the women listened attentively, Hafsa continued that women, in general, tend to compare their husbands with each other and with other men. She stated that the focus should be on men’s character and that women should look at the other ways men and husbands show their love, that they should focus on the good things their husbands do. Hafsa directed this last comment towards Saira who had initially raised the issue of her husband and went on by adding that women
should be thankful, that this thankfulness delivers patience, and that patience delivers
goodness. Such ideals could be applied to all relationships, not only those with spouses.
She then refocused the dars back to the Quranic verses.

The next example comes from the dars on the Quranic verse allowing men more than
one wife. Immediately after Hafsa read the verse she stated, “We must stay cool and not
attack.” Another woman read the commentary on the verse stressing that multiple
marriages were based on the criteria that one must be equal and just towards every wife.
Hafsa began the discussion of the verse by comparing taking multiple wives against
“Western culture.” She stated that more than one wife is a better option for men than the
issues faced by the West such as AIDS, broken marriages, illegitimate children, and
children with no fathers. Hafsa’s discussion continued with how the verse addresses the
sexual needs of men, which may be greater than for women, and thus prevents
prostitution and disease. She offers a fact that there are 8 million more women than men;
making it plausible for multiple marriages to occur. A debate began on the difference
between “needs” versus “womanizing” among the women present. All the comments
followed the format of comparing situations to the Western culture and society. One
woman, Saadia, stated, “I am a typical Eastern woman” and elaborated with accounts of
her roles as a stay-at-home mother and “housewife.” While she was offering her life as
an example of fulfilling Islamic duties another woman claimed that now “even in
Pakistan men are bringing home diseases – women are getting ovarian cancer.” A third
woman stated that yeast infections were also on the rise in Pakistan but was countered by
someone else who said that these were “Western problems” and not issues of Islam.
Hafsa brought the discussion back to the Quranic verse with her statement “instead of sleeping around like they do here in the U.S., men can marry more than one wife.” She stressed that Islam is not just a religion for another time but that its message could be applied to current situations; she offered the widowed women of the wars with the U.S. in Iran and Iraq as current examples. She ended the discussion of the verse through an injunction to the women to know the meaning of this verse and to defend it.

**Ethnicity and Narrative**

What began solely as a study of a religious practice transformed over the course of a year. The analysis changed into one of complex relationships situated within a religious format and set against an ethnically charged backdrop. For me as an observer, the lessons discussed and the experiences shared were unexpected outcomes from attending and observing the dars gathering. However, it should be emphasized that these discussions and the experiences shared did not always relate to religion, rather these discussions often conflated South Asian cultural and social values and customs with Islam. Again, the chance to attend and witness the dars was an opportunity rich in the many layers of analysis – religion, gender, space, and performance, but here I will concentrate my discussion on the issues of ethnic identity negotiation through narrative.

Returning to the spheres of public, home, and mosque discussed in the previous chapter, the dars is analyzed in relationship to ethnic identity. The women at the dars share a specific cultural and religious referential frame as upper middle class Muslim women from South Asia living in America. The experience and stories revealed at the
dars contain the same cultural and social ideals that are specific to their lives as mothers, wives, and friends. By attending the dars the women gain religious knowledge since they are learning about Islam and Muslim life in the U.S. Their attendance and participation also rewards the women with social status since the community considers religiosity and knowledge a social value. Thus, dars offers knowledge of culture and religion while it also offers an opportunity for social connection.

However, what is perhaps most interesting are the ways in which the dars and the discussions that take place there represent an entanglement of Islamic law and the cultural and social practice of ethnicity. Revisiting the two previous examples, the first one of Saira feeling unappreciated by her husband, and the second the conversation surrounding the Quranic verse of multiple marriage reinforce the dialectic nature of the dars and exhibits the negotiation of ethnic identity. The theory of narrative positions this discourse outside of Hafsa’s living room to the larger spheres of the local mosque community and the larger American society.

Saira’s question about her husband and the subsequent responses from the group and from Hafsa summed up the actions that Muslim women should engage in, and the attitude with which they should do them. As faithful women, they should be patient and thankful in their relationships with their husbands and with their friends and relatives. Similarly, women’s roles are again discussed in the other example when Saadia states that she is “a typical Eastern woman” since she remains at home for her children and is a “housewife.” Both examples have varying degrees of evidence from Islamic law, but more importantly,
what both examples possess is the strategies for negotiating situations in America as a South Asian Muslim. The examples are understood from within a particular cultural, social, and class referential frame – that of the economic upper middle class, educated, Indian/Pakistani woman. The question that a woman asks Saira – are her expectations greater from her husband since she lives in the U.S. – suggests that the concern has little to do with Islamic law and more in positioning the expectations of one ethnic identity in contrast to another. Saadia’s comment also subsumes the “typical Eastern woman’s” role under Islam and posits Eastern culture versus Western culture. The discourse clear indicates that adhering to the ethnic and religious roles in opposition to the West eases difficult situations.

In the second example surrounding the verse on multiple marriages, nearly all of the discussion centered on the contrast with “Western culture.” Issues of sexual disease, illegitimacy, and adultery are understood in terms of ‘us’ versus ‘them.’ The discourse by the South Asian Muslim women critiqued the other in order to locate their own ethnic identity in the American framework. Marking the differences in cultural and social reference points enabled the women to strengthen their beliefs in a way of life that they frequently felt was becoming a distant reality. This distancing between their lived reality and their past for the first generation women particularly impacted their relationships with their children many of whom were born and raised in the United States. The women utilized the differences between societies and cultures in order to stress their expectations to their children – that of family, education, and religion. Sharing similar experiences with their children eased a sense of isolation that may have otherwise occurred for many
of the women. The gathering offers the women a space in which they can negotiate the tension between the social and cultural norms of their birthplace and of their current life. In one sense, the attendance of the dars unites the women within the community vis-à-vis their role as practicing and knowledgeable Muslims. In another sense, the relationship also substantiates their beliefs as a group in opposition to American culture and society. This additionally offers the women an opportunity to reaffirm their Muslim identity and strategize ways to maintain religious and cultural values with their children. Their role as wife and mother is defined through their ethnicity. The discourse the women engage in suggests that adhering to one’s own ethnic and religious roles in opposition to the West facilitates resolving challenging issues. Most importantly, the discourse of the dars reflects strategies for the negotiation of how to live an ethnic life and the solidarity with which to confront it.

The impact of the dars on the lives of the women can be noted in many ways. On an individual basis, there is the foremost and perhaps most evident manner in how the dars has affected women’s religiosity. Many of them claim that they feel closer to their faith and practice Islam more regularly. Within the group, the dars has fostered relationships amongst women who may never have had any social connection otherwise. And as previously mentioned, Hafsa claimed that the weekly dars reduced the frequency of “backbiting.” According to Hafsa, because the women gather together weekly, there is more opportunity for them to know each other personally, preventing them from gossiping about each other. More importantly, though, these women share the same migration experience and the same socio-economic background, enabling them to further
share their personal stories together during the dars. I argue that it is the narrative that is collectively experienced that binds the women together and creates continuity for the group.

In their study of political asylum narratives, Shuman and Bohmer argue that cultural differences may impede the understanding of suffering and traumatic events between asylum seekers and immigration officials. Each person was required to frame their account in terms of the new cultural expectations and within a new legal system despite the painful memories aroused in retelling the trauma. The authors suggest that understanding cultural concepts, such as courage or persecution, shift in meaning across contexts and even though, “each of these concepts is translatable, ... they are also embodied cultural constructions further differentiated by local understandings of age, gender, and other identity markers” (Shuman 2004: 402). In very different context, Angrosino also suggests that narratives of ethnicity, or culturally specific narratives, must related for the larger society to understand. In his work on ethnic identity narratives with Indians in the West Indies, Angrosino asserts that individuals discuss various unrelated components of their ethnicity but all share the same format of narration in order for others to “get the message” (Angrosino 1995).

For the women meeting weekly in Hafsa’s home the dars provided another format, not only for the desired capital, but also for sharing the same cultural concepts. The women related the experiences and framed their narratives with the knowledge that their audience was competent in understanding the context and the social/cultural/religious mores surrounding it. Within the dars, there is no need to reframe events in order to be
understood; for the women, an implicit knowledge of common ground exists. The shared referential base additionally allows for the narratives to elicit empathy. Shuman contends that empathy plays a powerful role in storytelling and narrative because it shapes the possibility of understanding while it also invites further discourse (Shuman 2006). The women often share personal stories and discuss private family problems, such as Farhana and her daughter’s clothing or Saira and her husband’s anger. They also talk about culturally taboo topics such as suicide or sexual behavior knowing that the dars format is a safe space in which to discuss such matters. Empathy is a critical component in the narrative of the dars gathering providing the women assurance of collective understanding. The women share not only the experience of migration which structures the framework of their relationship, but they also share the privileges of class, the role of motherhood, and the comfort of a common language and faith. These facets of their life bind the women together in a deeply connected association.

Conclusion

Schely-Newman examines the transformations that occurred in the lives of Tunisian – Israeli women when they migrated to Israel (Schely-Newman 2002). Through the recording of hundreds of narratives, she emphasizes the impact of immigration on the roles and duties of the women as they began a new life in a foreign land. For many that meant new responsibilities outside of the home which in turn led to a more active voice in the home. This chapter parallels the same thematic discourse as it also concerns the narratives of women confronting shifting roles and changing lives.
In conclusion, this study argues that what begins as a weekly gathering of Quranic study and prayer for a small group of South Asian women has become over time folklore of ethnic identity, women, immigrants, and Muslims. Conversations concerning relationships with husbands and friends, issues of raising children in a foreign environment, and creating home and community as immigrants, are broached and discussed not only as such matters relate to Quranic teaching but also as such issues have impacted their lives. The discourse of the dars revisits “artistic communication in small groups” but more importantly examines the dynamism of ethnic identity as it relates to women, immigrants, and Muslims in the United States. The negative impact of the terroristic events of September 11, 2001 upon Muslims and the perception of Islam connects their lives as South Asian Muslim Americans and as mothers adding a degree of urgency in the narratives related. A sense of feeling threatened by discrimination shaped the narratives concerning the second generation and was reflected in the deep desire to practice religious and cultural traditions ultimately forming a pivotal part of their parenting.

Education, professional jobs, and language proficiency, understood as markers of class, thus positioned the members of the Islamic Society as upper class Pakistanis and Indians and later facilitate their entry into upper middle class life in the U.S. However, a double dynamic exists with the majority of the Islamic Society who migrated to the U.S. from middle and upper middle class families, fluent in English and eager to pursue advanced degrees. Their ethnic heritage, culture, race, and/or religion demarcated a separate space in American society marking their lives as different and visible, but their
language and professional job skills merged them seamlessly into the upper middle class suburban life providing them with an invisibility. An understanding of the early works in ethnicity studies provides the basis from which to begin an investigation of ethnic identity, but these theories fail to accurately represent this South Asian Muslim American community in their life in the U.S. today. The dars, a weekly gathering of women studying the Quran, offers one glimpse of religion, ritual, culture and ethnicity. As the women meet together and develop a deeper understanding of Islam, they are able to attain social and religious knowledge. Within the format of the dars religious, social, and personal life become intertwined.

In addition, they gather at the dars to share stories and experiences of their daily life. A narrative analysis of these stories and experiences reveals several key points: a shared migration narrative and contextual understanding, similar concerns and a shared set of religious and cultural values, and the negotiation of ethnic identity. Similar migration patterns and a common background from South Asia places the women in the same phase of life as educated mothers of school aged children. In the U.S., a common socio-economic base enables the women to have the opportunity to meet during the middle of the day regularly. Thus, both factors establish a common referential point and an understanding of the context of other’s experiences, which in turn assists in shaping familiarity and developing empathy amongst the women. This level of comfort invites sharing personal stories since the women know they will be understood. The stories that they share center on negotiating the tensions of an ethnic life in the U.S are often narrated as a contrast in societies, East versus West. It is the contrasting symbolism that
emphasizes the duality in the women’s lives and the struggles to maintain their own value system.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

"So, see in isolation (in the United States) there are moments and times when we need ethnicity, our cultural identity … (but) there is no contradiction between preserving your identity and ethnicity and religious obligations and meeting your neighbor."

Ghalib 2004

I would like to return to the event that began the questions of this research and set into motion the framework of this dissertation: that of the flag raised only to be lowered again night after night. The question of whether or not to display the American flag serves to exemplify the contested ideals and aspirations of immigrant life. Additionally, it raises the issue concerning the degree of visibility/invisibility that this community negotiates continuously. The issue of the flag asks: Should we raise the flag and make visible our American-ness or should the lack of the flag symbolize our non-political religious affiliation? Working with this community has demanded a re-examination of ethnicity and a rethinking of how the ethnic identity of South Asians, Muslims, and Americans is understood. In order to engage the internal dynamics of the debate, the combination of a socio-political framework, with an ethnographically centered approach is one constructive methodology and reflects the ways in which this community, at a socio-political crossroads, requires another theoretical model. Most importantly, it must be emphasized that while the issues faced by this community mirror many of the same struggles affecting other immigrant groups, it is the combination of the South Asian Muslim American ethnic, cultural, religious identity in combination with class during a
socio-politically tenuous moment of a post 9/11 United States, that makes this study critical.

This dissertation examines ethnicity through the practices of those affiliated with one suburban South Asian Muslim American mosque as revealed through their narratives. At the start of my dissertation work, my proposal situated the negative impacts of discrimination and hostility after September 11, 2001 towards Muslims and immigrants as the focal point of the research. However, soon after I began fieldwork, I recognized that my persistent questioning about 9/11 provided few responses and no insights from the members of the community. When asked about 9/11 and possible repercussions they may have had in their life, everyone responded that it did not affect them. While every individual I talked to felt deep empathy for the victims and outrage against the perpetrators, their reactions to my questions indicated that they felt disconnected to those Muslim immigrants who bore the weight of the blame for the terroristic attacks. Discouraged by the lack of direct response to the effects of September 11 upon their lives, I considered what I was doing wrong and if I was asking the wrong questions. As I drove back from an interview frustrated, I came to the realization that the problem did not involve the questions I was asking, rather that I needed to listen to what the interviewees were not saying. The aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001 and the resultant anti-Muslim discrimination impacted this South Asian Muslim American community in how they perceive of their identity in the larger American society and simultaneously distanced them from other South Asian Muslim Americans with a different socio-economic class background. Thus, the events of September 11 frame the strategic negotiation of visibility and invisibility.
Working with this community revealed the use of a binary approach to negotiating ethnic identity - that of sustaining visibility and invisibility - both of which were constructed and framed vis-à-vis class. With the Introduction, I suggest in this dissertation the need for rethinking of how ethnic identity creation and maintenance is balanced with the incorporation of the dynamics of class and class status in the United States whose socio-political milieu and Patriot Act legislation positions immigrants from Muslim countries as a national threat (Behdad 2005).

Ethnicity has been the theoretical concept structuring all the chapters as the keystone throughout my research. A historical analysis and current review of literature indicates the complexities of assimilation as it is understood and practiced by South Asian Muslim Americans. The scholarship on ethnicity continues to increase, however a lack of substantial numbers of studies on South Asian Muslims still exists. In addition, ethnography with the Islamic Society validated the deeply embedded nature of class within the study of ethnicity. It is class that allows for the community’s agency in the demarcation of visibility versus invisibility of their ethnic identity.

The theoretical framework of ethnicity and class significantly shape this work but ultimately this dissertation centers on the members of the Islamic community and the meanings they give to their lives. As Chapter One details, many of the members of the community came to the U.S. in order to further their professional careers and/or academic studies following the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act. Their migration stories share similar struggles as they adjusted to new lives leaving behind their families and friends. Most came to the U.S. fluent in English having studied the language throughout their education in Pakistan because of their middle and upper middle class backgrounds. In
the United States, the majority work as doctors, dentists, or engineers, and as a result, these families possess financial stability. In turn, the financial successes afforded the ability to have options and choice about where and how to live, the ability to live in an affluent neighborhood and to send their children to private schools. The same successes also provided for trips to India or Pakistan every year or every other year to visit relatives. All of these variables that the group shares - families, faith, financial security, education, and class - form the foundation for the community’s creation and maintenance of ethnicity.

For the majority of the community that I interviewed, the key practices that composed the individual definitions of ethnicity were consistent, and often included that of national culture, food, language, dress, family, and religion. Further, like Anila and Musa, many also related a prioritization of education and financial success, both markers of attainment of a particular social class. In reflecting on the fundamental aspects of the community, Ghalib also emphasized the strong desire for the second generation to succeed academically and professionally. Waleed and Shahana stressed the role of education in the lives of their children and remain proud of their professional achievements today.

The significance given to education and financial success conveys an ambition for not only a certain lifestyle, but also for the invisibility awarded to those that achieve class status. Possessing the material objects and ideological characteristics of a higher class displaces immigrant and ethnic stereotypes. Conversely, the same class status divides the community from within by distancing those that have achieved its symbolic lifestyle from those who have not. I argue it is class that is intertwined with ethnicity that this specific South Asian American Muslim community strategically employs to demarcate their own
individual and their community identity. In their lives as practicing South Asian Muslims, it is the role of class that assists in their ability to assimilate into upper middle class American society and in fact assimilate quite readily. Education, professional jobs, and language proficiency, understood as markers of class, thus position the Islamic Society members as upper class Indians or Pakistanis and later facilitates their entry into upper middle class life in the United States.

A double dynamic exists for the majority of the Islamic Society whose language and professional job skills merged them seamlessly into the upper middle class suburban life. In spite of their advanced degrees, English fluency, and economic success, their ethnic heritage, culture, race, and/or religion demarcates a separate space in American society. Marginalization considerably impacts the community’s possibilities of complete assimilation since in many respects the members of the Islamic Society still retain cultural and religious difference as a marker of their diasporic identity. The themes of generational issues, nostalgia for home, issues of recreating home, and maintaining cultural traditions as detailed in the preceding chapters all significantly factor into the community’s transnational life as they juggle their faith and culture in addition to their children and careers. While they push their children to achieve educational goals, and in turn economic success, these individuals also shape the children’s identity by frequent trips to Pakistan, sharing Pakistani food, and partaking in Islamic Sunday school. In each day they manage the multiple demands of their layered ethnic identity.

Chapter Two underlines the initial underlying connotation derived from the definition of ethnic and draws attention to a sense of difference in being ethnic. In the community’s life, difference does exist but a closer examination reveals that their life is one of
simultaneous assimilation and alienation. Marginalization significantly impacts the possibilities of assimilation since in many respects many members still retain cultural and religious difference as a marker of their identity. Of course, the issue of choice also factors significantly here as well due to the fact that in many cases the group desires only to assimilate to a certain degree and in certain ways opting to maintain their home life as one that is based on their own South Asian families and by adhering to Islamic religious practice.

The Islamic Society's immigrant experience challenges previous understandings of ethnicity in relationship to race, culture, religion, and education and it is further complicated by class. Through the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu in Chapter Three, I argue that their class status awards them choice about the daily structure of their life and it is the potential of the two combined, class and choice, that creates their simultaneous visibility and invisibility. Again, an upper middle class life merges them in American mainstream society while it also distances them from 'the terrorist' and working class immigrants. Perhaps, if the majority of this community did not possess advanced degrees or financial security or class status, assimilation and marginalization would disrupt the negotiation of visibility in American society.

In addition to the theories of ethnicity and class, the narrative analysis of the life histories and the stories shared during the weekly dars is examined in Chapter Four. Furthermore, my role as researcher was always imbued with my status as a member of the community and it is with this knowledge that many were willing to share aspects of their lives that often had been unspoken. The shared identity and history of our immigration contributed to a reading of the experiences as reflexive, one in which the
narrator and I could both identify. In telling me their histories and future goals, there existed a silent understanding that parts of the tale could be mirrored in my own family’s migration history. Many were proud also to relate their stories to me and proud that I, a daughter of the community, was academically successful. My position awarded me an intimacy and a familiarity but also left me to disentangle implicit meanings and beliefs. Any mistake in the decoding and disentangling is my own.

In conclusion, this dissertation concerns an immigrant community and their lives in the United States of America. Like other immigrants before them, their lives parallel the struggles of all who leave behind a life and an identity. However, while the discrete variables of history and ethnicity may overlap with other communities, it is the unique interchange of an ethnicity that combines the identities of a South Asian culture and Muslim faith in a post September 11 American society with class that distinguishes the community of the Islamic Society. As the community continues to grow and evolve and as United States government policies change, so too will the critical need to understand how this community negotiates the in/visibility of their lives.
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