

Cultural Hybridity and Post-9/11 Transformation: A Pakistani-American Experience

Tariq Khan* and Safer Awan**

Abstract

While drawing on the ethnographic data, this study explores the complex ways in which the Pakistani-American immigrants must negotiate to achieve cultural hybridity with the host communities in America. It explores how Islamization of all immigrants from Muslim countries affects integration with various groups in the host country. The dissonance that the immigrant community has about interacting with the host community is explored in depth, and the genesis spelled out in an analytical perspective. The hosts see the Pakistani-American immigrants as prone to intolerant criminal acts and terrorist acts.¹ The immigrants, on the other hand, do not desire to embrace American values and way of life even as they seek to benefit with American capital. Regarding the whole community as intolerant, violent, sadistic and radicalized because of the experiences of a few in the community is an issue that the Pakistani immigrants have to grapple with as the hosts demonize the community in view of eliminating radicals. The paper also explores how nationalism and religious doctrines inform the little interaction between the two communities with the view of finding common ground and ending bias. Rather than seeing each other as part of the global diversity, the two sides form parallel narratives on which community is at fault in a manner that stifles social cohesion. The present position paper (through critical discussion) explores that how Pakistani community gets detached from and disengaged with America in the wake of 9/11 strikes due to maltreatment they stumble across.

Keywords: Cultural hybridity, Stereotyping, Othering, Islamophobia, Transformation.

Introduction

The American concept of promoting diversity and multiculturalism both within its shores and globally has always been met with

* Tariq Khan, PhD Scholar, Department of Humanities, Faculty of Social Sciences, Air University, Islamabad. Email: tariqkhan1975@gmail.com

** Prof. Dr. Safer Awan, Dean, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad.

mixed reactions. The assimilationist and monocultural approach towards Americanizing every other culture borrows heavily from the notion of high culture that defined the European cultures four centuries back. America being an immigrant country has cultural diversity even within its borders to the point of blurring the exact meaning of American culture. The paper contrasts what would be referred to as American culture and how they perceived Pakistani immigrants and to a larger extent the Muslim immigrants before and after September eleven attacks.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to use an explorative approach with the objective of getting a better understanding of the underlying issues that affect the cultural hybridity between the Pakistani immigrants in the United States and the host population. The paper will incorporate the use of opinions, thoughts, scientific papers, trends and explore different studies to get a clearer understanding of what Pakistani immigrants have to grapple with in a foreign land and what informs their experiences.

The Research Question

What are the experiences of the Pakistani-Americans in pre-9/11 and post-9/11 and what informs their experiences on cultural hybridity with the citizens and culture of the host country?

Literature Review

Pakistanis in America before 9/11

Globalization has prompted many members of the predominantly Muslim communities to immigrate to countries with diverse religious affiliations and less tolerant to religious hold on the way of life. Immigrants enter the United States carrying the legacies of a troubled relationship with the United States of America due to a variety of factors among them the belief that the American society exists to disturb their way of life. The immigrant Muslims especially are renowned of crossing borders to western world yet not embracing the ways of the lands that they immigrate to. The relationship with the western world is characterized by what has been referred to as Orientalism where the concept of the Western world is defined as biased towards restructuring and dominating the Orient (in the current context immigrants from the Middle East and Asia) with a view of establishing authority over them. Whereas the approach by western countries has changed over time

after the end of colonization and the increased global focus on trade and development, the Western world still lacks parity and clarity when dealing with Middle East, Africa and the Oriental.² The unevenness of the relationship between the Pakistani and other Muslim immigrants and the United States means that the immigrants from the Middle East face a complex and layered entry into the United States.

When the Pakistani immigrants enter the United States, the hosts fail to realize the troubled Diaspora relations that their predecessors have faced in similar journeys.³ The colonial histories of the Southern Asia, North Africa, Middle East and South East Asia inform the nature of interaction with those that are referred as oppressors or colonialists. When the immigrant Muslims are finally allowed to immigrate to the United States, they get to a country where hardly any citizen can tell the history of their struggles with colonization and the influence of the Islamic faith. The hosts can also not understand the nature of regimes that the immigrants have had been in and how the lack of amenities their view of governance.⁴ In the newly immigrant nation, they are conveniently labeled as others making their struggle with identity even more daunting. Settling in the new country, immigrants realize that the “others” label goes beyond everyday interaction.⁵ The television shows, the cinema world and the literary world profiles persons of Arab descent on issues regarding sleeper cells, terror attacks and other racially related literature when Muslims are regarded as the aggressors.

The schools, shopping malls, public places are just a representation of the microcosm of the society, and the negative representation of the immigrant Muslim community permeates itself in the public arenas in the way that the immigrant people would not have guessed. The curricula of the schools in the United States of America is not representative of the increased diversity and fails to meet the expectations of the many cultural backgrounds. In the education system, identity or cultural affiliation is secondary to the desire to standardize and harmonize the curriculum. Scant attention is given for the cultural and social identities of the learners and how the education system supports or rejects the school environment. The United States social setting has a population that experiences lots of misunderstanding of the society judging by how people look, how they communicate, dress, interact and where they come from; the Pakistani immigrants are no exception.⁶ Other immigrant communities face multiple identity issues on account of their way of interaction, and their outsider

status within the country. The journey to growing up and attending the educational institutions while steeped in their cultural ways make the quest for identity in a place where they have suspect status more daunting. The identity of the Pakistani and the larger Muslim Americans has been affected by multicultural, transnational and geopolitical landscapes.

Transnational and post-colonial influences

Human beings today live in post-colonial influences where their countries struggle to impose their national identity globally without reverting to influences left by their colonialists. What inform the “othering” of other nations is the colonial mentality and the challenges that countries faced in the quest for self-determination. The stature of the United States to the Muslims, Africans, and the Orientals will always be tied to the history of the western civilization and the quest to establish dominance. The natural and human resources for Africa, Asian, and the Arab world were exploited to build dynasties in the West as well as establish a culture of dependence that many countries are yet to shake off.⁷ Elements of colonization by the western countries included the practice of slavery, assimilation, divide and rule strategies that left peaceful neighbors suspect of each other and biased teaching of history. Occupied lands were referred to as savages that needed to be civilized through occupations, education and the spread of the occupier religion.

Many countries gained their independence after the Second World War when their colonizers could not continue holding off to lands when their populations at home had decimated. The end of occupation does not, however, mean that colonization has stopped damaging the human capital and cultural identity even into the 21st century. There are vestiges of colonialism that continue to give an outline the lives of the citizens, particularly in the Middle East. The post-colonial history bears witness to the divisions that arose from colonial boundaries that pitted communities with little in common in the same countries where the fight for dominance has informed the struggle for identity and economic liberation.

Understanding of the complexities that surround post-colonial search for identity cannot be studied in isolation without a survey of the transnationalism that has affected people in the constantly demographically changing world. The identities that people have of nations are only some social constructs forced on them through domination, wars or ambitious expansionist ideas of

past rulers. While the twenty-first century may refer to countries in the Middle East by their individual names, a century back they were part of the Ottoman Empire regime and their cultures, religion, and their identities are related through intermarriages. The experiences of the Iraqis in America may not be any different from those of Turkish descent, and the Western Asians are lumped together in the classification as Arabs in the West. Where the previous identities would have taken their national borders are looked at them from their national identities, the Western world has gravitated towards the Ottoman Empire realms to call them Muslims or Arabs. It would, therefore, be a hard task to isolate the experiences of the Pakistani Americans from the discourse without touching on their Muslim brothers. To understand the experiences of the people of Arab descent in America is to understand the experience of the Pakistani Americans in the country of adoption. What may distinguish between the two are the national identities that the immigrants associate with and how strong they are in a multicultural setting.

The American public does not discern the colonial and the postcolonial issues that affect the immigrants and regards to all the Muslims as transnational unless it is pointed out from which country they originate from. What the public however does is to label them as foreigners; a label that they cannot outlive in the American context. The history of the American nation is that of some racial purity especially of the western European immigrants that founded the nation. There has always been the assertion that some people are more American than others and the Western American expansion showed that it has nothing to do with origin. The American Indians are not regarded as being more American than those who emigrated from Europe despite the others coming and chasing them from their lands. The African Americans despite inhabiting the country since its founding are not regarded as being equal citizens in the social and cultural settings. The Latinos have not fared any better and are considered as being lesser Americans. With such a racial background defining the Americans, the Muslim world immigrants were not any different from others before the 9/11 attacks.

The “Othering” of the immigrant Muslim communities in the United States of America meant that before the attacks of 9/11 they lived as a largely ignored community that did not have an impact on the way of life of Americans. They were yet to be subjected to the stereotypes that have painted the community after the attacks and every subsequent attack on the world arena. The

threat of domestic terrorism before the September eleven attacks was inconceivable to the American public and no segment of the society was particularly regarded as a threat to the others.⁸ Muslim was only one of the religions allowed to be practiced in the United States of America, and there was no stigma related to practicing the religion in American shores.

Socio-Personal and Professional Chronicles of American Dream

What brings diverse people together from different backgrounds, social spheres, cultural and religious backgrounds is the pursuit of the American dream that ushers a sense of hope and realization that better standards of living are attainable. Immigrants requiring freer environments where their political views would not make them enemies of the state espouse the values that America stands for. Others are lured to the American shores by the premise that their economic positions would improve their status in the society.⁹ The American dream is held on the assumption that all a person needs to do work hard and smart and they would work their way up and achieve what they desire in life. It means the pursuit of fulfilling the human nature objectives as well as the subjective individual vocations.

Objective dimensions regard to the nature that human beings share with the others as body and souls composites. It is the pursuance of the fulfillment of the material needs that include reasonable subsistence, educational, health care and recreation needs. Human beings also have spiritual needs that define their hopes and aspirations on earth. Finding happiness and fulfillment traverses financial positions in life intimating that the motivation comes from something else other than money. Some immigrants do not get consumed in the pursuit of financial rewards but find fulfillment by living frugally and working their way up.

The subjective dimension regards what makes every individual different from another. No matter the level of education, origin, race, class or the mental abilities, every person has unique abilities that define their talents and unique skills. The insecurities or idiosyncrasies that define individual experiences represent the subjective vocations that are peculiar to each.¹⁰

The pursuit of the American dream follows both the subjective and objective dimensions. Immigrants are confronted with the challenge of changing their dimensions to conform to the expectations of the new environment and dropping most of what they represented so that their transformation to persons with the ability to thrive in America is completed. Holding on to cultural,

religious, gender and sociocultural positions delays the integration into the wider American society making it hard to access various jobs in the communities.¹¹ Not all the immigrants embrace the American dream and pursue it as shown by the 27 September 2014 protest outside the United Nations general assembly when the Pakistani Prime Minister addressed the assembly. Despite the nation having Mid-Term elections, the interests of the Pakistani Americans were more on the domestic issues happening in Pakistan.¹² It showed that even as they are in America pursuing their dreams, their dream is focused outside the American sphere of life. Estimates have placed the number of Pakistan-Americans living in the United States at half a million. Pakistan-Americans are a relatively new immigrant community with many of them being first or second generation Americans. Negotiated identities still influence their involvement in the American way of life between fully immersing themselves in the host community's ways of life and aspiring to influence Pakistani politics.

Self-Resoluteness Grounded in Relations

The vast number of Pakistan-Americans immigrating to the United States from the 1970s to date can be explained by family relations present in the Pakistani communities.¹³ The first immigrants to the United States were professionals who took a chance to explore better opportunities in American society that valued their expertise. After the first immigrants had been settled, they brought in their relatives through family preference programs. The latter immigrants were not necessarily professionals but were brought in to fill the void of family relationships which immigration to the United States creates. The size of the Pakistani-Americans population is amongst the fastest growing from the immigrant community. From the figures of only around thirty thousand people in 1980, the American census data of 2010 approximates that there are four hundred and fifty-three thousand persons who relate to the Pakistani origin. It is imperative to note that the American census does not factor in those who were born in the host country. An independent study by the Pakistani embassy in the United States has put the figure at approximately seven hundred thousand. Such a figure is a marginal shift from a low figure of 30,000 showing that the number of people who have emigrated from Pakistan to America in the last three decades has increased ten-fold.

There are a vast number of Pakistani-Americans approximated to be a quarter of the total population who were born

in the host country. They are the second generation Muslim communities of the Pakistani origin who do not have the same level of attachment to Pakistan like their parents. That segment of the population is the one expected to navigate through identity issues while looking for ways of having seamless integration with the American public while greatly influencing the social and political conditions necessarily for the attainment of the American dream. Part of the strategy towards establishing relations with the American community while enhancing chances of succeeding in the host country has involved investing in the attainment of higher education.¹⁴ There is a higher number of first and second generation Pakistani-Americans earning undergraduate degrees than the overall sample from the United States population. Going through the education system, is one way of integrating with the host community socially, culturally and politically.

Personal-Political Nexus Iconised and Symbolised

While institutionalized racism and discrimination are absent in the American context, there exists racial divide within the American public. The immigrant population has to navigate multiple identities to achieve the American dream. The Pakistani-Americans communities find themselves in the middle of personal and political Nexus while the host community disregards their input in the society with fellow Asian immigrants displaying a high degree of misunderstanding the values that they represent.¹⁵ Their double consciousness of trying to fit in the American cultural context while retaining their Pakistani identity is similar to the African-American experience of double consciousness as narrated by W.E.B Dubois in his book "The souls of the black folk." Dubois had been trying to explain that double consciousness arises when a segment of a population is oppressed but refuses to be objectified, stereotyped and devalued. The Pakistani-Americans has exceedingly had to fight stereotypes that have symbolized their very existence with the terrorist narrative especially after the September Eleven terror attack in America.¹⁶

Before the September Eleventh attack, Pakistani and by extension Muslims in America had lived ordinary lives where every community was regarded as an equal in their pursuance of their American dream. Communities interacted socially, culturally, socioeconomically and religiously without either demographic group alienating others based on stereotypes. First and second-generation Pakistani-American have grown up believing that America was their land of opportunity and where class divides are

only part of history but not part of the future.¹⁷ A deviation from the life lived in the cultural and social contexts have made especially the young Pakistanis, a center of scrutiny that they have not encountered during their formative years.¹⁸ Immigrant communities always have social identity issues in the host country but rarely are they elements of derision from the media, the politicians, and the wider public as the Muslim communities have faced since being associated with terrorism and extremism.

Migration to America

The presence of South Asian inhabitants in the USA can be traced to the mid-19th century when immigrants that were mainly Punjabi settled in California. Their interaction with the American public and recognition was halted when they were barred from acquiring American citizenship in the Immigration Act of 1917 that was followed by the Supreme Court ruling of 1923. The majority of the earliest immigrants were Single men, and the anti-miscegenation laws prevented them from marrying white women. California barred such marriages, but the young South Asian immigrants could legally wed in Arizona. The suspect nature of interaction with white women made marriages with whites rare. The ruling defined them as aliens that were ineligible to be granted citizenship since they were not white. The only available path to citizenship that was open to them after the ruling was marrying those who were recognized as citizens. The Punjabi men married Americans of Mexican heritage and settled in El Centro, California. The path to citizenship was opened by the Luce-Celler Bill of 1946 that allowed the South Asians to own property, become citizens and invite their fellow citizens to immigrate to the USA under national quotas. A trickle of persons of the South Asian origin started in 1948 that was mainly composed of professionals and students. Within two decades that followed, there was a clearly identifiable population in the USA of persons of Pakistani origin distinct from other South Asians. The trickle would become a deluge when the passage of the immigration and naturalization act was passed in 1965 ushering in a significant number of immigrants into America. The number of Pakistanis who immigrated to the USA under the act shot to twenty thousand per year and was sustained for some years. Other Asian nations were experiencing the same trend where the professionals were opting to take the increasing opportunities in the USA while students who emigrated for educational needs opted not to return to their countries.

Muslims and Arabs from a world perspective

In the immigration context, it would be hard to divorce the concept of Pakistani immigrants and that of Arab and Muslim immigrants. To the larger American public, the Pakistani-Americans are members of the Arab or the Muslim community. The identity of the Pakistani immigrants in the USA has been homogenized and referred to as either Muslims or Arabs. The Arab world covers an area stretching from North Africa to the Arabian Gulf encompassing areas of diverse cultures, nationalities, and religions.¹⁹ In many social settings, the immigrants from those regions are regarded as Arab-Americans even as they originate from different countries that are not ethnically related. Read posited that using the term “Arab-American” is a flawed way to define people that come from different nationalities, do not share a language and have different religious affiliations.²⁰ The phrase is however still used to identify immigrants from the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe. The Arab American Institute (2012) confers that there are three and a half million individuals that are classified in the category of Arab-American in the United States. A majority of the Arab-Americans are Christians with the Muslims composing of twenty-three percent only, but the numbers have not stopped the American media and public from labeling the immigrants Muslim. Read further observed that although most Arabs in the world are Muslims by religion, those who have settled in the United States are largely Christian.²¹

The immigration of Arabs in the United States happened in waves. The first immigrants from the Arab world who immigrated to the United States were mostly Christian driven by economic desires just like other immigrants to the United States of the time. The second wave of Arab immigrants to the United States was Muslims motivated by the desire to better their economic conditions following periods of economic stagnation in their home nations.²² The consequences of the Second World War followed by Middle East turmoil made it lesser desirable to immigrants to go back to their countries of origin. The journey to the United States to improve the economic standing and return to their countries then became a mirage, and many took up the American citizenship.

The adoption of the immigration and naturalization laws of 1965 brought the relatives of the immigrants to the United States where they were naturalized and recognized as Americans. With the turn of event, the desire to go back to their countries diminished as they had the extended families with them. The cultures, their way of living and rituals started becoming more

evident in the daily interactions. It is observed that the Arabs living in the United States and who identify as Muslim have a lesser degree of satisfaction on their recognition in the host country compared to those who identify as Muslims. Such observations show that the immigration experience of the people from the Arab world in the United States is different based on the religion that the immigrant professes.

At the beginning of the immigration journey for Arabs into the United States, whiteness was the defining theme for being granted the citizenship of the United States.²³ The Arabs were regarded as being non-white and did not qualify for automatic citizenship. Arab Christians, however, were able to gain citizenship faster due to the association of Christianity and religion. The race has been used as the determining factor in America to decide what group qualifies for some individual rights and privileges. The Arab Americans that were granted citizenship because of their Christian beliefs also perceive themselves to be whiter and with more privileges than those that were deemed unqualified for citizenship. Cainkar found that the idea of race in the American context is an ongoing process and continues to contextualize people of Arab descent.²⁴ The whiteness of the American system regards whites as those of the Caucasian descent and blacks as those of African descent and with the dark color. The others including the people of the Arab descent whether associating themselves as Christians, Muslims or Buddhists are regarded as “others.” The conflation, especially regarding the distinction between the Arabs and Muslims, has meant that immigrants of the Pakistani descent are neither white to be wholeheartedly welcomed into the American context nor Blacks to be considered to having a share in the history. In the wider American public, media and in films, the Pakistani-Americans cannot escape the label of Muslims in the United States that is associated with the rise of terrorism globally and within the confines of the nation’s borders.²⁵ Such labeling and racial constructs have motivated immigrants to seek organizations that would help them interact while ensuring that the social cohesiveness builds an alternative narrative.

Organizations to enhance interaction

Various cultural and religious groups in the United States bring together persons of Pakistani descent for cultural and religious interactions. Major cities have different agencies that cater to various needs of the immigrant community and their desire to bond

and pursue common purposes. Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles have different organizations set up by the Pakistani community where members congregate to socialize and push common agendas. The events held up by those member organizations help the immigrants to maintain a cultural connection with the Pakistani community in the home country and follow the events that shape Pakistan politics.²⁶ Cultural and religious events are celebrated together through the organization of such groups as well as philanthropic activities aimed at impacting the lives of people in Pakistan. On the religious front, the Pakistani community has been vocal in the establishment of Mosques in the United States through private member funding. Initially, the mosques served the different divisions of Salafi and Wahhabi, but they have evolved to cater for the larger Muslim population irrespective of the factions. Islam is a way of life other than religion, and the Mosques employ Imams that must give direction on the way of worship as well as attending to the religious needs of the community.²⁷ Mosques are responsible for spreading the Islam way of life through religious teachings and involvement with the teaching of Madrassa and other religious as well as sociocultural obligations like weddings and celebrations. Mosques are funded by the believers and the immigrant Pakistani community in the United States is responsible for funding many mosques across the country.

Professional organizations exist to bring together different professionals from various fields to push for a common purpose. The Association of Pakistani Physicians in North America is one of the oldest and identifiable organizations that cater for the social life of Physicians of Pakistani origin. It is involved in charitable work aimed at uplifting standards of the immigrant community in the United States as well as coordinating with organizations in Pakistan in impacting communities on health issues. Another important organization of Pakistani immigrant community is the Organization of Pakistani Entrepreneur of North America that aims to create networks fostering relationships with the Pakistanis and Americans in professional circles.

Collocation of East and the West: Pakistan and American Milieu

The Pakistani social environment encompasses both the cultural settings of the Middle East and the organizational culture of the Orientals. Sandwiched between the Arab world and the Eastern civilization, the Pakistan culture has taken them best of both worlds and is outwardly regarded as a representative of both. The religious influence of its Western neighbors have affected Pakistan

and made it a Muslim country in a way that is different from its Eastern neighbors India and China. The Pakistan population is diverse and composed of people of Indian and Arab ancestry. The percentage of the Arab population in Pakistanis is minimal having less than five percent of all the people but some sections of the outside world regard Pakistan as an Arab country even if it is not. Pakistan can therefore not divorce itself from the Arab countries stereotypes when its immigrants access the western world. More fitting is the consideration of the Pakistani Diaspora as being synonymous with the Arab-Muslim acculturation.

The experience of the Pakistani immigrant community in the United States cannot be defined without contrasting the hegemonic culture of the host country and that of Pakistan. A study by the United States religious landscape survey that was conducted in 2012 showed that Christians in America consist of 72% of the total population.²⁸ The percentage of Muslims in that period was less than 1%. The radical difference between the Christian and the Muslim population shows that the America is predominantly a Christian nation. Such figures are in complete contrast to the Pakistani numbers which show the percentage of Christians, Hinduisms, and other religions consist of less than 5% while Islam as the dominant religion takes up 95% of all Pakistanis. Islam is the state religion in Pakistan while the United States is a secular country. The discourse of contrasting the Pakistan and American Setting cannot be done without regarding religious influence.

Traditionalism is one of the defining factors that delineate Islam from other religions. The influence of Islam in the general context of national politics in countries where it is the dominant religion contrasts sharply with the Western countries that espouse a division between State and religion. Religious choice does not affect the daily lives of the American people and is purely an individual preference. Kattan observed that in the Islamic countries, religion plays a prominent role in influencing all the aspects of the lives of citizens and to an extent the visitors.²⁹ The traditions of all Arab and Muslim immigrants are rooted in Islamic doctrines that influence personal life in matters of presentation and attire with an emphasis on the manner of dressing especially on the female gender. The western world does not advocate such traditions and its citizens are free in matters of choosing their regalia. Islam further prohibits its followers from the consumption of pork as well as other meats when not sure where they were sourced.³⁰ Prayers to the Muslim faithful is not a matter of choice as they are decreed on the number of times to pray every day and

they strive to ensure that in all circumstances they perform as expected. The contrast with the American culture becomes stark when the role and stature of women in the society are compared.³¹ Where Islam is the dominant religion, the communities are predominantly patriarchal with the ladies only playing a supportive role to the male figure in the society.³²

The United States Constitution confers the same rights on both genders and contrasts sharply with the views espoused by the teaching of Islam. Immigrants from countries where Islam is dominant have to experience a culture change when they interact with the American values and doctrines in social settings. Originally the Pakistan inhabitants struggle for identity between the Indian culture and the influence of the Arab culture brought about by Islam. The Pakistani-American immigrants have to struggle with an additional cultural shift when they have to experience a Christian and Secular dominated American traditions. The acculturation process has to include the multiplicity of all those cultures while also embracing the individualist values of the Western world.³³ The Muslim culture faces a unique challenge in the formalization of their marriage systems as the American laws do not have a place for polygamy. The Islamic doctrines, on the other hand, do not have provisions for some of the American sociocultural realities like same-sex marriages and divorce. Barry observed that the process of acculturation for the Arab and Muslim at times involves the total refusal of the values that the Muslim culture has advanced to the young immigrants before they can rightfully fit in the American context.³⁴

Fighting Muslim/ Islamic Stereotypes

The tragedy of September Eleven changed the dynamics of intergroup relations between the Americans and all “Muslim-looking” persons residing in the United States. Heightened racial, religious and ethnic stereotypes were enforced where none existed before.³⁵ A new range of human rights, civil liberties, and immigration advocacy groups emerged to fight for the common agenda of reestablishing protection of rights. The egregious violation of basic liberties and the concept of equal treatment as defined by the law is the standard approach of the groups formed after September Eleven. Violations emanated both from the public and the institutions with a whole community condemned of sponsoring terrorism and harboring terrorists even as they had lived peacefully with others for decades.³⁶ Pakistani-Americans advocacy groups were only part of the broader movements formed

to fight the severe compromise of the due process when dealing with suspects of the Arab descent and “Muslim-looking” individuals. Undue scrutiny resulted to heightened focus on the actions of immigrants with many of them having to present themselves for registration while others experienced increased hate crime.

Increased racial intolerance emanating from hatred directed to communities resembling attackers of 9/11 affected immigrants of Arab descent. According to the FBI, the events after the attacks resulted in a disproportionate increase in hate crimes directed against Muslim-Americans.³⁷ Muslim is a religious label that does not define any race although the line between religious discrimination and race is blurred especially on persons of Arab descent. The American media and public view Muslim American as being primarily monolithic³⁸ and conceptualize them as having a similar way of behavior and thought in spite of their differences in race.

Little research has been done concerning the experiences of Muslims arising from biased media with more focus on the attitudes towards Arabs acting as the basis for Muslim perception experience. A study in the United Kingdom touched on the subject on Islamophobia which indicated that hatred had spiked after the attacks on America.³⁹ Intolerance towards the Muslim-Americans existed even before the World Trade Center attacks with the media portraying Islamism as being violent and intolerant to alternative teachings.⁴⁰ Muslim-Americans are part of the American diversity, and an attack on the constituent racial mixture is an attack on American values that can have negative repercussions on the tolerance levels of the host country.⁴¹ The terrorist attacks originated from a deep hatred of the values espoused by subsequent American presidents on the global arena and showed a level of intolerance to different strategies.⁴² Converting the obvious hatred from non-Americans on American values into infractions amongst individuals of the same country would be localizing global hatred.

Methodology

The paper has used different forms of qualitative exploration incorporating the analysis of the various studies on the subject, commentaries from various media sources, government policy positions, and reactions from the affected persons archived in various research materials. Different papers were explored with a view of getting the relevant data that touches on the issues of

cultural hybridization affecting the Pakistani-American immigrant community. The Pakistani-American community does not face unique challenges, and the paper considered the experiences of the larger Arab-American populations as well as those of Muslim Americans.

The Research design

The design used in coming up with the relevant materials of this paper is the adoption of an exploratory approach from scientific journals, periodicals and academic sources that document the experience of the target segment of the population. Adopting an exploratory approach as opposed to conducting a quantitative analysis allows the paper to escape specificity that would happen if the experience was more localized.⁴³ Conducting a study on the diverse populations of the Pakistani-American community would be exhaustive, time-consuming and would involve resources that are beyond the realms of this paper.

Data sources

The information incorporated in this paper is got from secondary sources on the subject some commissioned by the various study groups, from government sources, from analysis on the changing trends and from demographic reports of human rights bodies. The paper incorporates political, geopolitical, religious, cultural and social commentaries on the subject to diversify the different opinions on the subject from various sources.

Data collection techniques

The bulk of the information that is used in this paper comes from an analysis of different scientific journals, books on the subject and the informative literature of the issue from delimited metadata. Different articles are available in public libraries, the World Wide Web, social commentaries, news organizations and demographic reports from government sources. The immigration issue is an emotive subject and the various measures adopted by the United States to keep out immigrants impacted the view on America receptiveness to the immigrant communities. Listening to different sermons available online on the opinions of the immigrants was another method used to understand the interaction and perception between the immigrant and their hosts.⁴⁴

Summary of Research Findings

The cultural hybridity between the Pakistani-Americans has faced numerous challenges due to the way the host community has continued “othering” the immigrant community and treating them as suspects in their daily discourses. Achieving integration of the immigrant community has been affected by how the two communities perceive each other’s culture, beliefs, and values.

An Uneasy Relationship

Approximately six million Muslim immigrants are living in the United States of America who only makes up a minority of the American population. Through Islamophobia that accelerated after the 9-11 attacks, the six million have been “othered” by the American systems to the point that their civil liberties are under threat. The American media have perpetuated the perception that Islam is a threat to the American nation based on the profiles of the attackers of the 9-11 attacks. Studies conducted since the attacks have continually shown that Americans harbor deep resentments to the Muslim population and believe that the religion of Islam is based on the premise of eliminating others. Such perceptions are prevalent in spite of the fact that most Americans cannot authoritatively say the doctrines taught in Islam or the content of Quran writings.

The media has pushed the two stereotypes that define the Muslim population; the terrorist male and the veiled and oppressed women.⁴⁵ The traditional Arab dress is what is mostly used to portray Muslim men even as the Arabs only constitute less than thirty percent of the Muslim community. The pluralistic nature of the Muslim community is lost to most Americans and the fact that the adherents of Islamic teachings have different backgrounds, cultures and languages just like Christians. The diversity of the Muslim faithful is not portrayed in the media and the American public context. The Muslim-Americans come from different backgrounds and cultures which are as different as different races in the United States of America. Other than religion, there is nothing in common between the immigrants from Pakistan and those from Egypt or Somalia but to the American media they are all Muslim-Americans that are defined in a certain monolithic way or another. With the classification of Muslim-Americans as acting in a certain manner that is consistent across the religion spectrum, the individualism of each consistent culture of the Muslim-Americans is lost.

Institutionalized discrimination

The aftermath of the 9-11 attacks has been dire to the Muslim-Americans. Crackdowns on the members of the communities with Arab, Pakistani, South Asian descent have intensified as have the civil liberties of those arrested on suspicion of terrorism. The signing of the U.S Patriot Act of 2001 spelled doom to the immigrants in the United States who would be apprehended on terror-related charges. Those that were yet to be granted full citizenship were most affected as the attorney general was given the powers to arrest, detain and bring charges to suspected person without needing a warrant. The Clear Law Enforcement Alien Removal Act passed in 2003 gave local authorities the power to enforce the Federal immigration laws and resulted to increased surveillance on Muslims. The combined effect of the two laws formed the genesis of the fight for civil rights from the Muslim community. The laws have resulted to considerable number of Pakistani immigrants as well as the Muslim immigrants being detained on issues ranging from immigration to terror-related charges.

Economic Discrimination

The interaction between the Muslim immigrants and the Americans has slowed after the 9-11 attacks. Immediately after the attacks, various threats were reported on the Muslim community and some resulted in hate crime against communities. The nature of the interaction between the two groups changed and suspicion on each other informed future communications. Workers have reported name-calling from their colleagues at the workplace with the Muslim community being regarded as terrorists. The height of animosity implicit in the two groups has continued to rise, and the hatred is evident after every attack happens.⁴⁶ There has arisen the narrative that the Muslims pose the greatest threat to the American public even as the figures show that guns in America take more lives per year in the country as opposed to terror attacks. Fed with the false narratives that the greatest danger will come from the Muslim community, the social interaction has decreased significantly. Reduced social interaction, especially concerning the immigrant community, is a precursor to reduced employment chances for the target population. Lack of jobs continues to befall the Muslims in America including the Pakistani-Americans.

Capital and Cultural Superiority

There are teachings of racial superiority in most communities in the world that desire to establish dominance. When the immigrant Pakistani community settles in America, the tendency to over-emphasize the inferiority of the host culture is high. Given that the Pakistani immigrants have had enhanced surveillance after the September 11 attacks, the immigrants tend to keep to their close circles and create a hegemonic or alternative narrative that seeks to position their culture as superior to the others.⁴⁷ The superior culture originates from a confluence of interests drawing on religion, nationality, culture, gender and race creating a hegemonic version of an ethnonational culture regarded as being superior when compared with the host culture.

The superiority of the culture is grounded in the teachings of Islam which are based on the myth of pure origins. Religion serves as a moral compass that families use to guide their children on values that they are supposed to take even as they are in a country that teaches different values. Maira observed that with the teachings, families held on to cultures that were on decline back home in a concept that she regarded as cultural fossilization.⁴⁸ The cultural fossilization is typically based on the nostalgic feeling about cultures that were previously dominant or served their purpose before challenges made them to either seek to change or conform.⁴⁹ Isolation of immigrant communities is what makes them adopt the cultural fossilization with the fear that the group identity would be lost. Remembrance of home country galvanizes communities to regard their communities with special significance.⁵⁰

An approach that considers some communities as being superior to others either culturally or through capital is neither beneficial to the host or immigrant communities. When cultures are regarded as being inferior, the rate of interaction reduces which is an antithesis to the ideal circumstance necessary for development.⁵¹ Parallel narratives result to less integrated communities that are suspicious of each other.⁵² It is also not in the interest of the host society when the immigrant community barricades themselves in their houses and fails to interact with other. Wealth is created through social interactions that open up opportunities. More jobs result to lesser persons on unemployment support that drain the resources of the taxpayers. Walling up in communities also results to residents in the United States but whose civil liberties are not taken care of since they remain under the control of their dominant Islamic culture.⁵³

Resentment and Repugnance of America

The economic opportunities and civil liberties are a major draw to immigrants across the world; not so some of the American values. To the majority of the Muslim-American immigrants and the Pakistani-Americans some of the civil liberties are repugnant. The Muslim world is centered around family values, and the individualism of the American culture is alien to their sociocultural context.⁵⁴ The interaction between genders is limited in the Islamic way of life and people who are used to its teachings cannot relate to the immorality brought about by the free choices in America. Marriages in the Islamic world are a social obligation and are expected to last a lifetime. The American culture espouses the value of free choice even in the context of matrimony allowing parties to sign prenuptial agreements and having high divorce rates as part of its cultural setting.

Pakistani-Americans brought up in conservative areas of their home country like Lahore experience culture shocks when they are exposed to life in American cities like Los Angeles where everything goes. Issues like the rights of the lesbians, gays, biracial, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) in the society are not prevalent in the Islamic world but are ubiquitous in the American sociocultural settings. To the immigrant from a predominantly Muslim country, the values that America prides itself in are to be met with a degree of resentment since they fly in the face of the Islamic doctrines.⁵⁵ Free choice in America has no bounds, and there are no topics too hallowed to escape discussion. While the American nation is established in sacred reverence to an omnipotent deity, the place of God in the society has been relegated to the periphery. The civil liberties have been expanded to the realms of the place of worship to the extent that the country has exceedingly become secular and societies like Atheists protected by the law.

The American resentment stretches beyond the sociocultural issues of its culture.⁵⁶ Being a global superpower its search for dominance in the world arena has left a long trail of victims in its wake. With the September 11 attack within the boundaries of the republic the retaliatory measures it adopted spelled doom to millions in the Arab and Muslim world. The American war on terror and efforts to depose governments that supported terrorist in their midst left millions of victims in the targeted countries. Scattered in the Arab and Muslim communities are strong sentiments against the interference of the American government in internal affairs. Such views are shared by the

immigrant populations from the affected nations who resent the values that America upholds since they have eviscerated communities from their structured ways of life. From their involvement in the Vietnam War, the prominent role of CIA in supporting revolutions, the Afghanis liberation from the Soviets, the two Gulf wars to the war on terror, the American government has played a key role in destabilizing structured systems in the Muslim world. Even as they seek economic opportunities in America, immigrants from the Muslim world loathe the role of America in destabilizing their homelands. The resentment toward the American intervention and the number of innocent people who have perished from their actions is felt across the board by immigrants from the Arab and Muslim world.⁵⁷ The war on terror has continuously exposed the Pakistani-Americans, and the wider American Muslims as co-conspirators have created a degree of resentment even to the ordinary American mortals.

Conclusion

Muslims in America face the extreme and arduous challenges while trying to break from the institutionalized social and economic problems. The pursuit of the American dream has placed and continues to place many Muslims in America. Social advocacy groups must fight for recognition that there are numerous challenges faced by the Muslim immigrants if the new entrants are to benefit from the opportunities that are available in America. Advocacy groups have tried to address the challenges faced by the immigrant communities by reaching out to the host community with view of correcting the anomalies. The paper has explored the experiences faced by the Pakistani immigrants in the USA and the challenges of establishing cultural hybridity with the host population. Based on the experiences with the American social context, acculturation to the American culture would be difficult but either side should establish resolve to bridge the gap of what makes the two groups have an uneasy relationship.⁵⁸

Terrorism negatively affects the society and the onus of ensuring that the different racial groups emerge stronger and not more divided are on government receptiveness to the stereotyping of the Muslim-Americans. For the Pakistani-Americans to achieve cultural hybridity with the Americans in the United States, the issues of stereotyping and discrimination must be addressed so that social interaction results.

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