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THE IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY FOR AMERICAN MUSLIMS

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Abstract

Though common sense and political rhetoric suggest that identity claims play an important role in determining action, psychology and sociology research both suggest that beliefs do not have a direct impact on action. This dissertation explores the impact of the religious identity of American Muslims on issues of broad societal concern. Rather than studying identity as an abstract system of beliefs, I consider both individual measures of religious belief orthodoxy and the influence of group commitment within the distinctive social context of self-identified Muslims living in the United States. The dissertation draws on the Pew Center's 2007 survey of American Muslims, as well as 23 in-depth interviews to create a multi-dimensional model of Muslim identity. The dissertation finds that, in isolation, religious belief does have little impact on social attitudes; however, group commitment and social context work to link American Muslim identity to distinctive attitudes on issues as diverse as terrorism and recycling. This finding suggests that a focus on the commonalities between religious identity and other identity claims can be beneficial both to the sociological study of religion and to sociology more generally.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Islam is a topic of considerable discussion in contemporary American society. Judiciaries are grappling with their desire to ban *sharia* law in the U.S. Lay people question whether Islam is a religion that deserves protection under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the U.S. or a radical ideology that should be fought at every turn. Theologians debate whether Islam is compatible with everything from democracy to gay marriage. Unfortunately, by focusing on Islam, these debates often essentialize religious identity to theological orthodoxy. While debates about orthodoxy are important to theologians and adherents, the public discussions which appear to be interested in Islam are often more concerned with the actual public consequences of religious identity for American Muslims, not with theological norms. For example, nearly everyone involved in the hearings on the radicalization of American Muslims, including both the Congressmen who expressed support for the hearings and the fathers who testified that their children had been radicalized, asserted they understood Islam to be normatively and theologically opposed to violence. Such examples suggest that these issues are, fundamentally, about what Muslims do and not about what the Qur'an or other Islamic texts say.

This dissertation attempts to explore these public consequences of religious identity for American Muslims from a sociological perspective. Sociology offers us powerful tools to understand what it means to be an American Muslim. Not what should it mean – that is a questions for theologians, philosophers, and lay believers – but what does it mean for the people who live as Muslims in the United States every day. There is little social science research on American Muslims; however, there is a large body of more general work on religious identity. This research suggests that religious identity manifests in diverse ways. Scholars have found that

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Western Christianity manifests itself in distinct ways in different contexts. For example, Catholicism in South America has not only distinctive ritual practices but also a stronger charismatic element than it does in North America. Similarly, Catholicism has shown itself to be both pro-civil society (Casanova 1994) and vehemently anti-democratic (Casanova 2001).

Though valuable, much of this general work addresses Christian populations. In order to develop a sociological understanding of American Muslims, it is necessary to address the diversity of Muslims generally and American Muslims specifically. With regard to Muslims in other countries, there is a robust literature studying what Marshal Hodgson called "islamicate cultures" (Hodgson 1977), countries where Muslims have infused the political process and civil society with norms and values that they believe are rooted in the Islamic traditions. These studies – such as Hodgson's historical study of the Middle East and South Asia and Clifford Geertz's more contemporary study of Morocco and Indonesia – make it clear that Muslim societies vary quite widely (Geertz 1971).

When looked at on the level of individuals, rather than societies, the diversity is even more striking. In fact, a large body of social science literature asserts that abstract beliefs – whether they are religious or secular – have few consequences for issues of societal concern. Theologically committed Catholics can be pro-choice (Dillon 1999), self-identified feminists can have distinctly gendered views on societal roles (Schnittker, Freese, and Powell 2003), and couples can be both firmly committed to romantic love and act in a decidedly unloving way (Swidler 2001). In fact, the lack of a direct connection between religious beliefs and social attitudes and behaviors led some social scientists to abandon the study of religion completely for a time (Stark 1984). Mark Chaves argues that impact, rather than its lack, should be surprising since it takes significant cognitive or social effort for abstract beliefs to have public implications.

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These findings call into question nearly the entire enterprise of looking for a relationship between religious identity and social attitudes (Chaves 2010).

And yet, despite these findings, it seems intuitively clear that scholars are overlooking something important if they jump from the understanding that there is great variety in the social attitudes of members of identity groups to the assertion that identity claims don't matter. Muslims, Christians, feminists, and loving couples the world over adamantly attest that they are influenced by what they believe. Specifically, 72% of American Muslims assert religion is very important to them (as do 54% of the general American population) (Pew 2007). In addition, social attitudes do vary in some consistent ways across identity groups. Muslims, for example, are much less supportive of homosexuality and of terrorism than the general public (Pew 2007). To reconcile the two apparently contradictory findings – that belief rarely has public consequences and that religious groups have distinctive attitudes on many of these issues – it is necessary to broaden our conception of religion. Religious identity can denote not just a theological "system of symbols" which establish "moods and motivations" (Geertz 1973) but also membership in a social group. Explicitly recognizing the complexity of religious identity is a prerequisite for making progress in understanding its public consequences.

In order to capture both the diversity of American Muslims and the complexity of religious identity, this dissertation draws on two distinct types of data. To capture the breadth of variety within the American Muslim community, I rely on a nationally representative survey of American Muslims conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2007. This survey includes a wide range of self-identified Muslims. In order to explore the complexity of religious identity as experienced by American Muslims, I draw upon 23 in-depth interviews in

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which I give respondents an opportunity to explain in their own words how their religious identity influences their social attitudes and behaviors.

In exploring the consequences of religious identity for American Muslims, this dissertation also addresses the ways in which religious identity can be implicated in ostensibly non-religious issues – such as racial identity and civic identity. There is a significant body of literature showing that identities need not be in conflict with one another; rather, they often are integrated in such a way as to make it impossible to understand the significance of one without considering the others.

In what remains of this chapter, I will first explain which public consequences of religious identity I will be measuring. I will then outline how acknowledging the complexity of religious identity allows me to address the diverse ways in which religious identity can manifest. Then I will discuss how this broad conception of religious identity makes it necessary to address the intertwining of religious identity with other identity claims. I will conclude with a description of the remaining dissertation chapters.

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The Public Consequences of Religious Identity

Table 1.1: Social Attitudes [a]

	Muslims	General Population
Q.H1. Violence against civilians can be justified	78% never	46% never[b]
Q.H5. Unfavorable opinion of Al Qaeda	68%	N/A
Q.G1. The quality of life for Muslim women in the U.S. is worse than in Muslim countries	7%	N/A
Q.H3. Arabs were responsible for 9/11 attacks	40%	N/A
Q.D3. The coverage of Islam by American news is unfair	57%	N/A
Q.B2-d. Homosexuality should be accepted by society	27%	51%
Q.B2-a. I worry the government is getting too involved in the issue of morality	29%	51%
Q.H4. The war on terror is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism	26%	67%
Q.C1. Military force in Afghanistan was the wrong decision	48%	29%
Q.C2. Military force in Iraq was the wrong decision	75%	47%
Q.B3. Big government is good	70%	43%
Q.B1. Approve of President Bush	15%	35%
Q.B2-b. Immigrants are a burden on the U.S.	16%	41%
Q.H7. Not bothered that Muslims are singled out for additional security	26%	48%

[a] Statistics drawn from the 2007 Pew Survey of American Muslims. Actual question wording can be found in appendix A.

[b] This is actually drawn from a survey by the Program on International Policy Attitudes, not a survey by the Pew Forum on Religion.

The central goal of this dissertation is identifying and explaining what Charles Glock and Rodney Stark called the consequential dimension of religious identity. They defined the consequential dimension of religiosity as the “secular effects of religious belief, practice, experience, and knowledge” (Stark and Glock 1968). Though this topic is a central concern for social scientists and policy makers alike, many (perhaps most) of the ways in which observant Muslims stand out from the larger American society do not fall into this category. The consequential dimension does not include, for example, the distinctive prayer rituals, methods of fasting, and dietary restrictions of Islam. Neither does it include the distinctive styles of dress

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and appearance, such as long beards among some Muslim men or headscarves among some women.

These ritual prescriptions and proscriptions are relevant, but only inasmuch as they are visible indicators of underlying attitudes. This is true even in cases where they become the topic of public debate and government legislation. For example, the French parliamentary committee that recommended a ban on Islamic headscarves (*hijab*) asserted, "It is the symbol of the repression of women, and ... of extremist fundamentalism." (BBC). France bans headscarves not because leaving the head uncovered is a core principle of French *laicite*, but because it is assumed to be a marker of political and social attitudes which are incompatible with the country's founding principles. In point of fact, studies which explicitly look at why Muslim women (in the U.S.) wear the *hijab* suggest that we cannot safely assume that such outward displays are reflection of distinctive social attitudes (Read and Bartowski 2000). This dissertation probes the nature of the relationship between such ritual commitments and public consequences.

The public consequences which will be the primary focus of this dissertation are the 14 issues on which the social attitudes of American Muslims drastically differed from those of the general American population, which are listed in table 1.1. All 14 questions are drawn from the 2007 survey of American Muslim by the Pew Research Center.[1] This consists of 10 questions wherein the opinions of American Muslims diverged from those of the general population by at least 20% and 4 additional questions showing variation among American Muslims, with no comparable question asked of the general population. For example, 7% of American Muslims believe that the quality of life for Muslims women is worse in the U.S. than in most Muslim

[1] Though the Pew survey offers the best national data on American Muslims, it has been criticized by a number of Muslim scholars, such as Aminah McCloud (McCloud 2007). The strengths and limitations of the survey are addressed in Chapter 3.

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majority countries, but it is unlikely that so large a percentage of the general public holds this view. That some of these issues would be distinctive to the American Muslim community is not surprising – nearly two thirds of American Muslims are immigrants, so we might expect them to be less likely to believe that immigrants are a burden on the U.S. Other responses are less intuitively obvious, such as the finding that American Muslims are less supportive of violence against civilians than the general population.

In addition to these central issues of social attitude, other consequences were highlighted by my in-depth interviews as being relevant to understanding American Muslim religious identity. They include topics ranging from recycling to dating and assimilation. Where appropriate, I will discuss my findings regarding these broader issues in order to draw a more complete picture of the ways in which religious identity influences the social attitudes of American Muslims. Even with the inclusion of these issues, however, the dissertation cannot offer a comprehensive description of the diverse social attitudes of American Muslims. What it does offer is a sense of the breadth of issues which might figure in that religious identity.

It is certainly possible that these distinctive social attitudes are not at all consequences of religious identity – in fact, a few of them will prove not to be. However, this dissertation will show that, though few of these attitudes correlate with the orthodoxy of a person's Islamic theological beliefs, nearly all are strongly tied to religious identity, broadly conceptualized.

Unpacking the Complexity of Religion

This dissertation is predicated on the assertion that religious identity consists of more than just theological beliefs. In order to address how religious identity influences social attitudes, religious identity must first be sufficiently mapped. To do so – to take an adequate measure of

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religious identity – requires more than merely asking respondents whether or not they believe in God, or how often they attend religious services.

As it is problematic to equate religiosity with either church attendance or belief in God, the solution is not, unfortunately, simply to ask people to report how religious they are. There are two problems with such an approach. First, people are notoriously bad at judging their own religiosity. For example, a study of Muslim women in Palestine found that respondents who report above-average attention to religious beliefs and practices tend to report relatively lower subjective religiosity than those that show less concern for religious beliefs and practice, because they set higher expectations for themselves (Huntington, Fronk, and Chadwick 2001). Research has found that even when this concern over inter-respondent reliability can be overcome, general questions such as "how religious are you?" offer more room for social desirability to subconsciously manipulate responses than do concrete questions such as "how many times did you pray yesterday?" (Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski 2000).

Second, and especially troubling for a broad understanding of religious identity, the use of general questions regarding religious identity treats religious commitment as a single, unified object, obscuring much of the subtlety of religious identity. When researchers use single item indicators, they must limit the generality of the claims they make or risk committing what Mark Chaves called the "congruence fallacy" (Chaves 2010). This mistaken assumption – that all aspects of religiosity are equivalent – was particularly common in early debates about secularization. Defenders of the theory claimed that people were becoming less religious because church attendance was declining (e.g.Bruce 2001), while opponents asserted that "[i]t is perverse to describe a nation as highly secularized (as a few of our European colleagues do) when fully two-thirds or more [of it citizens] say they are 'a religious person' and fewer than 5 percent say

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they are atheists" (Finke and Stark 2000: 33). To account for the diverse ways in which religious identity can have public consequences, we must first determine a method to distinguish between someone who considers herself "very religious" because she accepts the orthodox theological beliefs and someone who considers himself "very religious" because he diligently performs five prayers in the mosque each day.

In order to address these concerns, scholars have developed complex models of religious commitment. These models allow researchers to calculate a respondent's religious commitment from multiple descriptions of religious beliefs and actions in the same way that instructors can calculate a student's exam grade from multiple exam questions. The sizable literature on Christian religiosity provides a starting point for developing a model of religious identity among American Muslims. This literature has led to a virtual consensus that religious identity consists of multiple aspects, including ritual practice and theological belief. These dimensions are inter-related but distinct both in terms of their causes and their effects.

A focus on *dimensions* of religious commitment, rather than on individual religious beliefs and behaviors, has been useful in uncovering the patterns hidden by religion's complexity. Research has found, for example, that while belief in God is not a very good predictor of church attendance, a belief in heaven is related to church attendance. Thus, scholars have found it useful to talk about religious belief as a dimension of religious commitment which is distinct from ritual practices (Hill and Ralph W. Hood 1999). Similarly, scholars have found that, while belief in heaven and belief in hell are both well grounded in Christian theology, Christians are much more likely to feel that their belief in God implies a belief in Heaven than a belief in Hell, leading scholars to weight belief in Heaven and belief in Hell differently when trying to measure belief as a dimension of religiosity.

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While recognizing the great progress of previous research, scholars now evidence a growing understanding of the limitations of this research. Researchers have found evidence for the dimensionality discussed above primarily through their development of "general purpose" measures of religiosity. As the field has matured, however, they have recognized that these "general" measures have been developed and tested almost exclusively on Christians in either the United States or Western Europe. Given the difficulties of adapting these earlier measures to non-Western and non-Christian populations, scholars now develop more specialized measures, which take into account the unique aspects of the population being studied (Hill and Pargament 2003).

Though some scholars have done religiosity research on Islam in Muslim majority countries (e.g. Tezcur and Azadarmaki 2008), few scholars have explored the dimensionality of religion among American Muslims (for a recent, small scale, example see Jana-Masri and Priester 2007). Thus, while we should certainly expect that religious identity is multi-dimensional for American Muslims, we do not have a strong understanding of what these dimensions are. An accurate model of religious identity must take into account both the religion and its context, and no such models exist for American Muslims.

Religion is Not Just Individual

In addition to being focused primarily on Christianity in the West, these models have another major limitation. These models often do not take fully into account the collective nature of confessional identity. While some definitions of religion assert that people can be religious only as individuals (Berger 1974), a full understanding of religion must consider the effects of religious group commitment, not just discuss the theological beliefs. This point was made forcefully by Rodney Stark decades ago (Stark 1984); however, disciplinary boundaries have

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blunted the effect of this recognition. Psychologists continue to develop models of religiosity which focus on individual concerns – such as what people ask God for (Ladd and Spilka 2006). Sociology of culture has taken a “cognitive turn,” which risks replicating the limitations of psychology literature (Ann Swidler highlights this danger, Swidler 2008). Even sociologists of religion often fail to address these concerns, as they often focus more on religious organizations than groups as such (Kelly Besseck critiques this focus, Besecke 2005). Thus, many models of religious identity are limited even with regard to Christian populations because they look at only a narrow portion of religious identity. A narrow focus on religious ideas and institutions is one reason why contemporary scholars remain skeptical about the impact of religious identity at all, and why some scholars continue to argue that religion is becoming increasing irrelevant (e.g. Chaves 2010; Bruce 2002).

The recognition that religious identity is not just an individual phenomenon may be especially important for the study of Muslims. Many, if not all, Islamic devotional practices are communal in nature. For example, though the five daily prayers can be performed by a Muslim alone, there is a strong theological recommendation that they be done collectively. Islamic theology has generally been taken by Muslim scholars to both assume that Muslims make up a religious community and to demand that this aspect of religious commitment have real consequences for daily life – a fact that is much less true with regard to the Protestant denominations that make up the bulk of the American religious landscape. In fact, some historians go so far as to assert that a major characteristic of Islam has historically been “the establishment of the Community (*ummah*) of the Faithful expressing the moral and spiritual quality of its faith through a variety of institutions backed by a government organization.” Additionally, these historians hold that the expectation that such an organization should exist

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played a large role in the creation and growth of the early Muslim empires (Rahman 2002: 1). As such, we should expect that a great deal of the influence of religious identity will be driven by group effects. Further, if we accept Stephen Warner's assertion that the American context encourages religious groups to take on a congregational model (Warner 1993), then we should expect the collective aspects of religion to be especially relevant for Muslims living in the United States.

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Social Context and the American Muslim Community

Table 1.2: Summary Statistics of American Muslims [a]

Immigration	
First Generation	64%
Second Generation	7%
Non-Immigrant	28%
Generation 1.5[b]	17%
Ethnicity	
Black	19%
White	7%
Arab	23%
South Asian	20%
African	10%
European	7%
Iranian	8%
Changed religion	23%
Education	
Less than H.S.	7%
Some H.S.	14%
H.S. only	30%
Technical Training	2%
Some College	23%
College Graduate	15%
Advanced Degree	10%
Income	
Less than $10,000	4%
$10,000 to <$20,000	12%
$20,000 to <$30,000	18%
$30,000 to < $40,000	16%
$40,000 to <$50,000	8%
$50,000 to <$75,000	15%
$75,000 to <$100,000	10%
$100,000 to <$150,000	10%
$150,000 or more	7%
Female	48%
Urban	55%
Mean Age	38.7

[a] Data drawn from the 2007 Pew Survey of American Muslims. Actual question wording can be found in appendix A.

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Table 1.2: Summary Statistics of American Muslims (Continued)

[b] Though the Pew survey collected sufficient data to identify the age of immigration to the United States, deductive disclosure concerns led to a dataset which only supplies age ranges. Therefore age of arrival could only be definitively determined for half of the respondents. This estimate extrapolates the pattern found among the respondents who could be categorized across the entire dataset by assuming the data is Missing Completely at Random (MCAR). It suggests that 17% of respondents (27% of all first generation immigrants) came to the U.S. before age 14. Though my preliminary analysis suggest that these respondents are indeed distinctive, showing consistently lower levels of religiosity across all measures than any other group, the relatively small number of cases which could be definitively identified as falling into this category made detailed analysis of these findings problematic.

Because ostensibly non-religious aspects of identity are often influenced by religion, a broad study of religious identity should also consider them. The intersection of religious and non-religious identities is not well understood, though the idea that religious identity is relevant outside of explicitly religious contexts is not new (Cadge and Ecklund 2007). This issue of intersecting identities is especially important in the American context, since it allows for hyphenated identities, at least in principle. For example, Mary Water's book *Ethnic Options* argues pervasively that it is not only acceptable but even desirable to be at once civically American and ethnically Italian, Irish, etc. (Waters 1990). America, unlike many other countries, bases membership largely upon citizenship while allowing for both significant levels of immigration and considerable diversity in level of assimilation (Lee 2011). These trends of research suggest that the way in which religion influences racial and civic identities may be especially important in the American case. Further, research on Muslims in the U.S. suggests that they often find ways for their religious and civic identities to co-exist, and only rarely experience identity conflict (Sirin et al. 2008). For these reasons, this dissertation explores the way in which religious identity influences racial and civic identities.

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One way in which such hybridity occurs is by intertwining religious identity with these "secular" alternatives. Whether this happens through the infusion of American civic values into religious commitments or the reverse, a full understanding of religious identity must understand its relationship with the other identities that people of faith claim. Though there is certainly the potential for cross-pressures between religious norms and the norms of a broader American context, this dissertation finds that American Muslims generally feel that it is possible to negotiate them while being true to both identities simultaneously. In fact, my dissertation will show that the American Muslim community often infuses American civic values with Islamic validation. Where religious identity is intertwined with civic identity claims, it is inaccurate to talk about religion as divorced from the broader cultural context.

The existing literature on American Muslims, though rarely explicitly comparative, suggests that racial and ethnic norms are also infused with religious meaning (McCloud 1995, 2006). Further, it is worth noting that not only are the ethnic cleavages significant in themselves, they are also intertwined with other cleavages of sociological concern, such as immigrant status, conversion status, and socioeconomic status. Table 1.2 offers summary statistics about the American Muslim community, drawn from the 2007 Pew survey of American Muslims.

Socioeconomic status (a composite measure of social class, economic status, and education) is similarly intertwined with issues of race and ethnicity. Muslim immigrants from South Asia (unlike immigrants from Latin America) are often well educated, fluent in English (albeit sometimes in a British dialect), and able to find employment as highly paid professionals rather than low-paid service and agricultural workers. In fact, the influx of South-Asian Muslims to the U.S. became possible only because of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, which allowed highly skilled professionals from non-European countries to immigrate to America. In

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contrast, African-American and Caucasian-American Muslims have comparable income to non-Muslims of their race. A comparable pattern exists for educational attainment among American Muslims, in that, overall, American Muslims have roughly the same levels of college and graduate study as Americans overall, with significantly higher levels for foreign-born immigrants and significantly lower for the (mostly Black) American-born Muslims (Pew 2007).

Dissertation Outline

Because there is evidence that religious identity is intertwined with racial and civic identities – and by extension issues of immigration and class – my broad study of religious identity explores both when they are intertwined and what impact this combining has on the public consequences of religious identity. The remainder of the dissertation works, step by step, to develop a broad understanding of religious identity as well as to understand the public consequences of each of its aspects.

The next chapter summarizes the existing literature on identity and describes the model of religious identity – drawing heavily on the more general typology of identity proposed Rogers Brubaker - which the rest of the dissertation follows. It acknowledges the importance of theologically grounded beliefs (religious belief orthodoxy) as an important aspect of religious identity, then goes on to show that religious group commitment is also central to religious identity. It also discusses how we can evaluate the extent to which alternate identities – such as race – either offer cross-pressures to religious identity or are integrated into it.

Once a theoretical framework is established, the dissertation goes on to describe the sources of data and analytical tools that will be used to move from talking about religious identity to measuring it. The methodological chapter addresses the advantages and limitations of using the 2007 Pew survey of American Muslims to understand the relationship between

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religious identity and social attitude. In addition, it explains how a combination of cognitive interviewing and in-depth interviews are used to go beyond the limitations of the survey data to explore how both the survey questions, and religious identity more generally, are understood by the respondents. Finally, this chapter describes the use of confirmatory factor analysis and logistic regression in order to mitigate the fact that social attitudes generally exist on a continuum, yet survey responses are limited to a small number of possibilities.

The next chapter develops a method to measure the various aspects of religious identity. It uses a classical model of religiosity, as developed to analyze Christianity in the West, as a starting point. It adapts the model to account for the ways in which American Muslims are distinctive and tests which of the aspects of religious identity commonly found in Christian populations also exist among American Muslims, using confirmatory factor analysis. It eventually establishes the utility of a model of religious identity which focuses on two distinct aspects: religious belief and collective ritual involvement. It then uses interview data to align this revised model of religiosity to the model of religious identity previously outlined in the theory chapter.

The first aspect of religious identity which I investigate is religious belief orthodoxy. I begin by laying out the evidence that many American Muslims assume that their abstract religious beliefs have public consequences. I then that show that the results of the in-depth interviews give us reason to doubt the strength of this relationship. Using the measure developed in the modeling chapter, I test the relationship between religious belief orthodoxy and each of the 14 social attitudes upon which American Muslims differ significantly from the larger American population. I show that, though there is a normative assumption among American Muslims that religious belief orthodoxy should influence social attitudes, level religious belief orthodoxy can

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be used to explain only a handful of the issues. At the end of this chapter I return to the interview data to show that religious belief orthodoxy, though not directly related to social attitudes, is often perceived to be the reason for religious grouping.

After considering religious belief orthodoxy, the next chapter begins by showing that there is both theological and interview evidence that religious group commitment must be considered as an aspect of religious identity. It then goes on to test the relationship between religious group commitment and social attitudes using two measures: the group ritual commitment factor developed in the model chapter and the number of Muslim friends a respondent has. The chapter finds that both of these indicators are strongly related to most of the distinctive social attitudes of American Muslims. Finally, this chapter discusses the mechanisms that allow religious group commitment to influence some social attitudes more than others.

The final substantive chapter describes the relationship between American civic identity and Muslim religious identity, using cross-national survey data. It then goes on to explore the relationship between racial/ethnic identity and Muslim religious identity for American Muslims. The dissertation finds that religious identity influences, and is influenced by, both racial and civic identities. It shows that American Muslims are cognizant of this fact and are able to draw upon Islamic theology to explain why they work to be simultaneously American and Muslim, rather than switching between private (religious) and public (secular) modes of action.

In addition to summarizing my findings, the final chapter explores the ways in which American Muslims' religious identity is similar to and distinct from other religious and non-religious categories of identification. It suggests that the abstract theological beliefs which make Islam distinctive play an important role in changing Muslim religious identity from simply a category of identification, recognized but inconsequential, into a identity group – with a

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collective sense of self and with shared concerns. Though abstract beliefs play an important role in creating a sense of shared group commitment, this chapter argues that these beliefs have little direct influence in shaping the group's social attitudes and behaviors.

Chapter 2: Religion as a Group Identity

> I think Islam is the most important thing [in my life], because in Islam you have set out the way you ought to be treating your wife, and children, extended family, and so on. (5-new)

What should scholars make of a statement like this, where the respondent appears to assert that religion has significant social consequences? Most research shows that social attitudes and behaviors are not directly impacted by religious beliefs specifically, or abstract beliefs more generally. Research on self-identified feminists finds only an inconsistent relationship between being feminist and gender related social attitudes (Schnittker, Freese, and Powell 2003). Similarly, Ann Swidler's research on marriage argues against "deductive logic" – the sort of explicit conceptual linking of abstract beliefs to behaviors apparently being described in the quote above (Swidler 2001).

One way in which scholars have tried to explain assertions that religion has significant social consequences has been to claim that religious beliefs are more influential than other abstract commitments. This explanation is suggested by Clifford Geertz's assertion that religion sets up "powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations" that are "uniquely real" (Geertz 1973). However, the idea that religious beliefs have an exceptionally powerful influence on social attitudes and behaviors is undercut by the failure of decades of effort to uncover this influence (Stark 1984; Chaves 2010).

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Other scholars have claimed that Islam is exceptional, even for a religion, because it does not accept a separation of religious from non-religious spheres of life (Huntington 1993; Parsons 1963; Frick 2010). While claims persist about Islam's incompatibility with everything from democracy to women's rights, Jose Casanova reminds us that similar claims were leveled against Christianity in the recent past (Casanova 2001). Islamic ritual practices are distinctive in some ways; however, its impact on the public sphere varies widely. Studies have found significant variation in attitudes regarding social and political issues even though there is consistency in the underlying religious beliefs across many Muslim majority countries (Moaddel 2002; Geertz 1971).

Even with the United States, studies have found sharply differing social attitudes and behaviors being justified using Islamic beliefs. African-American Muslims frame concerns they share with the rest of the African-American community, such as poverty and crime, as Islamic concerns. Pakistani Muslims do the same when addressing tension between Pakistan and India over the contested Kashmir region, as do Palestinian Muslims when discussing the need for a Palestinian state. That each of these groups of Muslims frames their issues as "Islamic" suggests that their view of religion is broader than merely theologically orthodox beliefs (Mohamed 2002). Differences of this type between groups of Muslims show not only that Muslim identity is not a uniquely monolithic object, but also that it operates in the same domains as other collective identities such as race and nationality.

A growing body of literature suggests that many identities are collective – formed by individuals in dialogue with social groups as well as symbols and abstract beliefs. The collective nature of these identities suggests that identity commitments can influence behavior even when it does not influence abstract beliefs (Winchester 2008). Ann Swidler sums this fact up with her

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assertion that "[t]he question of how culture shapes action can't be answered by figuring out better models of how it operates in the heads of individuals, however interesting (and however difficult) that might be; instead, we need better analysis of the structures that determine how cultural meanings will be organized, and when and where particular sets of meanings will be brought to bear on experience." (Swidler 2008: 617). This trend in the literature implies that scholars must look at Islam as a collective identity, not just as a system of religious beliefs, if they wish to understand how the social attitudes and behavior of Muslims are distinctive.

Rogers Brubaker's effort to unpack the various uses of the term "identity" provides the beginnings of a typology for exploring the richness of collective identity (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). He suggests that most of the core analytical concepts subsumed under "identity" can be broken into three broad categories. The first, "Identification and Categorization," is largely a sorting exercise – who is Muslim, who is Black, etc. This dissertation spends little time addressing the issues of identification and categorization, since its analysis is restricted to self-identified Muslims and other types of identification (e.g. racial) are of interest only inasmuch as they are intertwined with religion.

The second set of categories that Rogers Brubaker suggests is "Self-Understanding and Social Location." These terms designate "one's sense of who one is, of one's social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act." (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 45) - or, to state this last idea more simply, the consequences of abstract beliefs. This dissertation explores this topic by comparing the abstract religious beliefs of individual Muslims to their shared understanding of what constitutes orthodox Islamic belief, in an effort to describe the texture of religious self-understandings among American Muslims.

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The final group of terms is "Commonality, Connectedness, Groupness." These terms deal with "the emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity or oneness with fellow members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders" (Brubaker 2004: 46). The dissertation unpacks group commitment in order to understand how social attitudes and behaviors are influenced by association with co-religionists (connectedness), affective ties to an abstract bounded community (groupness), and the intersection of association and affect in a feeling of fellowship with Muslims who are interacted with frequently. This chapter extends the descriptions of self-understanding and group commitment developed by Brubaker to religious identity, so that later chapters can explore the influence of each on social attitudes and behaviors.

In applying Brubaker's typology of collective identity to religion, this dissertation generalizes it in a way that removes the artificial barrier between religious and non-religious ways of thinking and acting. This framework makes it possible to engage fully the literature which suggests that people generally do not have a single, all-encompassing identity but have access to multiple identities (Chaves 2010; DiMaggio 1997; Swidler 2001). This framework does so by exploring the ways in which religious identity interacts with other collective identities - an interaction that often goes unnoticed by studies that focus primarily on theological orthodoxy. Using this typology, the dissertation tests the separation between religious and non-religious identity. The dissertation finds that, rather than acting in distinct spheres, religious meanings infuse important aspects of culture in the American context, such as race and civic identity.

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Self-understanding and Abstract Beliefs

When considering self-understanding for American Muslims (or religious groups more generally), the issue of central concern is theological belief orthodoxy.[2] Though theological beliefs are not the only aspect of religious identity, they remain crucial to most conceptions of what defines a group as religious. While it is insufficient to study religious identity without looking at religious groups, studying religion without studying belief is "like trying to understand apple pie without paying attention to apples" (Wuthnow 1997: 253) . As such, understanding how a person sees their beliefs in relation to established orthodoxy is an important first step in understanding the public consequences of religion.

The existing literature on religion makes it clear that self-identified members of a religion have varying levels of agreement with orthodox beliefs. This finding does not generally imply that the members are ignorant of what constitutes orthodox belief. For example, Michelle Dillon's study of "pro-change Catholics" found that many reject papal infallibility not because they are ignorant of this orthodox belief, but because they hold an alternative interpretation that they know to be unorthodox (Dillon 1999). Neither is such rejection of orthodoxy unusual. A study of the general American Lutheran population found that nearly half of all Lutherans reject core tenets of their religion (Wuthnow 1988).

There is reason to believe that American Muslims also have significant diversity in religious beliefs. The Pew survey suggests that there are self-identified Muslims that reject everything from the existence of God to the divinity of the Qur'an. This suggests that knowledge of orthodox theological beliefs is not sufficient to capture the religious beliefs of American

[2] The questions I use to measure belief orthodoxy are belief in God, Muhammad, the Day of Judgment, Angels, and the divinity of the Qur'an. In chapter 4 I explain in detail why these are an appropriate measure of Belief orthodoxy for American Muslims.

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Muslims. Rather, it is necessary to find out from Muslims what theological beliefs they hold. Only once this is done is it possible to attempt to map the relationship between beliefs and social attitudes and behaviors.

"[H]ow one is prepared to act" given their beliefs is the central concern of self-understanding, as defined by Rogers Brubaker; therefore, the respondents' view on the issue of whether or not religious beliefs should have public consequences must also be explored. For example, some proponents of the secularization thesis assert that, as religions adapt to modernity, they often internalize a model of societal differentiation that assumes beliefs are not supposed to have public consequences (Berger 1967; Dobbelaere 2002). This assertion is hotly contested; however, it must be considered since, for those respondents who do not think their religious beliefs should have public consequences, any apparent relationship between religious identity and social attitudes and behaviors cannot be attributed to the deliberate application of abstract religious beliefs.

Even so, it is unlikely for this normative disconnect between religious beliefs and social attitudes and behaviors to exist uniformly across self-identified Muslims. The critics of a strong role of culture in action accept the idea that there are circumstances in which individuals engage in careful deliberation of the implications of their beliefs on their behavior. For example, Ann Swidler suggests a broadly temporal distinction between "settled times," when actions are governed by routines that may be absorbed from the social group, and "unsettled times," when abstract beliefs have an opportunity to play a more active role in decision making (Swidler 1986). Other scholars focus on more individual level factors that cause reflection on the relationship between symbolic commitments and social behavior, such as cognitive dissonance (Cooper, Kelly, and Weaver 2001), or immediacy (Chaves 2010).

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What effect these beliefs will have is often difficult to predict at the macro level, however, because beliefs are often internalized as abstract symbols (God, Judgment day, etc.) rather than as concrete prescriptions. Symbols can take on a range of meanings (Turner 1974), and religious symbols are no less multi-vocal than others (Pinnock 2007). The move from "I'm a feminist" to "I'm pro-choice," or from "I believe in the Bible" to "I'm pro-life" encompasses many assumptions which are not explicitly part of the abstract beliefs. Linking abstract beliefs to these assumptions in a consistent way requires a significant amount of "intellectual work" (Schurman and Munro 2006; Kniss 1996).

Not only does it take intellectual work to link abstract beliefs to social attitudes and behavior, but what sort of links should be drawn is often highly contested by both individuals and institutions (Ruonavaara 1997; Ghaziani 2009). Michelle Dillon's work highlights the lack of uniformity even within the highly structured Catholic Church, as many "pro-change" Catholics draw upon theologians and scholars (though rarely ordained members of the clergy) as sources of institutional support for their self-understandings (Dillon 1999). A similar split was quite visible in the recent national healthcare discussion in America, in which the Catholic Health Association and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops offered opposing views on federal legislation (Annas 2010). This contestation is one reason why religious identity commitments can be intertwined with other collective identities, rather than clashing directly.

The linking of abstract identity commitments to public consequences is the specialty of a number of institutions, such as religious organizations and political parties. When it is done successfully, this work allows the institutions to affect the relationship between abstract beliefs and social attitudes and behavior. The impact of this sort of intellectual work can be seen dramatically when an institution has the material and symbolic resources to unite its adherents in

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support of a single, well-defined idea. For example, the Mormon Church was able to achieve this unity in certain aspects of voting behavior by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Campbell and Monson 2003).

In the case of American Muslims, however, efforts to create broadly accepted links between abstract beliefs and social attitudes and behaviors are complicated by the fact that most denominations of Islam have never had a centralized theological structure comparable to that of the Mormon or Catholic Church. Even when the entire Middle East was united under a single Muslim dominated empire, the ruler (*caliph*) was generally not the final theological authority (Hodgson 1977). This division between theological and worldly power continues to manifest itself in contemporary American mosques where the prayer leader (*imam)* is rarely the administrative head of the mosque (Bagby, Perl, and Froehle 2001). Further, in the contemporary American context, Muslims also lack a united political leadership.

Regardless of the effectiveness of institutions in aligning abstract beliefs to public consequences, the significant role that they can play highlights the limitations of a focus exclusively on abstract beliefs. Once institutions become the focus of analysis, the influence can no longer be accurately viewed as stemming directly from religious belief orthodoxy or self-understanding. The influence is, more directly and more correctly considered, the result of group commitments.

Group Commitment and Religious Rituals

Group commitment is the second aspect of identity that my dissertation explores. Rogers Brubaker suggests that this aspect of identity is described by a cluster of three concepts: commonality, connectedness, and groupness. He defines commonality as “the sharing of some common attribute” (47). Commonality is often cited as a reason for group commitment, though

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actual "objective" commonality is less significant than imagined or assumed communalities. This is a point made by Benedict Anderson's work (Anderson 1991), and Brubaker does not seem to dispute it. As such, I conceive of commonality as being more closely related to identification and categorization than group commitment, despite the fact that some aspect of commonality generally must exist (or be assumed to exist) for group commitment to exist. While individual members of a religious group will have varying levels of belief orthodoxy, the existence of some set of abstract beliefs is generally the reason for the religion's existence.

Once a religious group exists, the issues of group commitment can be explored. The extent to which group members associate with each other, or "the relational ties that link people" (47) is what Rogers Brubaker refers to as group connectedness. There is a large body of literature on network measures of association which explores issues such as the number of ties (how many group members an ego knows), the structure of the ties (how many of the group members that an ego knows also know each other), and the strength of the ties (whether the other group members are close friends, family, casual acquaintances, etc.), among other issues. Most measures of group association only consider other group members if the ego is aware of the shared group membership – which need not always be the case. It is certainly possible for two co-workers to both be Muslim (or feminist, or homosexual) and not realize that they share this trait, though there is research that suggests that group members tend to be aware of each other (Salganik et al. 2011)

With regard to religion, we may expect that one way in which group association is facilitated is through participation in collective rituals – such as church or mosque services (Durkheim 1995). The role of mosque involvement in reinforcing religious group consciousness was even confirmed by a small scale study of Muslims in the U.S. (Jamal 2005). Participation in

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such rituals is simultaneously an opportunity for association, an opportunity to develop networks that can be leveraged outside of the mosque context, and an opportunity for an affective sense of community to be built.

This affective tie – what Brubaker refers to as "groupness" – is the final aspect of group commitment that his typology addresses. Group commitment can be tied to abstract groups separately from actual association with other group members (Anderson 1991; Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Brubaker defines groupness as "the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded solidarity group" (47). This sense of belonging to a community may arise through rituals and other forms of association but can extend beyond group members that one associates with regularly to encompass the group as an (abstract) whole as well as anyone that is considered to be a member. For example, immigrants who have very few actual ties to their country of origin often retain some emotional tie to that country (Ghozzi 2010).

Group affect of this type is likely to exist in most collective identities, though some groups are likely to have a more pronounced sense of this than others. For example, Jews and Muslims tend to have a particularly strong sense of commitment to the larger community of co-religionists (the *ummah* in the case of Muslims, or *am yisrael* in the case of Jews). Reasons for this may be drawn from theology, experience of persecution, or a number of other sources. In the case of American Muslims, both theological and practical reasons promote a strong affective tie to Muslim as an abstract community – a point which will be revisited when I discuss group commitment in chapter 6.

Typologies do not exist perfectly in the real world; instead, they often overlap. While analytical precision is sometimes valuable, this overlapping may be significant in itself. Therefore, I will introduce an additional term to the typology for group commitment: fellowship.

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In general, fellowship is the overlap of association/connectedness and affect/groupness. Though it is certainly possible for someone to have a general affective tie to other group members without ever having met them (as is the case for nationalism or the concept of *ummah*) as well as possible to associate with group members without having any affective tie to the shared group identity, I believe the overlap of these two is both common and important. Such overlaps are likely to exist in a wide range of situations, from family units to prayer groups.

Each of these aspects of group commitment can have significant public social consequences, independent of issues of individual self-understanding and belief orthodoxy. In fact, the collective nature of most identities is an important, though often overlooked, reason that they can be influential. That associating with group members may make it more likely for religious identity to have consequences for behavior has been implied by a number of studies (Stark 1984; Bruce 2002; Chaves 2010). Though psychological accounts of identity may be able to ignore the collective aspect of religious identities, a sociological account should not.

One mechanism for the influence of group commitment on social attitudes and behaviors is a group's tendency to develop a shared "common sense" understanding about the world (Tindale et al. 2001;Martin and Desmond 2010). This understanding about the world may be developed, for example, through hearing testimonials from other group members about their experiences (Moon 2005).

The development of shared social representations can be distinct from religious self-understanding because group members do not always see this shared knowledge as stemming from their religious beliefs. Rather, group members often assert that their shared knowledge is tied to objective facts about the world that are, in principle, accessible to anyone. This group information often encompasses views and opinions about out-group members. For example,

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Claire Mitchell found that some Irish Catholics felt that the "ingrained wickedness" of Irish Protestants was not tied to theology but rooted in "common-sense knowledge, independent of religious practice or belief" (Mitchell 2005: 14-15). Because individuals often view this sort of knowledge as "objective," it is likely to manifest through group association, even when there is little in the way of affective community ties. One area in which this sort of group information manifests itself among American Muslims is distrust of the American media, which remains quite high despite evidence that media coverage of Muslims is comparable to that of other minority groups (Hout, Howe, and Shweder 2008).

In addition to influencing knowledge about the world, affective ties and group commitment can have even more direct public consequences. Children are more favorably inclined towards members of their own group, even at an early age. Toddlers often make these distinctions on the basis of physical markers such as racial appearance, language, accent, etc. (Kinzler 2008), but adults learn to generalize these unconscious preferences and apply them to groups without physical markers such as religious or political groups. Further, psychologists' so-called minimal group experiments tell us that a feeling of group membership can have a significant impact on behavior even when the groupings are known to be arbitrary (Tajfel 1982).

One very important place in which the affective and associative aspects of group commitment are often both at work is in families (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). Though religious group membership is, in theory, an achieved rather than ascribed characteristic, in practice it has elements of both (Cage and Ecklund 2006), in part because it is often shared within family units. Parents have a great deal of influence on the assumptions their children make about what behaviors their religious commitments should dictate, both by instructing their children and by acting as role models. Parents also have significant indirect influence since they can control what

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other institutions the children experience by selecting which neighborhoods they live in and which schools they attend. The enduring influence that parents have over their children's religious understanding is also highlighted by conversion studies that find that conversion is much less common when a child has religious parents (Hunsberger 1983). Parents' efforts to instill a strong attachment to their children's "birth religion" remains relevant even among people who do eventually change religions. Converts that had a strong attachment to their birth religion tend to view religious change as an adjustment to a religion which fits a preexisting abstract commitment, whereas radical shifts generally only happen when attachment to the previously held abstract beliefs is weak (Granqvist and Kirkpatrick 2004). Studies of American Muslims have confirmed the enduring influence of family ties on later life choices, such as selection of marriage partners (Curtis 2008). In an effort to give parents more choice regarding which institutions their children are in contact with, American Muslims have also been quite active in the establishment of their own schools (Riedel 2009).

Composite Identity

Group commitment can itself be an important part of identity; however, it also highlights the extent to which identities are multiple. Groups are often the site of intersecting collective identities. For example, the Arab Muslim American Federation (AMAF) focuses on the needs of people whose religious identity is Muslim, ethnic identity is Arab, and civic identity is American. Their events, such as an annual Ramadan dinner, are opportunities for people who share these identities to associate with one another. The annual convention held by The Mosque Cares (Ministry of W. Deen Muhammad) plays a similar role among African-American Muslims.

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That identities are multiple is often taken as an indicator that individuals internalize more culture than they use, leading researchers to probe the question of what contexts and situations trigger one aspect of identity versus another (DiMaggio 1997; Swidler 2008; Goffman 1959; Tindale et al. 2001). While there is certainly evidence that people do play different roles and wear different cultural masks at different times, a focus on roles and masks assumes that these different identities exist in parallel. When applied to religious identity, this lens of parallels makes the most sense if one accepts the secularization theorists' view that there are certain spheres of life that are appropriate for religious life (for example, the home and family life) while there are other spheres that are non-religious (politics being chief among them). As a normative position, the separation of public (non-religious) and private (religious) life suggests that any public consequences of religious identity are to be avoided. More importantly, the acceptance of this distinction as an analytical tool is problematic given the apparent resurgence in religious vitality around the world in recent decades.

One alternative view, which is also frequently invoked in discourse regarding secularization, is that of identities in conflict. This position assumes that certain identities are simply more important than others. Inasmuch as they overlap, one identity will be the clear victor, while the other is made irrelevant. Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis suggests such a model (Huntington 1993), as does the discussion of the children of many immigrants to Europe who feel a desire to separate religion from what is "just culture" (Roy 2006).

Inasmuch as religious identity manifests as either parallel to or conflicting with other identities, it is possible to focus exclusively on religious identity. In these views, it exists as a combination of abstract beliefs and group commitments that: fully manifests in a given social

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attitude or behavior (the winner in a conflictual model), is irrelevant to that topic (in a parallel model), or is rejected completely in favor of some alternative frame (the loser in a conflictual model).

There is, however, another possibility for the interaction of religious identity and social attitudes and behaviors – integration and adaptation. A number of scholars have found that religious identity often is infused with and suffuses other identity claims. Organizations like AMAF and The Mosque Cares, not to mention denominations such as the Nation of Islam, are predicated on precisely this principle. There is a large body of literature that suggests that religion is often infused with ethnic identity (Phillips and Kelner 2006; Cage and Ecklund 2006; Mitchell 2005). There is a also a body of work that suggests that most American Muslims see their identities as being integrated rather than parallel or conflictual, though the research has focused only on specific sub communities (Sirin et al. 2008; McCloud 1995). As such, my study of the relationship between religious identity and social attitudes and behaviors tests the integration paradigm by considering how religious identity is intertwined with two alternative elements of personal identity: racial identity and civic identity.

Racial identity is a focus because previous research on both religion and ethnic assimilation suggests that racial identity is strongly intertwined with religious identity (Greeley 1972; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). Qualitative studies of American Muslim communities have uncovered similar patterns. The literature on Muslims in the United States suggests that the practice of Islam by immigrants and their children is influenced by the cultural norms of sending countries; thus, it remains distinctive in many ways from that of African-American, Hispanic, and Caucasian indigenous American Muslims (Leonard 2003). The literature also recognizes cultural similarity among Muslims of South Asian heritage as compared with those of Arab

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heritage and with indigenous Muslims (Mattson 2003; Leonard 2003). For example, previous research found that Arabs have higher levels of religious ritual involvement than other ethnic groups within the American Muslim population (Jana-Masri and Priester 2007).

This intertwining of religion and ethnicity can also be seen in the relative ethnic homogeneity of many mosques and national religious organizations, even though these organizations are almost always ethnically neutral in principle. African-American Muslim leaders are often imbedded in the norms and assumptions which have historically governed black churches (Jackson 2005), and they are often concerned with issues of class and urban community development which do not directly affect immigrants. In contrast, immigrant leaders often attempt to link abstract religious beliefs to behavior in ways that worked overseas but can be difficult to translate to an American context with its very different non-religious assumptions. Because of this tension between context and abstract belief, second generation immigrants to Western countries often rebel against their parents' conception of Islam (Roy 2004; Chaudhury and Miller 2008).

Civic identity is included because the central focus of my study is on a single civic identity category (American), and though this category is complex (as are most identity categories), a brief detour into exploring the ways in which American civic identity is infused with religious meaning is helpful in putting the rest of the dissertation's findings into larger context. In addition, the way in which civic identity influences the link between abstract beliefs and social attitudes and behaviors has been explicitly addressed by theologians who have worked to develop revised Islamic precepts for the American context (sometimes called the *fiqh* of minorities), which explicitly takes into account the changes in underlying non-religious assumptions that the American context entails (Al-Alwani 2004).

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Conclusion

The intersection, overlap, and competition among collective identities highlight the need to look beyond theological belief orthodoxy to understand the behavior of members of religious groups. This chapter offers a framework for analysis which recognizes the fact that, in addition to individual belief orthodoxy, group commitment and ostensibly non-religious identity claims can also influence the relationship between religious identity and social attitudes and behaviors. Individuals can be influenced by group commitments as well as the infusion of religion into ethnic and civic identities, regardless of their self-understanding of the orthodox theological beliefs of the group.

Further, if collective identities are studied only in isolation - religious groups on the basis of individual self-understanding, ethnic groups on the basis of group commitments, etc. – then it is difficult to analyze how these identities interact. By bringing these aspects of collective identity together in a single framework, it is possible to understand both when and how collective identity is relevant for social action. This chapter suggests that failure to look at religious group membership in a holistic fashion is one reason why religious identity has been found to be such an unreliable predictor of social attitudes and behavior.

The following chapters build upon this holistic framework to develop multi-dimensional measures of belief orthodoxy and group commitment which take into account alternative identities. The models are developed using a combination of survey data, semi-structured interviews, and life-histories. The chapters will also measure a range of social attitudes and behaviors which are assumed to be related to Muslim identity. In some cases, such as views on terrorism and al-Qaeda, the connection is frequently made by academics and the media. In the case of other attitudes toward other social behaviors, such as views on recycling, the connection

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is made by my respondents. Separate chapters will attempt to shed light on the ways in which these attitudes and behaviors are related to the core theological beliefs of the American Muslim community, the pressures that group commitment places on group members, and the way in which religious identity interacts with civic and ethnic identity. Thus, each chapter will not only increase our understanding of this understudied community but also develop measures of these key factors for use in more comprehensive analysis.

Using American Muslims to explore the various aspects of group identity is particularly fruitful due to their specific social context. Self-understanding and group commitment always represent analytically distinct aspects of group identity; however, they are often co-present to a great degree. When they are too strongly co-present, or when very strong mechanisms for social control are in place, it becomes very difficult to disentangle different components of collective identity. For example, in a context where sanctions are in place for failure to attend religious services or to profess belief in God, it would be difficult to identify individuals who reject orthodox theological beliefs but are committed to the religious community. In addition, even when belief orthodoxy can be distinguished from group commitment, if the group members themselves are unaware of this relationship between identity and their social attitudes, it is more difficult to analyze them. This would be the case for American Whites, who are often unaware of the implications that identity group membership has for them (Waters 1990).

The case of American Muslims overcomes all of these obstacles. The American context offers only relatively weak mechanisms for religious groups to exert social control, resulting in a highly contested relationship between the various aspects of religious group identity as well as a great deal of individual freedom. In addition, previous research on American Muslims has shown that there are patterns linking religious identification with both group commitment and ethnic

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identity. Finally, the minority status of Muslims in the U.S. and the scrutiny that the group receives work together to make it highly unlikely that American Muslims will be unaware of their collective identity.

Furthermore, if one accepts Ann Swidler's idea that abstract beliefs are likely to have stronger public consequences during unsettled times, then the American Muslim case is currently one in which self-understanding and abstract beliefs are likely to be influential. The contemporary American Muslim community – made up primarily of first generation immigrants and of native-born Americans who converted from another religion – is very much in a state of flux. This situation forces Muslims (individually and collectively) to actively engage in reconciling their religious identities with other salient identity requirements. Taken together, these factors make the American Muslim community an especially promising group to study in order to understand the relationship between various aspects of identity group membership.

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Chapter 3: Data Sources and Methods of Analysis

The previous chapters described the project's overall purpose in exploring the public consequences of religious identity for American Muslims. In order to create a more complete picture of religious identity, I look at three distinct aspects of religious identity: religious belief orthodoxy, religious group commitment, and the infusion of religious norms into non-religious life.

This chapter begins the process of explaining how I am exploring the public consequences of religious identity for American Muslims. In order to understand this relationship, two key difficulties must be overcome: the complexity of religious identity generally, and the diversity of the American Muslim community specifically. I address these issues by using a mixed-methods approach that combines the results of a high quality national survey with rich interviews.

I begin this chapter by explaining how and why I decided to use the 2007 Pew survey of American Muslims as the source for my quantitative data. I then describe the method by which I selected respondents for the qualitative portion of my study. Finally, I explain how the interviews and statistical analysis was conducted.

Data Sources

Survey Data

Rather than focusing on a specific community, this dissertation attempts to capture the diversity of American Muslims both in religious identity and in social attitudes and behaviors. I accomplish this primarily through the use of the national survey of American Muslims conducted

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in 2007 by the Pew Research Center (Pew 2007). The Pew survey was selected because it was the only nationally representative survey of American Muslims which addressed a wide range of issues of religious identity as well as a variety of social attitudes.

Though there are a number of national surveys which ask questions about religion, American Muslims generally appears as less than 1% of respondents to these surveys. This means that most general surveys have only a handful of American Muslim respondents. Therefore, a survey focused specifically on American Muslims was necessary to understand the diversity of Muslims in the U.S. I had to select from merely three national surveys of American Muslim individuals. The first and second waves of the Muslim Americans in the Public Sphere data (MAPS 2001 and MAPS 2004) were not selected because they have too few questions addressing the religious belief orthodoxy and ritual orthopraxy aspects of religious identity. The Gallup survey released in 2009 also has relatively few questions addressing the various dimensions of religious identity. In addition, the raw data from the Gallup survey had not yet been made available to the public at the time when my analysis was undertaken. This left the 2007 survey done by the Pew center as the most comprehensive option.

The Pew survey has a number of traits to recommend it. It consists of 1050 respondents selected through a combination of phone calls to randomly generated phone numbers (RDD), calling individuals with names which are common among Muslims, and contacting individuals who had been identified as Muslim in previous Pew surveys. It was done in four languages, English, Arabic, Urdu, and Persian. The Pew survey of American Muslims was also preferable for comparing the data on American Muslims to the national data on all Americans because the Pew Forum has conducted comparable surveys targeting non-Muslim Americans.

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If I had focused my study on religious organizations, rather than religious individuals, then I could have considered the national mosque survey conducted by the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR); however, a survey of organizations is problematic for two reasons. First, the study would then be unable to address those Muslims who are not affiliated with organizations. In the case of the national mosque survey, this would mean restricting my analysis only to mosque-attending Muslims. Though mosque attendance is certainly a part of religious commitment, 18% of American Muslims never attend the mosque, and another 16% attend less than a few times a year (Pew 2007). These unmosqued Muslims constitute an important element of the diversity of Muslims in the U.S.

More generally, a focus on individuals rather than institutions, whether through surveys or through archival data, makes it possible to understand not only the "official" position on various issues, but also how individuals actually internalize the ideas. A focus on individuals is more helpful in understanding the impact of religious identity (the focus of my study) as distinct from the development of identity (where institutions are likely to play a larger role). For example, the government of Saudi Arabia sends (or used to send) a large amount of Islamic literature to the U.S. and has helped to finance the construction of many mosques here, but how much the Saudi government spends on influencing Islam in America does not necessarily tell us how successful the efforts are. In spending money on Islam in America, the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs is trying to shape religious belief orthodoxy, encourage ritual practice, influence daily life, and foster a sense of global community. How successful that effort is cannot be measured by counting Qur'ans or dollars sent but rather by looking for the imprint of Saudi doctrine on American Muslims.

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Studying domestic organizations would be more useful in some ways. One reason is that the presence and strength (in terms of dollars and manpower) of institutions such as Islamic schools can tell us something about the level of commitment among American Muslims to an Islamic identity. In addition, the views expressed by domestic Islamic organizations are a part of American Islam. Despite these two facts, looking at what these institutions claim to be doing or how much they are investing in their effort does not tell us much about what is happening on the ground. For example, the *Muslim Journal* claims, "Every political and social issue that can impact the life of the Muslim as well as that of his fellow man, is an issue that can be addressed from a Muslim perspective in the *Muslim Journal*"; however, the journal's African-American roots (and constituency) are obvious both in the topics that it addresses and in the language it uses to address them. For example, it has addressed issues like the death penalty and credit card debt, and done so without reference to Islamic theological discourses on either of these issues (Mohamed 2002). Their claim to be the voice of American Islam and their decision to tackle these issues neither demonstrates that the death penalty is an issue of particular importance for American Islam as such, nor even for its readers. It does not even tell us if its *readers* internalize the advice being given. Ultimately, learning the goals of these institutions and the resources they devote tells us little about how effective these institutions actually are.

Although the national survey of Muslims in America conducted by the Pew Center offers the best available national data for my research, no survey is perfect. Below is a discussion of the limitations of the survey as well as some thoughts on how those problems could be addressed. Problems with the Pew survey fall into two categories: problems with survey questions and problems with the data collection process. Though both sets of issues can cause significant

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problems, I believe I have adequately addressed them where possible. Where the problems were insurmountable, I highlight the limitations of my analysis.

The major limitation of the survey questions has to do with the fact that certain questions were phrased in a way that made interpretation difficult. This issue is one of the central reasons why a mixed methods approach is necessary, as interviews had to be conducted to determine what the questions were actually measuring. A related difficulty had to do with certain questions which had very high item non-response. For example, when asked whether Muslims coming to the U.S. should adopt American customs or remain distinct, 31% of respondents choose neither answer. Disregarding these responses is likely to bias the analysis quite severely, since non-responses at this level are almost never missing completely at random (MCAR). Instead of dropping nearly one-third of the responses, I was able to use the cognitive interviews to understand the reasons for non-response and include them in my analysis. I have addressed this issue extensively, such as when, in chapter 7, I analyze the relationships between religious and civic identity.

A second important limitation to the data is in regard to the measurement of race and ethnicity. The Pew survey asks respondents to identify their race as Black, White, or Asian. Ethnicity is not asked directly, but rather had to be constructed from available information. Specifically, respondents were asked their country of origin, and the country of origin of their parents. For reasons of deductive disclosure, country of origin was reported only in categories (Arab, African, etc.). I used these categories to denote ethnicity for respondents who were born in another country. For respondents born in the U.S., the survey also asked for the country of origin for the respondents' parents, and reported associated categories. In these cases, the parents' ethnicity was used as the respondent's ethnicity. For respondents whose parents were

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born in the U.S., the survey reported only race, and so their ethnicity was coded as either Black or White (respondents were also able to identify as "Asian"; however, all respondents who did so were either first or second generation immigrants). This left all respondents grouped into one of 9 "ethnic" categories: Black, White, Arab, South Asian, African, European, other immigrant, or other non-immigrant. This decision to use an ethnic description for respondents who were either first or second generation immigrants and a racial description for respondents who have longer roots in the U.S. would be problematic for some populations, yet historical records make it clear that very few Muslim immigrants arrived in the U.S. before 1965, so most respondents whose parents were born in the U.S. have fairly long histories in this country.

Other difficulties regarding the survey are not tied to the individual questions, but to the extent to which it can be generalized from the respondents to the general population of American Muslims. Surveys are intended to generalize beyond the respondents to similar people. Two systematic limitations in the survey design prevent the data from the Pew survey from generalizing to all American Muslims. The first is that none of the data sources include institutionalized populations (for example, prisoners and mental patients). This is a common limitation, since studies have shown that Muslim prisoners have a distinctive profile, being more likely to be both African-American and more ritually observant than the general Muslim population (Ammar, Weaver, and Saxon 2004). The second is that the surveys were all done on landlines. While this is a common problem for surveys, a later study found that American Muslims were disproportionately likely to have only a cellular phone (Pew 2008). These two problems do not invalidate the survey, but they do mean that the survey cannot be assumed to describe institutionalized populations or American Muslims who have a cellular phone but no

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landline. Using this survey, it is neither possible to describe the characteristics of these two populations nor to identify the ways in which they are distinctive.

The complex sampling procedure that the Pew Center employed must also be reviewed, because parts of it violate some of the mathematical assumptions underpinning survey design. The Pew Research Center did a national landline telephone survey. Three sampling sources were used: a geographically stratified random digit dial (RDD) sample of the general public, a commercial database, and a re-contact sample of English-speaking Muslim households.

For the RDD sample, 57,549 households were screened to yield 354 completed interviews with Muslim respondents. The RDD frame was divided into four geographic strata, based on the estimated density of Muslims living in the area. The respondents were sampled disproportionately, with more drawn from areas with a higher predicted concentration of Muslims. The responses were then re-weighted to account for this sampling strategy.

The commercial list, prepared by Experian, consisted of approximately 450,000 households believed to include Muslims based on an analysis of first and last names common to Muslims. From this list, 533 survey respondents were selected randomly. Clearly, identification of Muslims by name is problematic, especially given the relatively high portion of Muslims living in the U.S. that were born to non-Muslim parents. Fortunately, this sample overlapped the RDD sample. This made it was possible to calculate sample weights for respondents from the list as well.

Finally, 796 households which previous surveys by either the Pew Research Center or by their partners, Princeton Survey Research Associates International and SRBI, were included in the survey. This sample source resulted in 163 completed interviews. These surveys were all

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done in either English or Spanish; however, sampling weights were again used to integrate these responses into the larger whole.

In practice, the assumptions of statistical generalization are always violated to some degree; however, the structure of the survey response significantly reduces the statistical power of the analysis. Though 1050 respondents would generally allow for very strong statistical assertions, the fact that 533 of the respondents were selected from a commercial list reduces the statistical power by about half. Further, though it has been shown that the combination of a RDD sample with the re-contact list offers a generally valid statistical sample (Waksberg 1978), the combination places the calculation of standard errors beyond the capabilities of most commercially available statistics packages. This also made it impossible to use Akaike Information Criteria or Bayesian Information Criteria in selecting a confirmatory factor model.

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Interview Respondent Selection

Table 3.1: Respondent Demographic Information

Resp.	Gender	Convert	Ethnicity	Generation	Age	Education	religiosity
1	F	N	African American	N/A	30s	M.D.	High
2	M	N	South Asian	2	30s	College	Low
3	M	N	Arab	2	20s	H.S.	High
4	F	N	Arab	1	40s	Masters	High
5	M	N	South Asian	2	30s	Ph.D	Low
6	M	Y	Caucasian	N/A	20s	B.A.	High
7	F	Y	African American	N/A	60s	Ph.D	High
8	M	Y	African American	N/A	60s	M.A.	High
9	F	N	Arab	2	30s	College	High
10	F	N	South Asian	2	20s	College	Low
13	M	N	Arab	2	20s	H.S.	Low
14	M	N	African American	N/A	30s	J.D.	Low
18	M	N	South Asian	1	40s	M.D.	High
20	F	N	South Asian	1	40s	M.A.	High
21	M	N	South Asian	1	40s	College	High
22	M	N	Arab	1	50s	College	High
23	M	N	Bosnian	1	40s	M.D.	Low
24	M	N	African American	N/A	40s	H.S.	High
25	M	N	South Asian	1	60s	College	High

In addition to the use of survey data to get a broad sample of the American Muslim community, I selected interview respondents in a way that maximized the diversity of the

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population. The 19 interview participants are not statistically representative of the American Muslim population in the way that the 1050 survey respondents are. The interviews participants were selected on the basis of a number of theoretically salient categories in order to offer a broad cross-section of the American Muslims community. Table 3.1 lists information on gender, religious switching, ethnicity, immigrant generation, age, education, and level of religiosity for all 19 respondents. All of this demographic data, with the exception of religiosity, is self-reported. Religiosity is my composite assessment of the respondent's level of ritual involvement and the orthodoxy of the respondents theological beliefs.

Respondents were recruited from Chicago and the surrounding suburbs for the interviews. They were recruited through snowball samples which began with mosques and Muslims known to me personally. The initial respondents were asked to refer other respondents, who in turn were asked to refer others. Respondents which maximize the range of variation within the sample were sought out.

This method of recruiting was also intended to help the respondents feel comfortable speaking frankly, rather than altering their responses to give a politically correct answer. The decision to recruit respondents in a way that made the respondents feel comfortable with me was validated throughout the interview process. I received the starkest evidence for the need to have community validation during a particularly short interview I conducted toward the end of my field research. The respondent, an immigrant from South Asia, spent most of the interview reiterating that "the word Islam itself means peace"[1] in various ways. Though by this time I had completed nearly two dozen interviews and was quite comfortable with the interview protocol, I had a great deal of difficulty getting him to move off of his message and to the substance of my

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[1] A point which is not actually correct lexically.

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questions. At the end of the interview I realized that the respondent, who was referred to me by someone who was herself referred to me by someone I had only met twice, had forgotten how I had gotten his contact information. This experience reinforced my concern that lack of interviewer trust has the potential to significantly bias any study of American Muslims which does not rely on referrals and endorsements.

Modes of Analysis

In-depth Interviews

Rather than relying on my own preconceived idea about what religious identity is for American Muslims, I conducted in-depth interviews with 19 respondents. The interviews were designed to allow respondents to explain, in their own terms, what religious identity is and what, if any, public consequences they feel it has. These interviews were done in two waves. The first set of 9 interviews was done in conjunction with the Chicago Muslims, In Their Own Voices project (IRB project H08008, approved from 9/2008 to 9/2009). The second set of 14 interviews included 4 of the respondents that were interviewed for the Chicago Muslims project, as well as 10 new Chicago area respondents (IRB project 10056, approved from 3/2010 to 3/2011). The interviews varied widely in length, ranging from 30 minutes to three hours.

Allowing the respondents the opportunity to describe religious identity in their own terms proved to be especially helpful in exploring the extent to which religious identity was intertwined with other collective identities. For example, it became clear, very early in the project, that race/ethnicity is strongly correlated with many of the social attitudes under consideration; however, its relevance to a study of religious identity was only clear once the interviews were

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analyzed and a pattern emerged in which respondents often spoke about their racial and ethnic identities as being informed by their religious beliefs.

In fact, the in-depth interviews played an important role in determining which collective identities were analyzed. While, in the abstract, it is clear that religious identity may be implicated in a wide range of alternate identities, including race, gender, immigrant status, and civic identity, no one study can explore all of these possible implications. As a result, I intentionally selected racial identity and civic identity because they were recurring themes in my interviews and because there is a body of literature which suggests that they are intertwined with religious identity in other contexts.

Cognitive Interviews

The use of a statistical technique like factor analysis assumes that we can be confident in our understanding of what the variables being analyzed are actually measuring. Responses to survey questions always tell us something; however, in order for the responses to be useful, we have to understand specifically what that something is.

My knowledge of Islamic theology and religious practices led me to suspect that some of the variables which were intended to measure parallel constructs among Muslims and Christians did not do so. Despite the fact that focus groups and pre-tests were conducted by the Pew Forum, a number of the questions are worded such that they may not be understood in the same way by Muslims as by the larger population. In order to test my suspicions, I performed cognitive interviews on the problematic questions.

Cognitive interviews consist of respondents answering closed coded survey questions, but they are then provided an opportunity to expand upon their answers in an open-ended way. For example, a respondent would be asked, “How concerned, if at all, are you about the rise of

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Islamic extremism around the world these days? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about the rise of Islamic extremism around the world these days?" After the respondent selects an answer, he or she would be asked to expand on the short (close coded) response. By conducting the cognitive interviews after the open-ended questions, I increased my chances of developing a rapport with the respondents as well as helped to accustom the respondents to giving open-ended answers to questions.

The cognitive interviews uncovered multiple problems with the survey questions. For example, the survey asks about prayer frequency, but the interviews showed that when Muslims speak about "prayer," they generally refer to the structured practice which is prescribed five times a day, not the spontaneous supplications that Christian respondents might have assumed. My interviews found that even non-Arabic speaking Muslims generally refer to spontaneous supplications using the Arabic term *duah*, a category of worship which was not well measured by this survey.

Other questions were ambiguous because they actually asked more than one thing at a time, and so it is difficult to know which aspect of the question a respondent was trying to answer. For example, a single question asked about "violence against civilians" (which could be interpreted to apply to issues ranging from collateral casualties to the use of human shields), "suicide bombings" (which can be directed against civilian or military targets), and violence "in defense of Islam." The cognitive interviews made it clear that most respondents focused on the "violence against civilians" aspect of the question, going so far as to draw parallels to the bombing of Japan in World War II and the concept of collateral casualties. It is only by conducting cognitive interviews that it is possible to put the responses to this question in context

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(as I pointed out in the introduction, American Muslims are less supportive of violence against civilians than the general public).

In order to explore this complexity in my survey data, I attached a short cognitive interview to each of the 14 interviews that I conducted during the second wave. This offered me an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the survey question responses that were the most likely to be subject to dispute or misinterpretation. As such, cognitive interviews offered further insight into which questions resonated with American Muslims and which veered off into irrelevancy. Thus, the interviews were instrumental in determining the constructs and categories that pertain to the religious identity of American Muslims.

Factor Analysis

Though the perspective of lay believers on their religious identity is valuable, relying exclusively on native categories has its own pitfalls. For one thing, people have notoriously bad insight into the reasons for their own actions (Nisbett and Wilson 1977). In addition, though little of the existing social science literature on religion addresses Muslims in the U.S., it seems reasonable to expect some similarities between them and the Christian populations upon which much of the existing research has been done. Even in cases where American Muslims are distinctive, bringing research on Muslims into dialogue with the larger body of research on religiosity is valuable for both enterprises, a point I discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

Previous research in the sociology of religion demonstrates that religious identity is a complex phenomenon which consists of multiple aspects. Scholars have mapped out these dimensions of religiosity using sophisticated models (See Hill and Ralph W. Hood 1999 for an overview of the work done on measuring religiosity). Existing models of religiosity distinguish between religious beliefs, ritual practices, transcendent experiences that are viewed as religious,

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etc. The most nuanced of these models recognize both the extent to which the various dimensions of religiosity are distinct and also the fact that they collectively represent an individual's religious identity. These dimensions of religiosity have been mapped in some detail for Christian populations in the West but not for American Muslims on a national scale.

In this project, I test the extent to which categories that are commonly used to understand religious identity are actually meaningful for American Muslims by using confirmatory factor analysis. Using factor analysis makes it possible to identify patterns relating observed variables to each other. This allows me to determine the extent to which the religious identity of American Muslims aligns with the dimensions of religiosity found in previous literature. Factor analysis is appropriate when the researcher suspects that the observed variables are driven not only by issues specific to any individual question but also by more general underlying patterns (factors). In the same way that multiple exam questions are combined by instructors to arrive at a single score to describe a student's mastery of the subject matter, dozens of questions describing religious beliefs or practices can be combined into a handful of religiosity factors.

Factor analysis is most useful when the respondents either do not have conscious access to the underlying factor of interest or are not likely to describe that factor accurately. Just as instructors rarely base grading on a student's self-reported mastery, researchers must be very cautious when determining religiosity based on self-reports. People who are well above average in terms of both belief orthodoxy and ritual practice have been shown to under-report their own religiosity because they set a higher bar for themselves than those that are objectively less religious (Huntington, Fronk, and Chadwick 2001). In addition, people's desire to give the "right" answer often leads them to over- or under-report religiosity. Factor analysis gives us a

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tool to address these problems. The underlying assumption is that asking multiple questions gives a more complete picture than any single question can.

Factor analysis can be either exploratory or confirmatory. Exploratory factor analysis is generally used when a researcher has little guidance about which indicator variables are related to which underlying factors. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used to test relationships that are suggested by the literature. Because previous research on the religiosity of Christians gives us a strong starting point regarding the religiosity of American Muslims, CFA is the method utilized in this dissertation.

In this project, I tested all of the confirmatory factor models using LISREL 8.8. Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML). The presence of missing data recommended the use of a method of full information estimation in order to avoid removing all cases with missing data from the analysis. Because the data was weighted, in order to account for the complex sampling method used by the Pew survey, LISREL was only able to apply maximum likelihood estimation methods. As a result of using maximum likelihood estimation, rather than diagonally weighted least squares estimation, polychoric correlations were not applied despite the presence of ordinal data.

One unfortunate, but not surprising, problem with the dataset is the lack of an approximately normal distribution. For a number of variables, there is a high degree of skew towards religious orthodoxy. Fortunately, statistical simulations suggest that analysis of categorical data with high degrees of skew tends to inflate the value of the Chi-Squared fit statistic (Finney and DiStefano 2006). This implies that any models which appear to fit the data we are analyzing here are likely to fit a dataset with normally distributed, continuous variables even better. All of this suggests that Confirmatory Factor Analysis is a useful tool for testing the

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extent to which pre-existing models of religious commitment can be applied to American Muslims.

Summary

By using a combination of high quality survey data and in-depth interviews, my dissertation successfully describes much of the breadth and depth of American Muslim religiosity. Though there are some subpopulations which are not represented by the data, the vast majority of American Muslims, across all of the major racial subgroups and across the full spectrum of levels of orthodoxy, are represented. The use of survey data makes it possible to review data from over 1,000 American Muslims from all walks of life. I address the complexity of religious identity by allowing American Muslims to describe religious identity in their own words during in-depth interviews. I then test the extent to which existing ways of understanding religiosity apply to American Muslims with a set of confirmatory factor models. Finally, through the analysis of cognitive interviews, I demonstrate what the survey questions used in my study are really measuring.

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Chapter 4: Measuring Religious Identity

> [A] way to measure differential commitment to religion would do more than simply satisfy curiosity. It is a prerequisite to moving on to more compelling questions of what are the sources and the consequences of individual religiosity both for individuals and society. (Glock 1962: 98)

This chapter lays out a classical model of religious commitment, adapted to the American Muslim population. As the last chapter highlighted, there is reason to doubt that such a model will be sufficient to capture the full range of lived religion as it influences social attitudes. Despite this fact, the previous work on religiosity offers a valuable starting point for research on American Muslims. In addition, adapting existing models of religiosity to American Muslims can both highlight the points of intersection between this work and previous work on religiosity as well as show the limitations of the previous work.

Over the last four decades, scholars studying religion have come to a virtual consensus that religious commitment, or religiosity, is most accurately measured using multiple dimensions. Scholars have found evidence for this dimensionality primarily through their development of "general purpose" measures of religiosity. As the field has matured, however, scholars have recognized that these "general" measures have been developed and tested almost exclusively on Christianity in either the United States or Western Europe. Subsequent attempts to apply these early measures to non-western and non-Christian populations were largely unsuccessful, which led scholars to recognize the need for more specialized measures, ones that take into account the unique aspects of the population being studied (Hill and Pargament 2003). Though some scholars have conducted religiosity research on Islam in Muslim majority countries (e.g. Tezcur and Azadarmaki 2008), few scholars have explored the dimensionality of

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religious commitment among American Muslims (for a recent, small scale, example see Jana-Masri and Priester 2007).

By revising the classical model of religiosity for use on American Muslims, this chapter attempts to move forward the process of untangling the dimensionality of religious commitment. As I explain in the previous chapter, it relies on a combination of data from the 2007 Pew survey and in-depth interviews of American Muslims. This chapter begins with a review of the literature on measuring religiosity. It then discusses what indicators of religiosity are likely to be applicable to American Muslims. It shows both how various aspects of religiosity have been addressed in classical Islamic theological sources and the extent to which these theological positions continue to resonate with the American Muslim laity. Having identified a set of indicators, the chapter then goes on to test a number of hierarchically nested models of religiosity on the respondents of the 2007 Pew survey of American Muslims. After determining the best fitting model, the chapter suggests some of the ways in which religiosity is different for American Muslims than for the American Christian populations that this sort of model has typically been used to describe.

Literature Review

A great deal of research has been done regarding the dimensionality of religious commitment. Unfortunately, nearly all of the research which explores how best to characterize religiosity has focused on Christianity in a Western context. Though the stated goal of much of the research is to understand religiosity, it can only be relied upon to describe the Christian populations that make up the bulk of its subjects. While measures of religiosity developed on Christian populations offer a valuable starting point for exploring different populations, their applicability must be tested rather than assumed.

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The need for explicit testing of generality can be seen clearly in some cases. For example, among Muslims, the term "prayer" is generally used to describe a strictly defined, often communal, ritual which is prescribed at five specific times each day. In contrast, Christians often use the term prayer to refer to a spontaneous individual supplication which is only loosely ritualized and is not mandatory. Given this sort of variation, it is quite reasonable to expect that Muslim prayer would be more closely tied to public ritual practices such as church attendance, even though studies of Christian religiosity have found that certain types of prayer are more closely tied to personal belief about the role of God in daily life. As another example, the role of religious knowledge for lay members may vary widely depending on the institutional structure of a given religion or denomination. The correlation to knowledge of Islamic doctrine is therefore not always clear. Scholars have recognized the problem of overgeneralization but are only now beginning to address it (Hill and Ralph W. Hood 1999).

The narrow focus of previous research also complicates the interpretation of findings for Christian populations The congruence fallacy's incorporation of a theological mandate for belief to be expressed in "works" is one example of this (Chaves 2010), since the idea of works as an integral part of religion is common in many multi-dimensional measures of Christian religiosity, despite the fact that there is little psychological reason to assume that beliefs and behaviors should be tightly linked. By studying Islam in America, it is hoped that other such interpretive assumptions will be brought into focus.

Though early scholarship exploring the dimensionality of religion was plagued by attempts to create a comprehensive one-size-fits-all model of the dimension of religiosity, these debates largely faded into the background following the realization that the "one-not-five or the three-not-eleven debates over the number of dimensions of religiosity are primarily a function of

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level of abstraction and the subdivision of dimensions "(DeJong, Faulkner, and Warland 1976: 884). Thus, while not all models of religiosity use the same number of dimensions, they generally recognize similar distinctions (Hill and Ralph W. Hood 1999). Four of the commonly used dimensions which are relevant to my analysis are: religious belief, religious knowledge, public rituals, and private rituals.

Perhaps the best documented aspect of religious dimensionality is the division between ritual practices and religious beliefs (DeJong, Faulkner, and Warland 1976), (Clayton and Gladden 1974), (Meyer, Rizzo, and Ali 1998), (Jana-Masri and Priester 2007; Hill and Ralph W. Hood 1999). In his foundational work, Charles Glock referred to religious beliefs as the "ideological" dimension of religiosity and included within it both the strength of a person's belief as well as the orthodoxy of said beliefs. He contrasted religious belief with the "ritualistic" dimension – which included both public and private religious rituals (Glock 1962).

Another aspect of religiosity which Glock discusses is an individual's relationship with religious knowledge (Glock 1962). Working with Rodney Stark, Glock operationalizes the "intellectual" or "knowledge" dimension by measuring familiarity with Biblical quotation and prophets (Stark and Glock 1968). Other scholars, however, have included non-prophetic religious figures (For example St. Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther in Hilty and Stockman 1986), or attitudes toward the knowledge itself (for example whether the respondents believed the biblical creation story; Bishop et al. 2007).

Stark and Glock touch upon the distinction between public "ritual" and private "devotional" religious practices (Stark and Glock 1968), but it is explored in more detail by Jose Casanova (Casanova 1994). As Casanova points out, there is some ambiguity regarding whether this distinction is most profitably viewed as rooted in the distinction between organized

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congregational forms of religious worship and individual forms, or whether it is more properly considered in light of the distinction between forms of worship which are visibly part of the public sphere as opposed to forms which are invisible. In what follows, I explore the applicability of each of these commonly used aspects of religiosity, including both the visible/invisible and the public/private distinction, for the American Muslim case.

Islamic Religiosity

Islamic theology offers parallels for much of the dimensionality found in classical models of religiosity, though the alignment is imperfect. For nearly all denominations, Islamic theology begins with and builds upon the declaration of faith, or *shahada*. This consists of two beliefs: that there is a unique and transcendent divine being – in Arabic, *Allah* – and that Muhammad, the seventh-century Arabian, was the final prophet and messenger sent from *Allah*. This assertion is the beginning of a chain of Islamic beliefs, known collectively as *aqeeda*. For example, the belief that Muhammad was the final messenger of God is generally taken to imply that the Qur'an (the book Muhammad is said to have presented to the tribes of Arabia) is the final word of God and that it should be followed closely since it originates with God. [1]

The Qur'an itself occupies a dual role as both a symbol of religious faith and a source of religious knowledge. This duality has been reinforced by the maintenance of Arabic as the liturgical language of Islam, even though most Muslims are not Arab. The maintenance of Arabic as the liturgical language has strong theological warrant; just as importantly, American Muslims continue to maintain this tradition. When asked about the Qur'an, respondents who did not understand Arabic often spoke about the value of recitation and memorization in Arabic in addition to the value of reading it in a language they understood. For example, one interview

[1] This belief also derives from Muhammad's identification of the Qur'an as God's final word.

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respondent who did not know Arabic said she often listened to the Qur'an in Arabic "despite the fact that [she didn't] really understand everything." She further explained, "It's still a kind of soothing, calming, relaxing thing to do and it helps you be more on religion and on being a good person." In contrast, when speaking about reading the Qur'an in English, she acknowledged, "It's still relaxing and soothing and reassuring, but I'm getting more specific admonishment and knowledge and reminding in my head when I read it" (1-new).

The Qur'an's role as a source of knowledge includes its role in laying out the Islamic cosmology. In this cosmology, God is all knowing and all powerful, angels exist to fulfill God's will, all people will be judged by God after their death, and this judgment results in either a blissful existence in Heaven or torment in Hell. These aspects of religious belief are talked about in classical Sunni sources, such as Imam Muslim's collection of *hadith*, which quotes that *iman* (religious belief) "is to believe in Allah, his angels, his books, his messengers, and judgment day, and that you affirm the divine decree" (al-Bukhari 1997). In this case also, there is evidence that this theological structure resonates among Muslims. As one example, previous social science research on Islam in Iran has confirmed that various belief indicators tend to be highly correlated with each other and distinct from measures of Muslims' behavior (Tezcur and Azadarmaki 2008).

In addition to beliefs such as those illustrated above, the *shahada* encourages Muslims to follow the practices and prescriptions of Muhammad, since his actions were informed by his close relationship to God. This includes both ritual aspects of his behavior (*ibadat)* as well as dictates related to social attitudes and day-to-day behavior (*muamilat).* The former includes daily prayers (*salah)*, tithing (*zakat)*, fasting (*saum)* in Ramadan, and pilgrimage to Mecca *(hajj),* while the latter encompasses the social attitudes which are the focus of this dissertation, as well

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as such things as the definition of modest dress, appropriate hospitality for guests, and dining etiquette.

Finally, the public declaration of the *shahada* marks the individual as a member of the global Muslim community (*ummah)*. Membership in this community is generally assumed to consist of certain rights over the community (such as protection and access to alms when needed) as well as responsibilities to that community. Thus, the concept of the *ummah* is likely to play an important role in enabling feelings of group solidarity – a point which will be explored in more detail in chapter 6, which treats group commitment.

Though these tenets have historically been widely accepted among Muslim theologians world wide, not all denominations of Islam currently accept them. For example, the Nation of Islam believes that "Allah (God) appeared in the Person of Master W. Fard Muhammad," the founder of the movement (Nation_of_Islam 2011). Most other denominations take this position to be a violation of God's transcendence and/or the finality of Muhammad's prophethood. Another American denomination, the Moorish Science Temple of America, believes that their founder, the Noble Drew Ali, was a prophet. This is also viewed as a violation of the finality of Muhammad's prophethood by other denominations, since Noble Drew Ali lived in the twentieth century. The Moorish Science Temple also maintains its own holy text, the Circle 7 Koran. These denominations are very small however, even in the American context. According to the Pew survey, less than 5% of American Muslims belong to a denomination that does not accept the central tenets outlined above. Even among African-Americans, which form the core of a number of American denominations, less than 13% are members of these minority denominations.

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These core religious tenets – those described in orthodox Islamic theology – often surfaced during in-depth interviews without prompting from the interviewer. In response to a question concerning differences of theological opinion among Muslims, one respondent said:

> There are certain fundamental basic principles like the five pillars: that there's one god, there's angels, there's the Qur'an – it's a holy book; you fast, you pray. Those are main, basic principles that every Muslim should follow. (9-new)

When asked specifically what someone has to believe to be Muslim, another respondent, said:

> You have to believe in the five pillars of Islam. You have to believe in the *shahadatain* [there is only one god and Muhammad is the messenger of God]*,… salah* [prayer] – this is not a pillar but obviously you have to believe in the prophet [Muhammad], the books [the Qur'an, the Bible, the Torah], the angels, that kind of stuff – … *hajj, zakat* [tithing], *saum* [fasting] for Ramadan. (3-new)

Even respondents who either rejected some of these core principles of Islamic religiosity alluded to their canonical nature. For example, in cognitive interviews about whether "the Koran is the word of God," one respondent replied, "I know what I'm supposed to say. I know I'm supposed to say it's the word of God…" (14-new).

Interviews also revealed the fact that a number of respondents organized religiosity into a hierarchy, much as my preceding theological outline suggests. Belief in God and Muhammad are the central aspects, other beliefs are viewed as derived from (and therefore secondary to) these beliefs, and ritual practices are also a distinct, still less important aspect of religiosity. This distinction is alluded to in the previous quote when the respondent lists practices (such as *salah*) with belief in prophets but prefaces his discussion of this practice by acknowledging that "this is not a pillar" (3-new). One respondent explained the structure of religious commitment this way:

> I feel like my belief in God is the most important. That he is a single entity, and all powerful and all knowing and he continues to be in control. That is my overarching belief for everything else… Secondarily - after my belief in Allah - would be Heaven, Hell, Day of Judgment, prophets, angels, scriptures. All of that would be the second tier. And then

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> the third tier would be the mundane ritualistic personification of the religion on a daily basis. So, the prayer and the fasting and the charity and the *hajj*… (1-new)

This understanding – that ritual practices were important but that beliefs formed a distinct, and more important, aspect of religiosity – was common among those interviewed. When asked about important aspects of religious identity, one respondent said, "I didn't always pray, I didn't always fast, I didn't always give charity… I was still Muslim… because I had the belief" (1-new). Another respondent made a similar assertion in abstract terms: "It's more important to believe than to practice and not believe" (9-new). Some respondents seemed to feel that this way of viewing the relationship between belief and behavior was distinctive to Islam. For example, one explained, "Unlike more … structured religions where you have to do this ritual practice at this time in this way in order to be inside the pale of the religion… it is enough for someone to say the *shahada* [the belief that there is only one god and Muhammad is a prophet] for them to be Muslim. And whether or not they do anything else Islamic for the rest of their life or not they're still a Muslim" (5-new). Many of the respondents who were less involved in religious practices took similar positions. They were extremely hesitant to reject the core beliefs outright, but they confidently made declarations such as "I don't really believe in the codified practices or the rituals" (10-new).

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Table 4.1: Religiosity Questions

Q.E1 On average, how often do you attend the mosque or Islamic center for salah (sal-AH) and Jum'ah (joom-AH) prayer?
Q.E2 And outside of salah (sal-AH) and Jum'ah (joom-AH) prayer, do you take part in any other social or religious activities at the mosque or Islamic center?
Q.E3 How important is religion in your life – very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?
Q.E4 Which comes closest to your view? The Koran is the word of God OR The Koran is a book written by men and is not the word of God
Q.E5 And would you say that The Koran is to be taken literally, word for word OR That not everything in the Koran should be taken literally, word for word.
Q.E6 Concerning daily salah (sal-AH) or prayer, do you, in general, pray all five salah daily, make some of the five salah daily, occasionally make salah, only make Eid (EED) prayers, or do you never pray?
Q.E10 Here are a few religious activities…for each one, please tell me if it is important to you or not.
Q.E10 a. Giving charity, or zakat
Q.E10 b. Fasting during Ramadan
Q.E10 c. Undertaking a pilgrimage to Mecca
Q.E10 d. Reading or listening to Koran daily
Q.E11 As I read from a list, please tell me if you believe in each of the things I read. Do you believe, or not?
Q.E11 a. In One God, Allah
Q.E11 b. In the Prophet Muhammad
Q.E11 e. In Day of Judgment
Q.E11 f. In angels

That religiosity consists of distinct dimensions is confirmed not only by both the previous work on religiosity and the perceptions of American Muslims but also by the 2007 Pew survey. In the Pew survey, an overwhelming majority of American Muslims reported that they believe in God and the Prophet Muhammad (96% and 94% respectively). But respondents agreed less on the importance of religious practices like the *hajj* pilgrimage, reading or listening to the Qur'an, and even fulfilling the five-times daily prayer requirement (ranging from 41% of respondents who made all five daily prayers, to 63% who believed that it is very important to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca). There is thus a significant difference between the number of people who identify as Muslim yet reject core theological beliefs and the much larger number who identify

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as Muslim yet reject ritual practices. This disparity indicates a difference in the relative priority of the theological beliefs as compared to the importance of religious practices among American Muslims.

In the in-depth interviews, when talking specifically about belief, many Muslims quoted the five beliefs addressed by the Pew survey (listed in table 4.1) without being prompted. In fact, respondents generally took the existence of a core set of beliefs for granted. When asked what beliefs and ideas stemmed from being Muslim, one person replied: "list them? … It's the same old number everybody got… belief in god, belief in the message of his prophet, belief in the angels, belief in prophets, belief in the books … and the day of judgment" (7-new). Others phrased these same ideas by saying that the "fundamental basic principles" were "one god, angels, Qur'an - holy book" (9-new) or were "Angels, the books, the prophets, God himself… judgment day" (3-new). Similarly, respondents spoke of many of the 8 practices addressed by the Pew survey (listed in table 4.1), though many balked at the characterization of these practices as rituals. This suggests that the Pew survey offers reasonable indicators of religiosity.

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Confirmatory Factor Model Selection

Table 4.2: CFA Model Fit

Model	Chi^2	DF	Normed Chi^2	RMSEA
Base Model	166.09	75	2.21	0.039
Two Factor	135.63	73	1.86	0.033
Three Factor- Knowledge	133.05	72	1.85	0.033
Three Factor - Visible/Invisible	131.51	71	1.85	0.033
Three Factor - Organizational/Non Org.[a]	134.99	72	1.87	0.033

[a] Matrix was not positive definite

Table 4.3: CFA Difference Test

	Chi^2	DF	P value
Two Factor vs. Single Factor Model	30.46	2	0.00
Knowledge Factor vs. Two Factor Model	2.58	1	0.11
Visible/Invisible vs. Two Factor Model	4.12	2	.13
Organizational/Non Org vs Two Factor Model	.64	1	.73

Given the relevance of the Pew survey questions listed in table 4.1 for measuring religiosity, this section uses those indicators to create a model of religiosity for American Muslims. In this section, I test five models of religiosity. First, I combine all the questions about religiosity into a single factor. This model tests whether the various aspects of religiosity measured by this model move in roughly the same direction among American Muslims. This model also creates a baseline against which more precise distinctions can be compared. A second model distinguishes between religious belief and ritual practice. A third model goes further by separating religious knowledge from beliefs and practice. Finally, two models that distinguish between public and private ritual practice are tested. All five models use the same 14 questions as indicators of religiosity. After comparing the value added by each subsequent nested model, I identify the most parsimonious and instructive model of religiosity for the American Muslim population.

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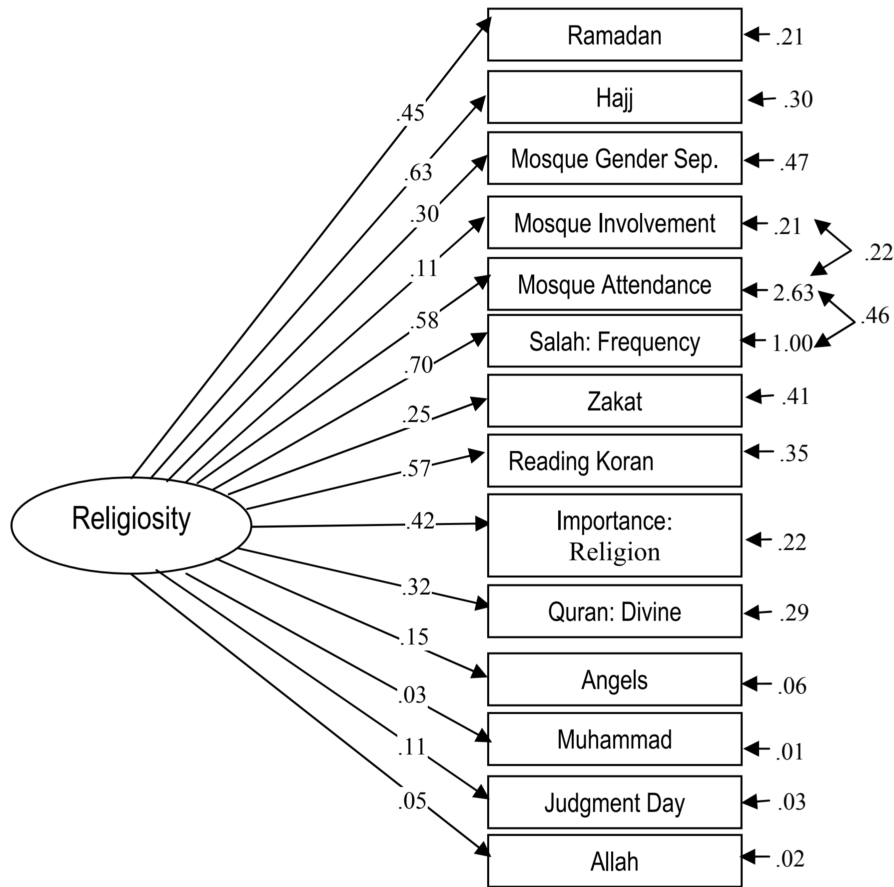
Figure 4.1: Basic Religiosity CFA Model



In order to determine if it is reasonable to consider all of these topics as related to religiosity, I performed a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The CFA model shown in Figure 4.1 makes the assumption that the 14 topics listed are, in large part, driven by a single underlying factor – religiosity. In order to test this assumption I applied three tests: a Chi-squared test, a normed Chi-squared test, and a root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) test. The results of each of these tests can be found in Table 4.2.

I began with the most sensitive of the three tests, the Chi-squared test. The results of this test suggest that, while the responses to the 14 Pew questions might be influenced by religiosity,

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each one is simultaneously influenced by independent issues as well. That is, the Chi-squared value of 166.09 is large enough that we can be quite sure that a single factor does not capture the full variation of all 14 variables (P=0.01); however, this finding does not mean the model is not useful. Collapsing multiple variables into a single underlying variable almost always results in the loss of some information. In this case, the variation that is not captured by a single religiosity measure indicates both that religiosity is multi-dimensional and that some questions may be affected by unrelated or unmeasured issues. For example, the model does not consider how close to a mosque the respondent lives, yet clearly that distance is likely to affect how often they attend religious services. Despite its shortcomings, this Chi-squared value offers a baseline number against which improvements to the model can be tested.

The normed Chi-squared test, found by dividing the Chi-squared value by a measure of model simplicity (the number of degrees of freedom in the model), tests the model while taking into account the fact that the model attempts to represent all 14 of the observed religiosity indicators by a single latent factor. Its value of 2.2 suggests that the model is reasonably accurate, given its level of complexity (Kline 2005: 137).

Like the normed Chi-squared, the RMSEA is a parsimony adjusted index, which means that given two models with similar overall explanatory power, the simpler model will be favored. The RMSEA metrics consist of a point estimate of the model's accuracy on the tested dataset as well as the highest and lowest that the accuracy is actually likely to be, given statistical uncertainty. Any number below .05 suggests an acceptable fit, and I found a point estimate of .033, which is promising. In addition, both the upper and lower boundaries for the estimate are also below .05, which offers increased certainty that the single factor model is a reasonable approximation, due to its level of simplicity.

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The RMSEA and normed Chi-squared take into account the fact that, like averaging and most other statistical techniques, a CFA model is most useful when it concisely describes the aspects of the data which are most relevant to a given research goal, not when it most accurately describes the entire data structure. The fact that both of these tests agree that the model fits the data suggests that, given the level of data compression achieved by the model (all 14 variables are now being subsumed into a single variable), this model represents a reasonable fit of the data.[2] Thus we can claim with some confidence that the aspects of religiosity measured here are all roughly consistent with each other.

[2] Even when both the upper and lower bound of the RMSEA are below .05 it is possible that other test statistics will suggest that a CFA model should be rejected. Unfortunately, many of the commonly used test of CFA models are unavailable for this analysis. This is because they rely on sample size and both FIML and survey design weighting skew the sample size badly. LISREL can only calculate a full array of fit statistics if both missing variable cases are either imputed or excluded and the sample design weights are either ignored or used to manually calculate a weighted covariance matrix. Because the upper and lower bounds of the RMSEA fit statistic fall below the .05 threshold and agree with the normed Chi-Squared value, I felt that the RMSEA and normed Chi-Squared tests were sufficient tests.

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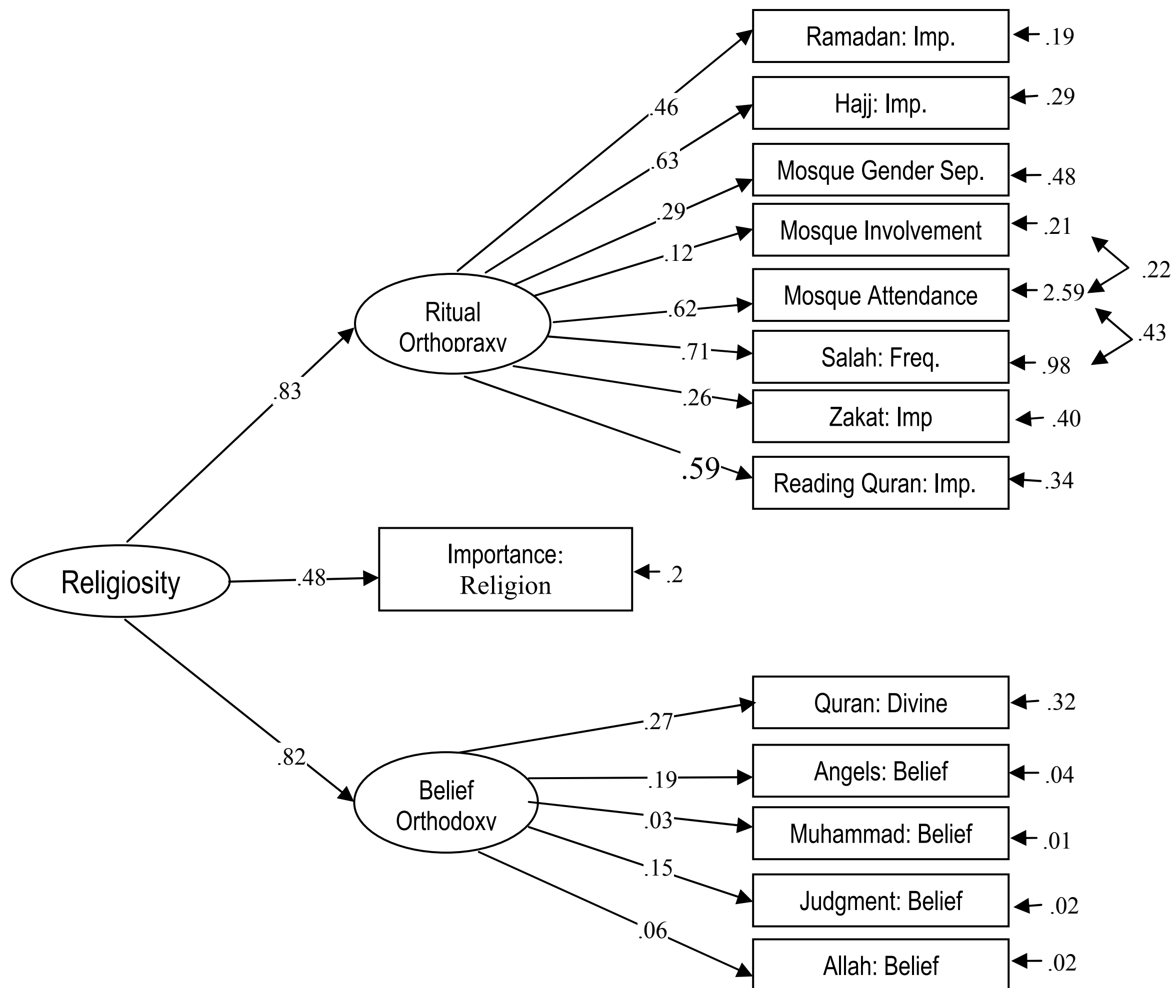
Figure 4.2: CFA Model with Belief/Behavior Split



The preceding analysis suggests that a model which treats all indicators of religiosity as related to each other primarily through a single religiosity factor is not unreasonable. Despite this fact, both the poor absolute fit of the previous model and the pervasive distinction between beliefs and practices made by respondents, the survey data, and previous literature suggest that it is worthwhile to test a more sophisticated model. The next model allows for significant commonality among the various indicators of religious belief as well as commonality among the indicators of ritual practice. If indicators of religious belief can be explained by a common

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factor, if the same is true for indicators of ritual practice, and if these belief and practice factors are themselves aspects of religiosity, a thorough analysis requires a second order model, as seen in figure 4.2.

This model is considered second order because there are factors with indicators that are exclusively observed variables (the Religious Belief and Ritual Behavior factors, which rely upon belief in God, mosque attendance, etc.) alongside a factor which itself relies on latent factors (Religiosity, which is defined as relying upon both Religious Belief and Ritual Behavior factors as well as the importance of religion question). This model tests the idea that, although self-reported importance of religion is directly driven by general religiosity, other indicators, such as frequency of mosque attendance, are more accurately thought of as related to religious belief or religious practice, rather than religiosity as such. In other words, being religious encourages a Muslim to accept an Islamic belief system, and the more strongly one is committed to that belief system generally, the more likely one is to accept the idea, for example, that angels exist.

Table 4.2 shows that this more complex model offers at least a slight improvement over the single factor model, as seen in the RMSEA and Chi-squared values. This outcome was expected because the single factor model is "nested" in this model, in that the simpler model we began with functions as a special case of this second order model. The Chi-squared value for this model is still too high to claim it is an accurate model of the variables, strictly speaking; however, because the models are hierarchically nested, a Chi-squared comparison can determine if the improvement is significant, given the added complexity.

The Chi-squared comparison of the one- and two-dimensional models shows that the added complexity (loss of two "degrees of freedom") does significantly improve the model (P = 0.01).

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In addition, the normed Chi-squared improves. These results imply that a two-dimensional model, which separates religious ritual practices from religious beliefs, gives a significantly more accurate description of American Muslim religiosity than a model which uses a single dimension.

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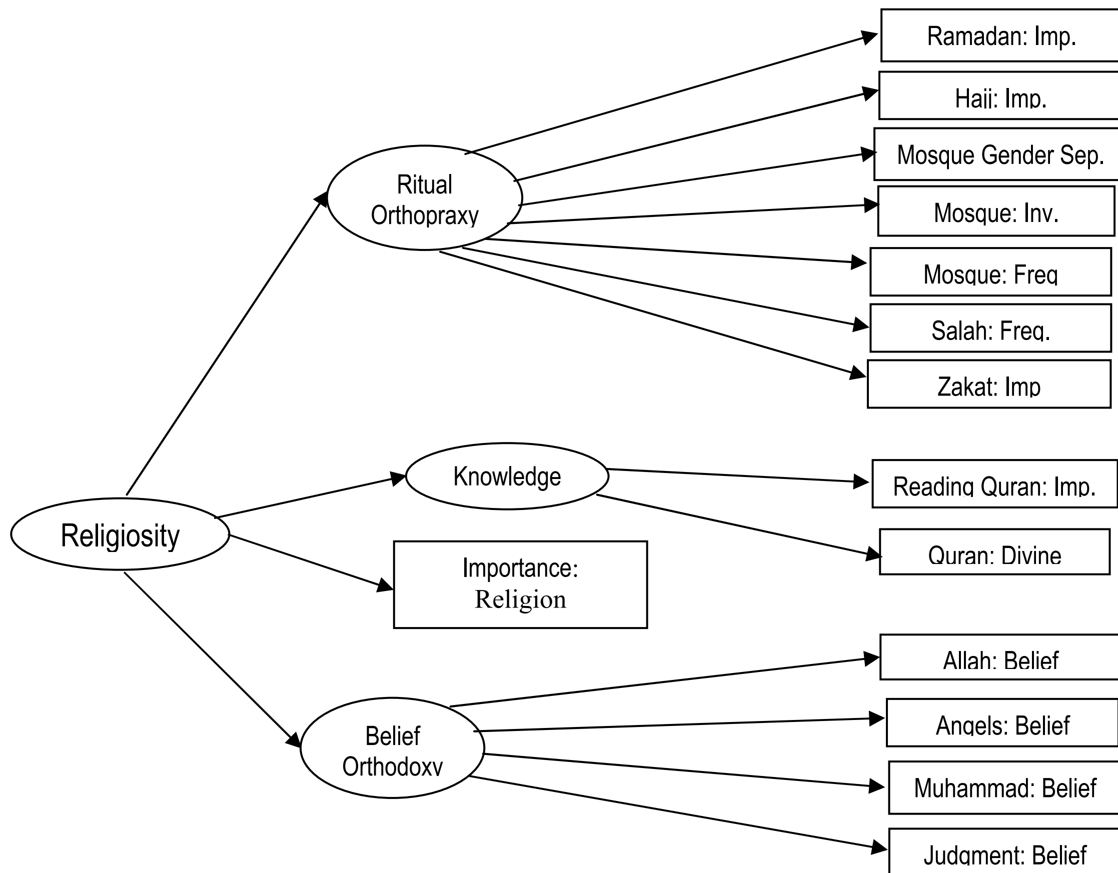
Figure 4.3: CFA Model with Religious Knowledge



In an attempt to further improve the model of religiosity, I next tested a model which treats religious knowledge as a distinct dimension of religiosity. The Pew survey offers three questions which address religious knowledge. The first is a question about the importance of reading the Qur'an, which was formerly included as an indicator of religious behavior. The second and third are questions about the divinity and literalism of the Qur'an, which were formerly used as an indicator of orthodox belief.[3]

[3] Although divinity and literalism are separate topics, and in fact are addressed by two distinct questions in the Pew survey, the question of quranic literalism was only asked of respondents

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As table 4.3 shows, this model also represents an improvement over the base model, as seen in a Chi-squared improvement of 33 with a loss of 3 degrees of freedom. The model does not, however, represent a significant improvement over the two-dimensional model, despite the added complexity (an improvement of 2.5 with a loss of 1 degree of freedom when compared to the two factor model). This implies that the two-dimensional model should be preferred over this three-dimensional model, and that the attempt to divide attitudes toward religious knowledge from religious belief and ritual practice using these questions is unhelpful.

One reason that a distinct religious knowledge dimension does not appear may be the dual role that the Qur'an plays, as both a source of religious knowledge and as an object of ritual practice. In trying to make sense of these findings, it is useful to review what role religious knowledge, as measured by Stark, Glock, and others, plays for Christians. If this dimension is intended to measure understanding, then only the Qur'an's use as a source of knowledge should count. The broadening by later scholars to include non-biblical figures suggests a possible parallel in the *hadith* and the Islamic legal tradition.

One way of interpreting this dimension is to assert that independently acquired religious knowledge should be privileged over that received from an individual in a position of authority. This assertion is, however, problematic for a model of religiosity intended for measuring the relationship between religious identity and social attitudes. It is not at all clear that someone should be considered more religious who knows that "thou shall not steal" is one of the 10 commandments of the Old Testament than someone who knows that their pastor/imam/rabbi told them that stealing is wrong.

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who accepted the premise of quranic divinity. This fact necessitated collapsing the results from the two questions into a single variable.

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An alternative way of integrating the current findings into the larger body of literature on the knowledge dimension of religiosity is to focus not on how the knowledge is acquired but rather on what role the acquired knowledge plays. Some concepts that believers are expected to learn are central to the religion's cosmology (beliefs), others concern the proper way to interact with God (ritual practices), and still others reflect interactions with the world at large (consequences). However, there are certain types of knowledge that act as indicators of religious group membership. There are, for example, Biblical or Qur'anic verses that believers simply expect other believers to recognize. It may be more important for a Christian to know that "the 10 commandments" refers to things that Christians are supposed to do than to be able to recite them.

In fact, this view of the knowledge dimension as consisting of tools for recognition fits well with the existing literature. Nearly half of the respondents in Stark and Glock's original study didn't realize that "Jews believe in the ten commandments," suggesting that they viewed it as a distinctive cultural marker, even though it is in fact part of a shared heritage (Stark and Glock 1968). This view also makes sense of the sharp pattern of difference between certain Biblical verses which most respondents were able to identify (such as, "the meek shall inherit the earth") and others that many were not able to identify ("thou shall not suffer a witch to live," for example).

The shift from focusing on the content of religious knowledge to the role it plays is subtle, yet it has significant implications for any attempt to generalize and replicate findings. For example, the attempts to include attitudes toward the Bible significantly dilutes it as a knowledge indicator (Compare: Bishop et al. 2007; Hilty and Stockman 1986). In the case of the Pew survey, the inclusion of such attitudes had no more than a chance distinction from general

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doctrinal orthodoxy. Perhaps asking a Christian to define a “church home” or a “VBS” (Vacation Bible School) would better identify this non-ritual, non-doctrinal “religious” knowledge than the recognition of Biblical prophets does. Among Muslims, then, the comparable topics would include the myriad Arabic phrases which have found their way into the lexicon of English-speaking Muslims, such as *al-salamu alaikum* as a greeting, or *zakat* rather than tithe, or even the chants that are recited before the holiday *Eid* prayers. This religious language cues listeners to the speaker’s faith. Such religious knowledge, when properly measured, may be an indicator of religious group involvement.

Given these shortcomings, the religious knowledge indicators offered by the Pew survey do not form a distinct dimension of religiosity. Therefore, the models of religiosity utilized in the rest of this dissertation will not include a religious knowledge dimension.

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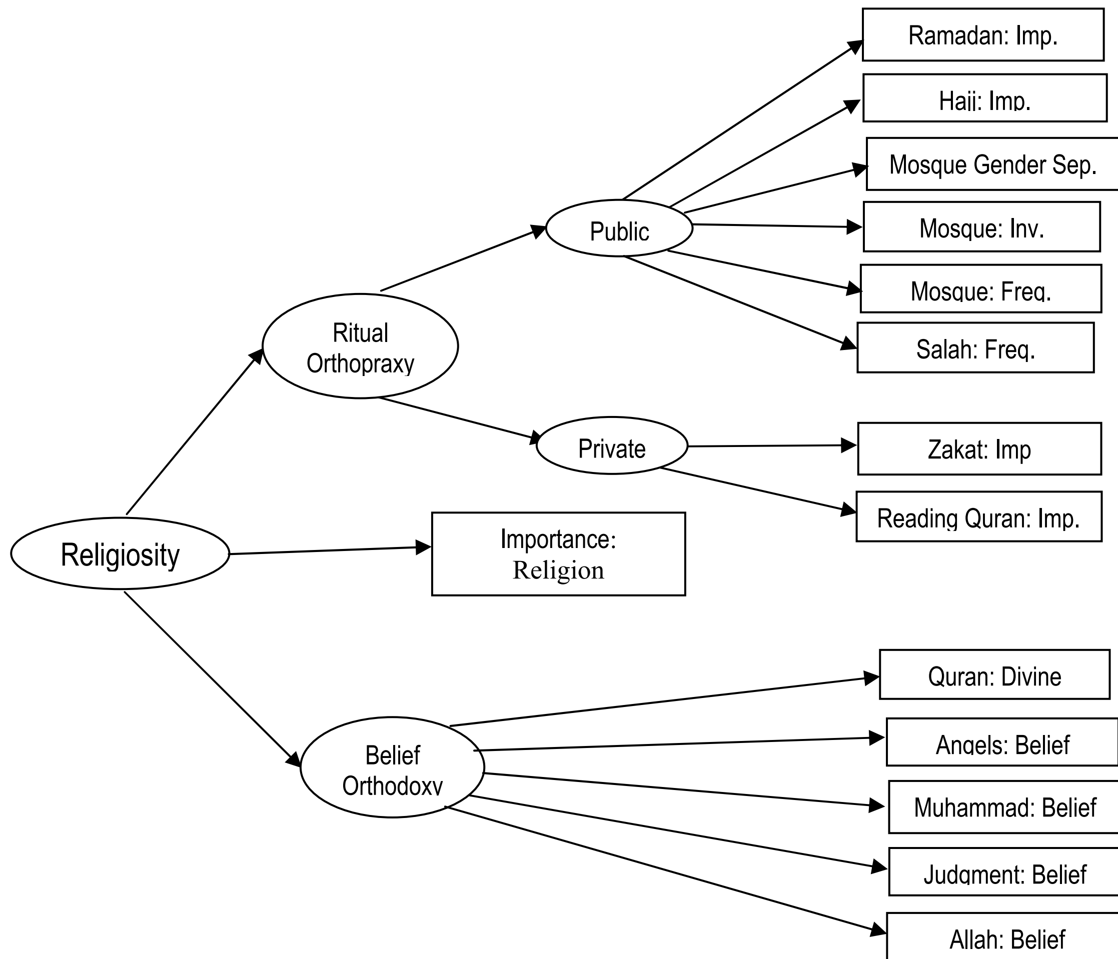
Figure 4.4: CFA Model with Public/Private Distinction



Including Salah as a public ritual is somewhat unorthodox, but I think justifiable logically and the model gives a negative error variance if it's changed.

Another important aspect of religiosity is the separation between public rituals (e.g. church attendance) and private rituals of devotion (e.g. individual prayer). This distinction is highlighted primarily in the sociological literature rather than in Glock's original typology,

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which derives primarily from psychology of religion. Because adding a distinctive knowledge dimension to the model did not significantly improve its fit, the public/private distinction was overlaid on the two-dimensional model.

Unfortunately, there is little consensus on that which actually constitutes the distinction between public and private rituals (Casanova 1994). For this reason, two different ways of organizing public/private rituals are presented here. The first attempt to separate public rituals from private ones focuses on the split between organizational and non-organizational behaviors. Three questions are assumed to be related to organizational behavior, two of which are well documented in previous literature and one of which has little parallel in Christian theology (and therefore in previous literature). The two commonly used indicators of organizational behavior are: frequency of mosque attendance and involvement in other mosque activities. The indicator that is unique to Islam is opinions about where in the mosque women should pray (the answer options that the survey offered were "women should be separate from men, in another area of the mosque or behind a curtain," "women should pray behind men, with no curtain," or "women should pray in an area alongside men, with no curtain." Table 4.3 shows that this model did not improve significantly on the two-dimensional model.

The second method of dividing public and private rituals considers ritual behavior that is invisible to others as private and that which is likely to be visible to others as public. While this distinction still locates church attendance on one end of the spectrum and individual prayer on the other, Islam offers unique challenges when attempting to organize behaviors in this way. For example, prayer is generally viewed as a private act, but Sunni orthodoxy turns prayer into a physical act which is quite obvious to observers and is performed daily at five specific time ranges, not merely whenever it is convenient. This makes it difficult for the behavior to remain

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private for those that spend their days outside of the home. Thus, prayer frequency was considered a public ritual act, leaving only the reading of Qur'an and tithing to be considered as private acts. This revised model still did not improve significantly upon the two-dimensional model, as seen in table 4.3.

The failure to find a strong distinction between public and private religiosity suggests that ritual practice might also be best viewed as an aspect of religious group involvement. This idea is also well supported by interview data. As one respondent explained:

> The ritual of prayer is the individual expression of submitting oneself to God … while it is also a collective binding…
> *Zakat* is a personal thing in that you pay your money and nobody really knows whether you paid enough or not except for you, but it's a public thing in that it is going to the poor members of the community….
> Same with the *hajj*. *Hajj* is private, in that it is done between an individual and God, but it is public in that you're … expressing this with a multiplicity of other people…
> The fast is a personal thing but it is also a public in that you break fast together as a group with other people.
> All of these things mutually reinforce ... the bonds of community. (5-new)

Many respondents seemed to agree with the sentiments outlined above, though they further intimated that the relationship between religious group commitment and ritual practice is not restricted to these abstract ideas. The connection between religious group involvement and ritual practice was additionally characterized by respondents as being grounded in the very concrete sense that group involvement made ritual observance more common and easier. For example, one respondent explained that, while she was very observant of ritual practices, her husband struggled with them, unless he was surrounded by others who were also observing the same rituals: "I'm always wanting that 100% alignment [of belief and behavior]. It's never going to be that case [for him]… It's hard for him to fast Ramadan. He only fasted Ramadan last year because we were in Egypt" (4-new). Similarly, another respondent observed, "It's possible to

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practice and not believe - especially in the Middle East where it's a part of culture, and if you don't [practice] you're completely outcaste" (9-new).

Similar pressures can operate for those American Muslims who have no exposure to Muslim majority countries. One respondent explained that, since moving out of his parents' house, he prayed less: "When I was living with my family they would always tell me 'it's time for prayer' and we would pray… When I started living alone …the disadvantage is that I'm not praying as regularly as I would like to." He went on to say that a similar pattern holds for his attendance at the weekly congregational prayer: "I don't catch all my Friday prayers [in the mosque] as often as I would like to anymore. When I'm with the family it's not an option, I'm always catching it… Sometimes for Friday prayer I need a push … I really need to step that up. I hardly ever go [to the mosque] of my own free will just to go" (13-new). Another respondent, who told me she very rarely prays on her own and was unsure if she believed in God, was similarly influenced to be more ritually observant when around her family: "There's this loft area outside of my bedroom [at my parent's house]. I pray there sometimes. But just knowing that everyone's praying is kind of nice" (10-new). She went on to say that even when she was not at home, Ramadan was a time when she was more ritually involved. When asked the reason for this, she replied, "[B]ecause it's more of a communal thing. My family's fasting and praying, even though I don't live with them I know that they're going through the same thing and all these Muslims everywhere are doing this thing [fasting]" (10-new). Another respondent, who said he has never accepted Islamic beliefs, said that Islamic rituals were always an important part of his life: "We say we're Muslim by birth… I had to observe those holidays with my grandparents. Not had to, but it was a custom kind of thing to wish them well and luck and they would make cakes and give money" (23-new). Neither are the pressures limited only to family members. One

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respondent, when talking about how he interacted with Muslims who don't pray regularly, explained, "If you see him do it often enough, and they are in your circle often enough, then you should address him because it becomes a block and obstacle to the flow of whatever good energies come when people are in agreement and are around each other…" (8-new).

To summarize, it seems likely that ritual practice is an indicator of group commitment, which I discuss in chapter 6. Scholars have found that participation in rituals is likely to increase the affective ties between group members (Durkheim 1995; Collins 2008). In addition, involvement in rituals is likely to increase the degree to which the respondent is connected to the religious community, as Muslims are encouraged to perform many of the rituals collectively.

Discussion

The preceding tests suggest that a second order model which groups religious rituals and religious beliefs as two separate dimensions of religiosity is the best religiosity model supported by the Pew dataset. This finding does not exclude the possibility that religious knowledge or the distinction between public and private rituals represents a distinctive part of the American Muslims religious experience. My findings do, however, highlight the unique relationship that American Muslims have with these aspects of religiosity. Any attempt to explore the dimensions further would have to be sensitive to this distinctiveness. Because such work is currently unavailable, the two-dimensional model will be used in the following chapters to explore the consequences of religiosity on non-ritual behavior.

One, initially surprising, finding regarding the indicator variables is that two of the variables have both low factor loadings and low error variance, implying that the variables contribute little to the model of religiosity but that, after the religiosity model is applied, there is little left to explain. More careful examination shows a valid reason why these loadings are so

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low. The two questions, belief in Allah and belief in Muhammad, make up the *shahada* and are the two defining characteristics of Islamic orthodoxy. Ironically, this centrality renders them largely unhelpful as indicators of religiosity. Less than three percent of the Sunni Muslims who were asked these questions rejected one of these beliefs. This means that the question has little power to distinguish between respondents, which is also what the low factor loading tells us. In addition, very few Sunni Muslims would consider themselves religious -- or, the data suggests, even consider themselves Muslim -- while rejecting these basic tenets, thus explaining the low error variance. The low error variance and low factor loadings should offer, therefore, additional evidence that this model accurately describes the range of religious belief orthodoxy among those surveyed.

There is significant overlap between the findings of this chapter and previous research on Islamic religiosity. Exploratory factor analysis of religiosity data from Iranian Muslim students found three dimensions (Ghorbani 2000). Two of these dimensions – the ritual practice dimension (called "Muslim practices" by the authors) and the religious belief dimension (called "Muslim world view" by the authors) – are the same dimensions found in the above analysis. The third factor found in the study of Iranian Muslims (called "personal help" by the authors) references the consequential dimension of religiosity, which I explore in the next three chapters. Exploratory factor analysis of Muslims in Malaysia also found a distinction between ritual practice (called the "ritual" portion of an "Islamic personality" by the study's authors) and religious belief (called the "spiritual" portion of an "Islamic Worldview" by the authors) (Krauss et al. 2006).

Work that has been done on Muslims in the U.S. has also found support for the distinction between ritual practice and religious belief. For example, Asma Jana-Masri and Paul

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Priester did exploratory work with a small mosque-based sample and identified a distinction between “Islamic belief” and “Behavioral practices,” one that was well supported by their data (Jana-Masri and Priester 2007). Their behavioral practices scale included both ritual behaviors (such as fasting during Ramadan) and non-ritual behaviors (such as treating parents with respect); however, the small sample size (there were seventy-one respondents) makes it difficult to find more than two usable factors.

Given the different survey questions, research methods, and contexts, the substantial overlap between this chapter’s findings and previous research on both Muslim and non-Muslim respondents gives strong support to the proposition that separating ritual practice and religious belief is a valuable way of understanding Muslim religiosity. Simultaneously, the failure of other dimensions to manifest highlights the need to expand a stuffy idea of religious identity beyond religiosity.

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Chapter 5: The Public Consequences of Religious Belief

The conceptions of religion that appear in the previous two chapters may appear to be in conflict. I first argue that religious identity must be conceived broadly, and that particular attention should be paid to religious belief orthodoxy, religious group commitment, and the interplay of religion with "secular" identities. Apparently ignoring my own advice, I then move to a classical view of religiosity, which focuses primarily on religious belief orthodoxy and religious ritual practice, and attempt to adapt this narrower model to the American Muslim case. Aligning these disparate conceptions of religion is one of the tasks of the next two chapters. Religious belief orthodoxy, a concept with is central to both understandings of religious identity, is the focus of this chapter.

Though I believe it is necessary to go beyond religious belief in order to understand the ways in which religious identity influences social attitude, I also feel it is important to consider explicitly how religious beliefs influence social attitudes. Most definitions of religion – both theological and social scientific - assume a systematized set of abstract beliefs. For example, Durkheim asserts that "a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things" (Durkheim 1995), and Clifford Geertz defines religion as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations..." (Geertz 1973: 90). In the case of Islam, the study of these symbols has evolved into a highly specialized scholarly discipline that derives attitudes and behaviors from theological principles (*fiqh*).

In addition to the scholarly consensus that abstract beliefs are an important aspect of religious identity, there is a strong sense among American Muslims that their abstract religious beliefs – in God, the Qur'an, etc – have significant public consequences. As previous work has

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shown that most abstract commitments have little impact on social attitudes, these perceptions seem to suggest that religious beliefs have a distinctive relationship with social attitudes among American Muslims.

This chapter begins to explore this possibility by laying out evidence from my in-depth interviews which suggests that American Muslims believe that their religious beliefs have public consequences. I then test the extent to which religious belief orthodoxy can be used to predict the social attitudes of American Muslims, using the factor model developed in the previous chapter. Though many American Muslims believe that religious belief orthodoxy should and does influence social attitudes and behaviors, this chapter finds that it is a poor predictor of social attitudes. Finally, this chapter closes by moving beyond the conceptualization of individual religious belief as a direct predictor of social attitude to consider how religious belief creates an imagined boundary for the Muslim community – a point which the next chapter will explore more fully.

Perceived Consequences among American Muslims

In apparent alignment with the view that religious belief orthodoxy is central to religious identity, many of the people I interviewed asserted that their abstract religious beliefs influence their social attitudes and behaviors directly. This was sometimes made as a general claim, such as, "There are certain truths that I have found: that there is only one god, that Muhammad is the messenger of God, and there are certain obligations and duties that flow from that" (6-cmes). In the words of another respondent:

> You have these beliefs: you believe in the prophets, you believe in Allah, you believe in the scripture, you believe in heaven and hell and the Day of Judgment, you believe in Muhammad as the last prophet… all that expressed from you is how you live your life…

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> being a good neighbor, being a good daughter… being good to the environment… all those things are me trying to act on my belief. (1-new)

While the public consequences of religious belief orthodoxy were sometimes addressed in completely general terms, at other times respondents highlighted a specific aspect of their religious beliefs that influenced their social attitudes or behaviors. Belief in God was the religious belief most often involved in this way, as in: “you have to answer to God for deeds and your choices… and so you always want to think carefully as best you can” (7-new). Or as another respondent explained, “The notion of *taqwa*, God consciousness. It keeps you from doings things you're not supposed to do” (10-new).

Of course, belief in God is highly abstracted and is common to many religions. In addition to that belief, respondents also felt an influence from more concrete theological beliefs. For example, the same respondent, after asserting that God-consciousness influences attitudes and behavior, went on to say, “The Qur’an does have its own influence" (10-new). The idea that the Qur’an has an independent influence on social attitudes was quite common among my respondents.

Finally, respondents were occasionally more specific, highlighting a specific religious belief as the source for a certain social attitude. When explaining why homosexuality should be discouraged by society, one respondent drew on her belief in the Qur’an: “because there’s a story in the Qur’an … it’s a similar story to Sodom and Gomorrah in the Bible…” (1-new). Though the Qur’an was most often referred to as a source for attitudes toward homosexuality, other belief-attitude pairings occurred. Some respondents used the Qur’an to explain other social attitudes, as when one respondent said, “No drinking, no smoking, no adultery, no sex before marriage: all those things are rules of the Qur’an” (22-cmes). Other respondents referenced other

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orthodox theological beliefs. Once again, belief in God featured prominently. For example, one respondent explained that it was his concern that God was watching that prevented him from stealing things, explaining, "Stealing: I have a moral aversion to it [because] … I always think that God watching" (3-new).

Sometimes, the same respondent would link social attitudes to religious beliefs in general as well as to specific abstract beliefs, depending on how general the question was. The above-mentioned answer about the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Qur'an was given in response to interview questions regarding the place of homosexuality in society, while the more general assertion that "...all those things are me trying to act on my belief" was in response to a question to the same respondent to speak generally about the social attitudes and behaviors that she had previously asserted were informed by her being Muslim. This suggests that both one-to-one connection and more general assertions are indicators of the same sort of underlying attitudes.

The view that social attitudes and behaviors are influenced directly by abstract religious beliefs was made by many respondents. This pervasive idea that theological beliefs influence social attitudes and behaviors would seem to imply that high levels of belief orthodoxy should have predictable implications for social attitudes and behaviors. Though my respondents often agreed with this claim, a great deal of evidence emerged to the contrary.

Commonality with Non-Muslims

One reason to be suspicious of the claim that the social attitudes of Muslims can be predicted by the orthodoxy of their religious beliefs is how many of their social attitudes are not distinctive. The Pew survey hints at this. There are nearly as many issues about which American Muslims have similar attitudes to non-Muslims as there are issues on which the two groups are

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very different. For example, 51% of American Muslims are concerned about extremism around the world, while 48% of the general public shares this concern. The in-depth interviews show that this pattern of similar social attitudes exists even when American Muslims believe their faith is guiding them. For example, a number of my interview respondents asserted that they do not steal because they feel that God is watching, but not-steal is a generally accepted secular value - not just a religious one.

Similarly, the respondent who spoke about answering for choices before God asserted that it was important to "enjoin the good" but felt that it is unclear what this should mean (7-new). In other words, God-consciousness doesn't say what to do, it just says do what you believe is right. When probed later on how someone would know if an act was pleasing to God, the respondent asserted:

> You know God doesn't like two people who live together, and are supposed to be the momma and daddy of some little person, screaming and hollering and calling each other names… Or if one is concealing something from the other - you know it's not good because the Qur'an says so. So you have a list of stuff. (7-new)

This assertion complicates the relationship between belief and social attitudes since, while the respondent may be right that there is a common understanding that verbal abuse in front of children or that lying to one's spouse is wrong, most issues of social attitude have less obvious right and wrong answers.

The respondents are not ignorant of the fact that many of their social attitudes are shared with non-Muslims. A number of respondents volunteered this fact. For example, when talking about his interactions with non-Muslims, one respondent said: "It's easiest for me to integrate with people who are religious… If I talk about what I believe in they realize it's pretty much the

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same thing they believe in" (6-cmes). When talking about raising his children in the U.S., another respondent – an immigrant from India – said:

> As long as we teach the right values to our children – and I'm sure all parents would like to teach the right values to their children... As long as we teach them respect to other human beings, other properties, other faith – and that is the basic core of any religion…[as Muslims] we don't eat pork, we don't consume alcohol, but what we do in common is a lot more than what we do not do in common. (25-new)

Most respondents seemed to assume that this pattern of similarity sprang from the common history that Islam has with other religions. As one respondent explained:

> Islam makes this claim explicitly, that it is not a religion that came out of the blue. It is the expression of God's oneness that was originally presented to Jesus, and Moses, and Abraham, and a series of prophets. If you subscribe to that then the difference between Christianity and Judaism and Islam in terms of core values is differentiated only by drift. In other words, is differentiated only by the way that those religions changed over time. (5-new)

Skeptical of secular morality, many respondents seemed to believe that their only commonality with American norms stems from this theological similarity. I will return to this pattern of American Muslims assuming that religion is a motivating factor for morality in America when I explore the intertwining of religious and secular identities in chapter 7. For now, it is worthwhile to note that many of their social attitudes are shared not just with other people of faith, but with atheists as well. This casts some doubt on the idea that the shared morality is rooted in shared theology.

Disputed Interpretations

Perhaps more problematic for the idea that religious belief can be used to predict social attitudes is the wide range of interpretations that Muslims have for how their religious beliefs should manifest in their social attitudes. For example, after talking about the core religious beliefs, one respondent asserted, "It's not consistent once you get beyond those things I just

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mentioned" (1-new). She further explained, "For example I believe in *hijab* [the Islamic headscarf] and not everyone does. I believe it's in the Qur'an and it's clear but not everyone does" (1-new). Similarly, one respond asserted, "When I hear Muslims saying anything racist or sexist…when they use God or the Qur'an to justify these things. That really bothers me, a lot, because one I don't agree..." (10-new).

When addressing issues such as terrorism, respondents often went even further than just raising the possibility of differing interpretations. They often rejected other interpretations as completely invalid. For example, one respondent said, "Even with the interpretation of the Qur'an you can read something and it says 'kill the infidels' and it's not really [saying Muslims should kill non-Muslims] and then they explain it a certain way in the media and it makes us seem like we're vicious - we're not" (13-new). Another respondent claimed, "No one wants to attack civilians - children, babies, innocent men and women - but they're desperate. It has nothing to do with Qur'an or *fiqh* [Islamic law] it has to do with politics and economics" (4-new). Other respondents felt that social causes were often implicated in how and why the Qur'an is used to legitimate extremism: "You hear about all these attacks around the world and I get it. We're seeing a lot of extremism. People say it's the Qur'an, but as a sociologist I see that people have blocked opportunities that, in some ways, are the result of American practices, and this is a way to fight those practices" (14-new).

Some of this dispute is captured during cognitive interviews of the Pew survey question that asks whether or not the Qur'an can be taken "literally, word for word." One respondent asserted it couldn't be taken literally, but went on to say:

> …there's a spirit to it that is important. We can haggle about whether that spirit means that we should have satellite TV or not but … there's a sense about them [about religious texts]. So, I think that they're relevant: the Qur'an, Bible, Torah, [U.S.] Constitution,

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> whatever your religious text is. But I have no patience for literalists…The text could be a metaphor and if they're not smart enough to know what's a metaphor and what isn't then we're all screwed. (2-new)

Another respondent explained:

> a lot of people think … that Islam is not enlightened. I think that because I'm a little more liberal with certain interpretations of Islam I think there's room for an Enlightenment. I think there's room for talking about equality with women... If you look at the Qur'an and you look at the teachings [of Muhammad], one way of read it is women are subservient to men, but there are other ways of reading it to empower women. (14-new)

This theme of reading the Qur'an selectively was reiterated by other respondents as well, even when they felt it influenced their social attitudes. For example, one respondent who asserted that the Qur'an has an influence also spoke quite openly about re-interpreting it to fit with her pre-existing ideas: "We already have a way of understanding the world. When we encounter the Qur'an we're going to encounter it with that understanding" (10-new). Neither was this sentiment limited to respondents who reported low belief orthodoxy. A religiously orthodox respondent asserted:

> The Qur'an has a lot of different prescriptions depending on the context and people have notoriously picked and chosen according to their own personalities, upbringing, the circumstances they're going through. We always have options as Muslims and I think it's our sociological realities that dictate which ones we're going to veer toward. (4-new)

Ignorance of Religious Texts

Even when respondents asserted that the Qur'an supported their social attitudes, few were able to actually point to specific evidence of how their social attitudes stemmed from abstract Islamic beliefs. For example, when I asked one respondent, who had asserted that the Qur'an forbids drinking alcohol and stealing, to be more specific about his evidence, he could not: "I'm

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almost positive [it's in the Qur'an]…90% chance I've read a verse [in the Qur'an] about that" (3-new).

Even more problematic for a direct link connecting belief orthodoxy to social attitudes, some assertions were factually incorrect. For example, when discussing the Qur'an, one respondent asserted that "not a dot, period, comma, space has changed other than the stylistic elements" (13-new). An orthodox theological view, however, generally accepts that most diacritical marks found in contemporary printings of the Qur'an (including *igam* and *tashkil)* were absent at the time of the Qur'an's canonization (Gruendler 2011). In addition, though there is no actual punctuation in contemporary printings of the Qur'an, the sorts of pauses in reading that periods and commas would typically represent do vary (according to Islamic theological tradition) across a number of valid modes of recitation (*Qira'at*), not all of which are supported by the contemporary print styles of the Qur'an. Furthermore, interpretations suggested or underscored by punctuation can have significant theological implications.

Similarly, one respondent, in explaining why he believed that the Qur'an forbade homosexuality, recounted a tale in which he was listening to someone recite "the *surah* [chapter] called the star and I think it was the last verse that they read… one of the few moments in the Qur'an that talks about homosexuality. Just basically how these people who lust after the same sex are blessed with hellfire" (14-new). This assertion is problematic because that chapter does not speak about lust at all. Though there is a circuitous reference to the destruction of "the towns" which commentators take to be Sodom and Gomorrah, they are not mentioned by name, nor is the reason for their destruction mentioned there. Any influence that religious belief orthodoxy has on social attitudes would clearly be weakened by respondents' being ignorant of the degree to which their theological beliefs actually align with established orthodoxy.

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The Role of Religious Scholars and Specialists

The Qur'an has 114 chapters and over 6,000 verses, so it is not surprising that most respondents (none of whom has been dedicated full-time to the study of Islamic law or the Qur'an) were familiar with only parts of the Qur'an. For most of the history of Islam, though there has not been an ordained clergy, there has been a class of specially educated religious scholars (*ulima*). Historically, the scholarly class has played an import role in defining valid and invalid interpretations of the Qur'an; however, their influence has sustained a number of challenges throughout the 20th century. In the American context, their influence is further reduced both by America's Protestant background, which has generally encouraged even traditions with clear hierarchies (such as Catholicism) to challenge authority, and by a limited supply of scholars who are familiar with both the American context and traditional Islamic sources.

In interviews, American Muslims seem conflicted about the role of scholars, and this division also does not map cleanly along the lines of belief orthodoxy. Some highly orthodox respondents relied heavily on scholars, making assertions like, "I can't just read the Qur'an and decide on my own what it means, so I learn it through taking the interpretations of knowledgeable scholars" (9-new). Despite sharing the level of orthodoxy, others rejected the idea that one could defer to the opinion of someone else. For example, one respondent asserted that "Islam allows the individual believer to make a determination for himself or herself … It's actually incumbent on the believer to engage in that sort of discussion with others, but also to look at the issue themselves" (5-new).

The need to balance the Islamic tradition of professional theologians with the lack of an ordained clergy is a theme that came up frequently in the interviews. Often, respondents would

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try to determine the link between abstract beliefs and behaviors on their own, and only turn to scholars if they were unable to. One respondent explained:

> I ask God to guide me…and hopefully he will help me not to make mistakes… and then I have to do what I think makes the most sense based on my own [understanding of the] Qur'an, from my own [understanding of the] *hadith* ... If it's a topic that's too complicated for me … then I have to ask Allah for guidance and follow who I think is the most trustworthy. (1-new)

Another explained, "If it's something that's social: public or semi-public... the Qur'an is likely to have something to say on it." He added that he only consulted scholars when he couldn't find guidance in the primary sources of religious knowledge (e.g. Qur'an or *hadith* [24new]).

Lack of Correlation between Religious Belief and Social Attitudes

Table 5.1: Logistic Regression – Belief Orthodoxy and Social Attitudes[a]

	Belief	Belief, race, age, gender
Q.H1. Violence against civilians is not justified to defend Islam	0.20	0.20
Q.H5. Unfavorable opinion of Al Qaeda	0.08	0.07
Q.G1. The quality of life for Muslim women in the U.S. is worse than in Muslim countries	0.18	0.01
Q.H3. Arabs were responsible for 9/11 attacks	-0.61**	-0.42*
Q.D3. The coverage of Islam by American news is unfair	0.17	0.15
Q.B2-d. Homosexuality is a way of life that should be discouraged by society	0.29*	0.31*
Q.B2-a. I worry the government is getting too involved in the issue of morality	-0.20	-0.13
Q.H4. The war on terror is not a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism.	-0.16	-0.11
Q.C1. Military force in Afghanistan was the wrong decision	-0.02	0.01
Q.C1. Military force in Iraq was the wrong decision	0.20	0.12
Q.B3. Big government is good	0.08	0.11
Q.B1. Disapprove of President Bush	0.02	-0.04
Q.B2-b. Immigrants are bad of the U.S.	-0.10	0.08
Q.H7. Not bothered that Muslims are singled out for additional security	-0.04	0.06

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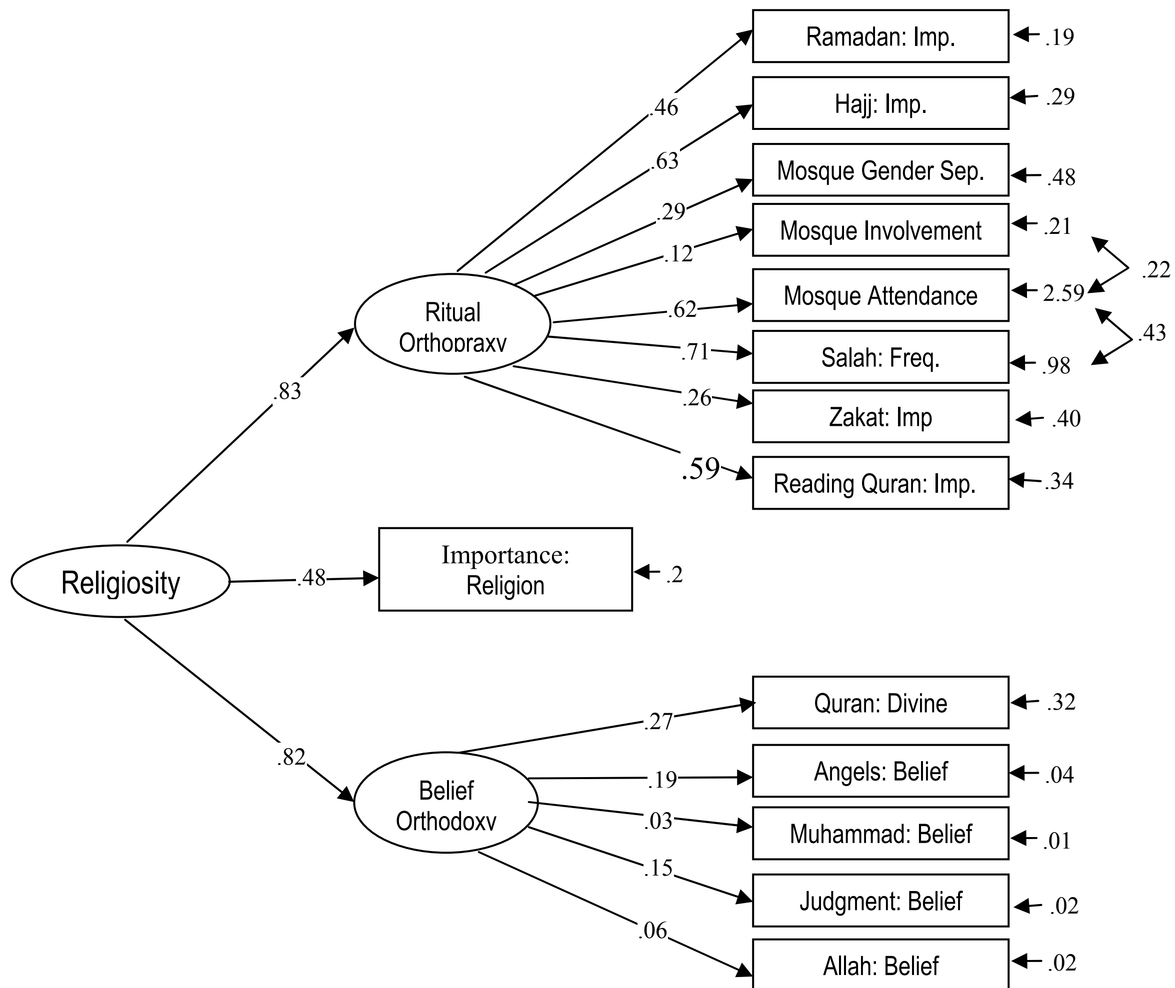
[a] Statistics drawn from the 2007 Pew Survey of American Muslims. Actual question wording can be found in appendix A.

Figure 5.1: Best Fitting CFA Model



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The interview data raises a number of questions regarding the extent to which religious belief orthodoxy influences social attitudes. Even when respondents felt that their social attitudes where guided by their abstract religious beliefs, they had the same attitudes as people who did not share their beliefs. Similarly, respondents who held the same abstract religious beliefs often felt they led to different attitudes and behaviors. Even within individual accounts of the influence of religious belief on social attitudes, there were difficulties, since attempts to offer theological evidence grounded in their religious beliefs were often fraught with inaccuracies.

To explore these concerns, I explicitly tested the relationship between religious belief orthodoxy and social attitudes, using the religious belief factor developed in the previous chapter. The model selected in that chapter (presented here as figure 5.1) suggested that religious belief and ritual practice make up distinct dimensions of religiosity. Using that model, LISREL assigned each respondent a religious belief orthodoxy score.

I compared religious belief orthodoxy to responses for each of the 14 questions in which American Muslims had very different social attitudes than the general population, using logistic regression. Each social attitude was tested independently, since these attitudes are largely independent of one another. An ordered logistic regression was used because the survey questions measure social attitudes as discrete values, offering responses such as strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree; or very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat favorable, very unfavorable.[7] The regression was run both for religious belief orthodoxy alone, and religious belief orthodoxy along with various demographic indicators. The results are shown in table 5.1.

[7] Appendix A has a list of all questions and the valid responses

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The logistic regression supports the conclusion that religious belief is not strongly implicated in many social attitudes. Of the 14 attitudes tested, only views on homosexuality and on who is responsible for the attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, are significantly predicted by belief orthodoxy. This pattern holds both for analysis of belief alone and analysis which includes both belief and demographic indicators of social context. Most social attitudes have no statistically significant relationship with religious belief, regardless of the presence or absence of demographic variables. Though the CFA model makes it clear that religious belief is an aspect of religious identity, the regression analysis suggests that social attitudes are rarely driven directly by religious belief.

Discussion

Though respondents often asserted that their religious beliefs directly impact their social attitudes and behaviors, there is little evidence of this. Many Muslims believe that their religious beliefs have public consequences; however, said consequences are not consistent for Muslims. While some respondents asserted that their belief made them avoid stealing, others said it was why they recycled or had chosen their career path. Some felt that there was clear guidance in the Qur'an for nearly all social issues; others asserted that people merely confirm preconceived social ideas when they turn to the Qur'an. Interestingly, the idea that people brought their social and psychological "baggage" to bear when reading the Qur'an was highlighted by all of the respondents who held advanced degrees in the humanities or social science disciplines, but rarely by other respondents – a point to which I will return in my conclusion. The respondents were often aware of such disputes, as well as the overlap between the social attitudes they attributed to their religious beliefs and the social attitudes held by the rest of society. The lack of consistency,

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however, in how religious beliefs influence social attitudes need not imply an utter lack of influence, though it does complicate efforts to use religious belief as a predictor of social attitudes.

More troubling than the lack of consistency in how religious beliefs influence social attitudes was the fact that respondents often struggled when asked to detail the connection between religious beliefs and social attitudes. They sometimes deferred to scholars who could make the connections clear but were rarely able to offer unambiguous evidence; a number of respondents even made assertions which were factually inaccurate. These behaviors suggest that, if social attitude is influenced by religious beliefs, the influence is often mediated by social factors – such as those explored in the next two chapters. Previous research has found similar patterns in which symbolically important "facts" are misinterpreted or misremembered in order to conform with an individual's social attitudes (Adamek 1994).

The regression analysis suggests that there are two questions which are predicted significantly by religious belief: homosexuality and the identity of the 9/11 attackers. The reason that opinions about the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon would be tied to religious belief is unclear. In contrast, the issue of homosexuality does appear to be a direct connection of religious beliefs to social attitude. Every respondent interviewed asserted that the Qur'an clearly prohibits homosexual acts. In fact, even the homosexual Muslim I interviewed asserted that there was a direct connection. He recounted to me the point in his life when he realized that homosexuality is a clear sin, asserting, "It is pretty clear in the Qur'an… you're not supposed to have sex with guys if you're a guy" (14-new).

The research suggests that, with the possible exception of homosexuality, the linking of social attitudes and behaviors to religious identity is not well defined by abstract religious beliefs

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alone. Instead, the link requires a large number of assumptions and decisions which are not part of the core tenets of orthodox Islam. The assumptions ranged from narrow ones, such the idea that a certain scholar was reliable, to broad, like the definition of what it means to be a moral person. The next two chapters will explore two aspects of this mediating process: religious group commitment and alternate identities.

Belief as a Boundary

Religious belief is not very helpful in predicting social attitudes; however, it remains sociologically relevant in important ways. One important role of religious belief may well be to encourage self-transcendence. In-depth interviews suggest that another important role that religious beliefs play for American Muslims is in creating the symbolic boundary for group membership. As one respondent explained, "If what you say doesn't gel with what you do that's secondary, what's important ... is whose side are you on" (4-new).

The idea that acceptance of the core beliefs is sufficient for group membership is an idea held by every respondent I interviewed, regardless of their personal beliefs – though some respondents reported having had their religious identity called into question on the basis of other things. When asked "what it means" if someone has these core beliefs but is not acting on them, one respondent said:

> It still means that they're Muslim but they're not doing those specific things that I believe we're supposed to be doing. I was one of those people at one point. I didn't always pray, I didn't always fast, I didn't always give charity in the way you're supposed to give it Islamically. I was still Muslim. I feel like even scholars would consider me Muslim because I still had *la ilaha illa allah muhmmad rasul allah* [there is one God and Muhammad is his messenger] even if I wasn't executing on any other level. (1-new)

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More concisely, another respondent explained, “If someone takes the *shahada* [asserts that they believe there is one God and Muhammad is his messenger] then you accept them as a Muslim” (4-new).

There was also a great deal of agreement, though not unanimity, that sharing in these core beliefs is necessary for membership in the Muslim community. Many respondents seemed to agree with the respondent who said, “a Muslim believes in Allah, his prophets, his books, the angels, the day of resurrection, life after death, the day of resurrection… if you don’t believe in these things you’re not Muslim” (14-new). In the words of another respondent, “God is one, Muhammad is the prophet, there are angels, the scriptures, the prophets, the messengers, heaven and hell and the day of judgment… Scholars have broken it down to if you’re Muslim you believe in these core things…You can’t be Muslim and not subscribe to that core of beliefs” (1-new). The idea that these beliefs were necessary for group membership was so obvious to some respondents that they seemed surprised by some of the questions in my cognitive interviews. For example, when asked whether or not the Qur’an was the word of God, one respondent replied, almost dismissively, “It’s the word of God. I’m a Muslim.” To him, the fact that he was Muslim was sufficient to show that he believed the Qur’an is the word of God. This respondent went on to explain that “it was an adjustment for [him] to learn that for people who aren’t Muslim that’s not the case.” He added, “They think it’s just made up” (4-new).

The existence of this conceptual boundary should not be taken to imply that American Muslims frequently excommunicate one another. In fact, the respondents I interviewed were very hesitant to assert that someone who said they are Muslim is not. One respondent explained his hesitation by stating that “Muslim authenticity is something I intentionally don’t get into.” He went on to recount this story from his childhood:

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> …when I was in elementary school there was a brother [i.e. a fellow Muslim] who smoked cigarettes…and we were taught that Muslims don't smoke cigarettes... We were in class one day ….and everyone was saying "This brother [fellow Muslim], he's not Muslim" and one of our teacher said "that's not for you to say. If that brother is smoking cigarettes that's between him and God"…. That's always something that's always stuck out with me. This idea of judging other people's faith. (14-new)

Those Muslims who stated that religious belief is a pre-requisite for being Muslim generally assumed that everyone who says they are Muslim holds the same core beliefs as they do. Respondents assumed self-identification as Muslim to indicate that a person holds to these beliefs, and even discounted the possibility that someone might identify as Muslim without believing them. As one respondent explained, "I think there are core beliefs in Islam and everyone is on board with them" (14-new). Respondents were aware of and comfortable with the idea that not all Muslims engaged in the same ritual practices, but not that there were Muslims who rejected what the respondents considered core beliefs. For example, respondents referred to "nominal Muslims". One respondent explained it this way: "If you asked them [nominal Muslims would say] 'yeah, we believe in all this stuff' but they don't act upon it. It's not to say they don't believe in it. It's the same thing as my drinking situation [the respondent previously explained that he drinks alcohol]. You know it's wrong" (3-new). This was not just an assertion that all Muslims believe in God, but that they accept all of the core beliefs. When asked specifically about issues beyond belief in God, many respondents had opinions in line with the respondent who said:

> I think all Muslims believe in Heaven and Hell. I've never heard of a Muslim not believing in one or the other… I've never heard of Muslims who didn't believe in angels…I don't think you can be Muslim and not believe in the Qur'an… Day of Judgment, I think all Muslims believe that…I think all Muslims believe in all of them. (1-new)

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Respondents generally assumed that anyone who said they were Muslim shared their views, though such issues rarely come up in conversation. In fact, at the end of my interview, I suggested to some respondents that not everyone who says they are Muslims believes as they do. These respondents were often both surprised and disturbed. Though it is a clear fact that not everyone who says they are Muslim (or even Sunni Muslim) accepts the core beliefs, the existence of this assumption is important, since it may still play an important role in the organization of religious groups. This proposal will be explored in the next chapter.

Interestingly, the idea that the core beliefs were necessary and sufficient in order to be part of the Muslim community often seemed to override denominational concerns. For example, though most Sunni and Shii groups accept the core beliefs previously mentioned, each group has had, throughout Islamic history, a great deal of discussion about whether or not the other group is really Muslim. In the American context, these debates have so little resonance that many Muslims rejected the distinctions completely by insisting that anyone who holds the core beliefs is Muslim. Many respondents were, in fact, unsure of their denominational affiliation, stating that they were "Sunni I guess," while others rejected the idea that further distinctions were appropriate, asserting they were "just Muslim." The only exception to this general assumption that came up in the interviews concerned the American denominations, such as the Nation of Islam. These groups were generally viewed as "not really Muslim" because they were assumed to reject some of the core beliefs.

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Chapter 6: Religious Group Commitment

If I one day decide I'm atheist … even then I would be Muslim. (Aneesa)

Aneesa's assertion makes it clear that she views religious identity as extending beyond religious belief orthodoxy. Aneesa was raised in a Muslim household, attended Sunday school growing up, and took Islamic history courses in college. Despite having a relatively high level of knowledge about Islamic theology, she has rejected many of the core abstract beliefs. She is uncertain about the existence of God, doubts the existence of a Hell, and believes that the Qur'an is a book written by men and is not the word of God, though she still holds a great deal of reverence for it. Most of her religious identity can be tied to her relationship with other Muslims. She is the child of South Asian immigrants and prays with her family – though the practice is not emphasized in her family. She is dating a Muslim, though she says his theological beliefs are even less orthodox than hers are, and she has many Muslim friends.

In the previous chapter, I showed that religious belief orthodoxy is not a very good predictor of social attitudes for American Muslims; however, I have suggested that religious identity is broader than belief orthodoxy. This chapter explores the aspect of religious identity which is most important to Aneesa and Muslims like her – religious group commitment. The chapter begins by laying out evidence that religious group commitment is an aspect of religious identity. The evidence for this connection consists of four parts: a review of the rationale presented in my theoretical framing chapter, a review of the statistical evidence presented with the model of religiosity I developed in chapter 4, a short summary of the treatment of group commitment in classical Islamic theology, and data from in-depth interviews which show the resonance of group commitment as an aspect of religious identity among American Muslims.

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After establishing the appropriateness of considering group commitment as an aspect of religious identity, the chapter goes on to describe the relationship that religious group commitment has to the social attitudes and behaviors of American Muslims. It begins this process by describing the relationship between religious group commitment and social attitudes and behaviors, as perceived by American Muslims. In order to test the intuitions of the respondents, the chapter goes on to offer two statistical measures of religious group involvement drawn from the Pew survey: number of Muslim friends and level of ritual practice. The analysis conducted in this chapter tests the relationship between these two indicators of religious group involvement and each of the 14 social attitude questions upon which American Muslims differ significantly from the general American population. Finally, I discuss possible mechanisms underlying why certain social attitudes are influenced by religious group commitment while other aspects are not.

Why Religious Group Commitment is Part of Religious Identity

Review of Previous Chapters

The theoretical framing laid out in chapter 2 stated that association, affect, and fellowship are the aspects of religious group commitment which are the focus of my analysis. Association measures the degree to which someone is in contact with other members of the group – in this case, co-religionists. Association is found among Muslim neighbors or coworkers who interact with one another. Affect is the sense of feeling that one belongs to a bounded group – a sense of camaraderie with co-religionists, regardless of actual proximity or direct contact. Among the Muslims I interviewed, this aspect of group commitment was often framed as concern with the global Muslim community (*ummah)* as well as a sense that Muslims should be especially attentive to the plight of other Muslims. I will refer to the combination of association and affect

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as fellowship. Situations of fellowship occur frequently: for example, members of a prayer group are connected by virtue of their association in group meetings and are also likely to develop affective ties toward one another. Despite the frequent co-occurrence of association and affect, the ability to distinguish them analytically (if not always substantively) will be useful in explaining some of the impact that religious group commitment has on social attitudes.

In addition to the logical argument laid out in chapter 2, the model developed in chapter 4 offers some evidence that group commitment is an aspect of religious identity pertinent to the analysis of religious rituals. It showed first that the indicators of ritual practice made available in the Pew survey are best modeled by using a single ritual practice factor. This single-factor model contrasts with many of the models used in studying Christianity in the West, since it does not distinguish between individual and collective ritual practices. The chapter then went on to show that all of these rituals are felt to reinforce “the bonds of community” (5-new), as suggested by scholars such as Emile Durkheim and Randal Collins. By showing the connection between group commitment and ritual practice, chapter 4 offered evidence that group commitment should be viewed as an aspect of religious identity.

Islamic Norms Regarding Group Commitment

The rationale offered in chapter 2 for including group commitment as an aspect of religious identity is suggestive but is not specific to Islam. The statistical patterns described in chapter 4 offer evidence that group commitment is related to religious identity for American Muslims. The interview data discussed in that chapter further illustrated this point. However, if group commitment is a natural part of religious identity, then one might expect some theological justification as well. Fortunately, there is little question that group commitment has strong warrant in Islamic theology. The Qur’an frequently refers to the Muslims as a community

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(*ummah*). For example, in the second chapter of the Qur'an, God asserts that he has made Muslims "a balanced community (*ummah)*, to be witness over mankind, and the prophet Muhammad is a witness over the community" (2:142). The third chapter of the Qur'an goes on to extol, "Let there be one community (*ummah)* among you, inviting men to good and forbidding bad deeds, such are those that prosper. And be not as those who divided and fell into disagreement after clear signs had come to them; for them there is a mighty punishment" (3:104-105). In addition, the forty-ninth chapter asserts, "The Muslims[1] (*mu'min)* are as brothers to one another" (49:10). The assertion that Muslims are brothers is reinforced in the quotations attributed to prophet Muhammad by Islamic scholars (*hadith*), and is taken quite literally by many American Muslims who refer to one another as "brother" and "sister" (or the Arabic *akhi* – lit. my brother*).* There are also many *hadith* which reinforce the idea that Muslims have a religious duty to act as a community. One exemplar, found in a canonical collection of Sunni *hadith*, asserts, "A Muslim (*mu'min*) to another Muslim is like a building whose different parts enforce each other" (al-Bukhari 1997).

The sense of group commitment as an important aspect of Muslim identity extends well beyond the majority (Sunni) denomination. Shia denominations also accept the Qur'anic support for Muslims as a community, and even denominations of Islam such as the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam generally accept the idea that Islam is a religion of community.

[1] I have translate *mu'min* here as Muslim. Though *mu'min* is often translated as Believer, the common religious interpretation of the term *mu'min* requires belief in Islamic theological tenants, though which specific tenants varies somewhat by denomination. This interpretation has been challenged by certain western historians of the early Islamic period (Donner 2002) however this critique is not widely accepted within religious circles and therefore not relevant for this discussion of contemporary Islamic theology.

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A major difference does appear in their interpretation of the breadth of the community. For example, Ibn Babuya al-Saduq – a noted 10th century Shii scholar – asserts:

> Every verse in the Qur'an which begins with the expression 'Oh you who believe' refers necessarily to Ali ibn Abi Talib as their leader and prince and the most notable among them…among communities none in reality is more excellent than this Community – the partisans (Shi'a) of the Prophet's family, and none else." (Williams 1981: 39-40)

Rather than accepting the idea that the "believers" (*mu'min)* refers to all Muslims, he asserts it applies only to his sect and its early progenitor (Ali). Even so, he retains the idea that there should be a community of Muslims. Similarly, the assumption that there should be a community of believers is prevalent in the theology of the Nation of Islam – so much so that the idea of nationhood is part of its name, though the nation of primary interest is the African-American community, the "lost people of the original nation of African descent" (Nation_of_Islam 2011).

Salience of Religious Group Commitment Among American Muslims

In addition to the theoretical, statistical, and theological support for group commitment as an aspect of religious identity for American Muslims, it is important to note that religious group commitment is perceived to be an important aspect of religious identity among American Muslims. As I mentioned when I explained the need for a mixed-method inquiry in chapter 3, although native categories do not always offer the best analytical lens, the breadth of lived religion is most completely rendered by the perceptions of religious adherents and participants. From interviews, we can see that affect, association, and fellowship are salient among American Muslims as aspects of their religious identity. I will present interview data for each of these aspects of religious group commitment in turn.

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Association

A desire for association with co-religionists was common both among people who switched to Islam after being raised in another religion and among those who grew up in a Muslim household. In the words of one respondent who was not raised in a Muslim household, Muslims “should be a distinct community that works within the context of the American society, but it should remain their distinctive selves.” When asked to clarify why he felt creating a community of Muslims that associated with one another was important, the respondent explained, “the rationale for it is scriptural” (8-new).

This desire (and opportunity) to associate with other Muslims can also be seen in life histories as well. More than one person who was raised in a non-Muslim family asserted that becoming Muslim had dramatically changed their network of friends. For example, when explaining how being Muslim was different from being Christian, one respondent offered the increased opportunity to associate with other Muslims as evidence, saying, “I have been able to travel with [my wife] to different places. I have been in the palace of [the] King of Saudi Arabia” (8-new). Even more than these reports of new opportunities to interact with Muslims, the desire and effort to associate with co-religionists were ubiquitous in my interviews. For example, one Caucasian Muslim explained, “After I ended up converting to Islam when I was in high school, a lot of my friends became a lot more diverse, just because there aren’t a lot of Caucasian Muslims around” (6-cmes). The respondent thus indicates that, in order to associate with a significant number of Muslims, he reached beyond his pre-existing friends and his own racial group.

Similarly, respondents who were raised in Muslim households often asserted that their parents encouraged them to interact with other Muslims. One college-age respondent who did not grow up with many Muslim friends admitted, “My parents kind of regret that I don’t have

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more Muslim friends" (3-cmes). As if to confirm this sentiment, another respondent, a parent whose child was college-aged, lamented that her child is "now more comfortable with American friends" than with Muslims (4-new). Together, these quotes suggest that, when their children fail to associate with co-religionists, Muslim parents are often disappointed.

Respondents often went so far as to assert that their desire to associate with co-religionists was influential in helping them decide where to live, where to work, and who they married. For example, one respondent who lives in a suburb with a high concentration of Muslims explained, "Since I'm in Chicago I live in that area. I have most of my friends [in that area] and our mosque is there" (21-cmes). The respondent asserts that he choose to live in this predominantly Muslim area because there is a mosque and because most of his (almost exclusively Muslim) friends live in that area as well. The college-age respondent cited above (as not having many Muslim friends growing up because there were few in his neighborhood) talked about going to the Muslim Students Association on his college campus to find more Muslim friends (3-cmes). This tendency to seek out co-religionists was common among my respondents and offers further support for the relevance of association as an aspect of religious group commitment and, more generally, religious identity.

Despite the importance of group association as an aspect of religious identity, respondents were quick to assert that this connectedness should not become excessive. This concern often came up in cognitive interviews about whether it was better to remain distinct from American society or to assimilate. For example, when asked if Muslims coming to the U.S. should adapt to American customs and ways of life or remain distinct from the larger American society, one respondent asserted, "If I had to choose one I would say they should remain distinct. I think, however, that we [Muslims] have issues with being overly distinct and we should be

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somewhere in-between" (9-new). In fact, only 26% of survey respondents felt it was better to remain distinct. Many American Muslims seemed to agree with the respondent who declared, "I'm not a big fan of separation [from non-Muslims]" (3-new). Or, as another respondent insisted, "I don't think self-ghetto-ization is a good thing" (2-new). This sense that, though association with co-religionists is good, Muslims need to be involved with American society will be revisited when I consider the relationship between Islam and the American context in chapter 7.

Affect

Distinct from association, affective ties came up as an important aspect of religious identity. Respondents frequently asserted that they were especially sensitive to the difficulties faced by their fellow Muslims, even those they had no contact with. Affective group commitment was described by some respondents as a "sacred bond" (3-cmes), further reinforcing its connection to religious identity. Some respondents asserted explicitly that group affect was an important aspect of their religious identity. One such respondent stated, "[M]y political views are shaped by my Islam – my religion – but also my Islamic identity – my Islamic cultural perspective" (1-new). When asked whether she was Muslim first or American first, she went on to say, "My loyalty is to Muslims and Islam first" (1-new). In these quotes, the respondent explicitly points out that her religious identity consists both of her religious belief orthodoxy (her loyalty to Islam) and also her religious group commitment (her loyalty to Muslims).

Other respondents talked about how their affective ties influenced the ways in which they react to the media's focus on intolerant and violent Muslims. One explained:

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> We [tolerant Muslims] don't see ourselves in that picture. We see some people in that picture, and we also bemoan that. In fact we have more reason to bemoan than any non-Muslim because it's sad for us. It's not sad for you. It's annoying and makes you angry. For us it's sad to see our religion being hijacked by certain people, in addition to being angry, and in addition to being fearful because these people live among us. (4-new)

Affective group commitment was described as the primary way in which religion was important to some respondents, such as those who had low religious belief orthodoxy. Below, Aneesa explains how her various affective ties to Muslims (generally) produce feeling of anger and frustration. She said:

> My identity as a Muslim does affect me emotionally in terms of how I see what is going on in the world. [For example] When I get upset at Muslims; when I get upset at how non-Muslims are treating Muslims or perceiving Muslims; when Muslims are being assholes -idiots- sorry for the language; when I really hope Muslims would get their act together. It upsets me when there is somebody who has committed some horrific crime and uses Islam to justify their actions. That hurts me.

She further asserts, "I do encounter a lot of frustrations dealing with both Muslims and non-Muslims in terms of how they perceive Islam. And it can be Muslims too who say Islam is terrible, and that also bothers me. In those ways religion affect me a lot." In both cases, she describes affective ties to the American Muslim community as a part of her religious identity.

A sense of affective group commitment, even to co-religionists in other countries, was described not only by respondents who have ethnic ties overseas (in which case a question might be raised about the extent to which the bond is ethnic and not religious at all) but also among Muslims who were born and raised in the U.S. For example, one Caucasian respondent asserted,

> America has a very large footprint in the world and is very involved, and there are very few Muslims here but a lot of the people affected by American foreign policy, economic policy, or American culture are Muslims who live outside the United States, but I still consider them as my co-religionists and my siblings in faith. And it raises a lot of issues, which may not be raised by[for] people of other faiths, about what is my duty to them [my co-religionists] as Muslims, given that I'm here living in a country that has an impact on them. (6-cmes)

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Similarly, a number of respondents spoke about a desire to see Muslims in the U.S. act as a unified political force. One African-American Muslim explained it in this way: “[W]e have to unify. Allah *supanna wa tallah* he says in the holy Qur’an ‘they are allies with one another, if you don’t do the same then mischief will spread worldwide.’ That’s what we need to do – be allies with one another globally” (24-new). This desire for Muslims globally to be allies with one another is a clear manifestation of religious group affect, especially given the respondent’s lack of ethnic ties to Muslim majority countries.

Fellowship

In my interviews, group association and group affect were both described, independently, as being related to religious group commitment. Even so, when talking about situations in which they were connected but did not feel a religious group affect, respondents were often dissatisfied. For example, a number of respondents asserted that when they associated with other Muslims through religious group services but felt no group affect, the situation was uncomfortable. Aneesa goes to prayer services intermittently, in part because she does not feel an affective tie with the members of her local congregation. She explained her attempts to fit into the congregation in this way:

> I would go to the *jumah* prayer [the Friday congregational prayer] and ...it just wasn’t happening for me. I couldn’t focus on God… When I’m praying it’s like ‘Okay I’m just doing what everybody else is doing.’ I actually like being able to take my time and ‘okay I’ll do what we’re all doing, and we’re all doing this together’ but it felt so superficial.

As this quote suggests, respondents generally felt that the co-occurrence of association and affect was the normal way of things.

Respondents gave a number of reasons for the intertwining of affect and association. One common assertion was that the generalized feeling of religious group affect facilitates stronger

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inter-personal relationships with any Muslims they encounter. As one respondent explained, "There are certain rights and duties toward Muslims which accelerate bonds of friendship" (6-cmes). Another respondent explained that he had a "feeling that people are more trustworthy because of the religion" (3-cmes). This idea that the intersection of religious group affect and religious group association led to close bonds of fellowship was a common thread.

Perhaps as an outgrowth of the intersection of religious group association and religious group affect, many respondents established a pattern of developing close friendships primarily with co-religionists. For example, one respondent explained, "When you say 'friends' I like to break it into two categories. I have those I associate with and there is my inner circle. I have a lot of associates, because I run my own business. Some of them are Muslim, but not all. Those that are very close to me, as in we have a friendship relationship, all of those are Muslim. I don't have any close friends who are non-Muslim." When asked why that is he responded:

> I believe what the *hadith* says. Prophet Muhammad *sulalahu alayhi wasulum* said: "Show me your friends and I'll show you who you are." And he gave guidance about be careful in what friends you have because you steal from their brain. If they're not on Islam [i.e. if your friends do not take their religious commitment seriously] then nine times out of ten you're going to have some of the same characteristics and traits. So it wasn't something that was deliberate, but it worked itself out that as you grow and you start to take this *deen*, this way of life [Islam] extremely seriously, you're not going to want to associate with people who don't do the same. We pray five times a day. That's a commitment … it becomes burdensome to keep having to explain that. Let me just stick with people who are Muslim. It's easier. (24-new)

Although, in cognitive interviews, respondents showed some uncertainty in deciding whether the Pew survey question which asked about "close friends" really meant only those people they had strong affective ties to, their elaborations made it clear that the people with whom the respondents had the closest ties were often (though not always) Muslim. This pattern extended even to some respondents who felt they had friends from a wide range of faiths. For

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example, one respondent explained that his friendships are "fairly distributed among religions," but he went on to say that his best friend is Muslim (23-new).

In addition to this pattern, whereby Muslims had a highly disproportionate number of Muslims among their friends, respondents who were raised in Muslim households often described their family in terms of religious fellowship as well. For example, one respondent explained:

> If I can pray with my parents, or if I can lead the prayer and I can show them that I'm still close to those teachings, then that's the part of my family that I've accepted that I can have. I can't have the side of my family where we can go out to a nightclub and have a good time, but the peaceful side, that's what I can have with my family and hope to keep with them forever. (13-new)

Another said, more simply, that "part of my religious experience is a way of honoring my parents" (2-cmes).

Not only is such religious fellowship with family members significant in itself, it also offered a bridge to a more generalized group commitment. For example, one respondent explained, "As I get older, I've been getting more Muslim friends. When my dad goes out [to visit his Muslim friends] I might go with him now…" (3-cmes). The respondent drew on the religious fellowship he had with his father to expand the network of American Muslims he associates with.

The Public Consequences of Religious Group Commitment

The first half of this chapter suggests that not only do American Muslims view religious group commitment as part of their religious identity, but also there is both theological and statistical support for this view. The chapter now turns toward understanding the public consequences of religious group commitment. This section first explores how American Muslims

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view the relationship between religious group commitment and social attitudes and behaviors, using interview data. It then tests the strength of this relationship, using logistic regression.

Perceived Consequences among American Muslims

As with religious belief, respondents generally had a very strong sense that religious group commitment influenced their social attitudes and behaviors. One situation in which the associational aspect of group commitment was felt to influence behaviors is when respondents reported feeling a pressure to conform to group norms. For example, one respondent recounted an incident from her youth when the perceptions of other Muslims was reason enough for her sister to avoid chewing gum during Ramadan: "she [the sister] was figuring we don't eat food or drink in Ramadan, and this [gum] is neither. It's just an object… but there was an added dimension of how it looks. It looks like you are chewing food, in Ramadan" (4-new). However, this incident, and most like it, was in reference to life in Muslim majority countries, not Muslims living in the West. In the American context, it seemed that this pressure to conform to the norms of the Muslim community is much weaker.

This does not mean that people are completely unconcerned with the norms of the Muslims they associated with. For example, one respondent, when talking about how being Muslim influenced him, mentioned that he changed his behavior when he was around Muslims who had a different interpretation of Islam than him. He explained:

> I think it's okay for [a] Muslim to eat the general beef or chicken of American society because of my understand of what the [Islamic theological] laws are … there are lots of people [in the Muslim community] who have a different view… including all of my in-laws, so I will never eat non-*halal*/non-*zabiha* meat [i.e. the general beef or chicken of American society] in front of them… because I respect the fact that this is important to them and I don't want to create too much uncertainty...This way of thinking, not just that I'm going to have to answer for what I do to God but that I'm part of a larger social group – that even if what I'm doing is okay, it may have larger implications for them. I don't find my non-Muslim friends thinking through things in this way. (6-cmes)

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Though the group's expectations influence his behavior, this respondent asserts that conformity is primarily a voluntary process, stemming from his concern for the community, rather than a mandate from others.

In addition to the various pressures to conform that some respondents talked about, a much more pervasive impact of associating with other Muslims was evident in the sorts of knowledge about the world that this association supplied. This issue came up often when respondents contrasted the portrayal of Muslims in the media with their own experiences. Many felt that, because they interacted with Muslims routinely, they had a very different sense of the Muslim community. For example, Aneesa asserted:

> I think, insofar as my experience as a Muslim has informed me, it does influence how I consider various international events or how the media portrays Muslims, for example, because I also know how diverse Muslims are in thought and belief and practice and lifestyle. Out of all the Muslims I know, no two are alike. When people talk about Muslims as being a monochromatic, homogenous group, I don't like that because every single human is an individual first and foremost.

This sense that associating with other Muslims offered privileged information – information that changed social attitudes – was common among respondents. This was not only present in how respondents viewed Muslims in general (and the media's portrayal specifically) but also in their knowledge about world events. Specifically, respondents tended to know a great deal about the affairs of Muslim majority countries, such as Afghanistan and Palestine. A good deal of this information came from associational ties with co-religionists. Two quotes illustrate this pattern. The first is from a second-generation South Asian immigrant who explained:

> When we talk about Pakistan – I've lived in Pakistan for a year, I have cousins there. So there's a different level of understanding. There's clearly more engagement on Pakistan and India than other places... There's also an appreciation of poverty and the role poverty has in things. That also fits into this. When you talk about politics in these places. Religion and poverty etcetera, they're all tied together. (2-new)

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The second quote is from a second-generation Palestinian who is studying political science. He said:

> If I had a personal choice of what I wanted to study, I would choose economics or aeronautics, but when I was 10 years old, my cousin got killed about 20 paces in front of his doorstep after curfew by an Israeli soldier and the injustices that my people suffer… I feel what I really need to do is to restore justice and the best when I can do that is to [be] involved in the [American] political process. (3-cmes)

Though family ties were an important source of information for immigrants and their children (which make up about two-thirds of American Muslims), knowledge stemming from religious group association did not come only through family ties. For example, when asked the Pew survey question about whether conditions were better or worse for women in the U.S. compared to "Muslim majority countries," one African-American respondent asserted, "There are quite a few Muslim countries. Given the breadth of Muslim countries, I would have to maybe say it's the same on balance… and I have to maybe, because I don't know every single Muslim country" (24-new). Many respondents gave similarly non-committal answers – and cited the diversity of Muslims with whom they associate as the reason for these views.

In fact, both immigrants and non-immigrants of all ethnicities tended to draw upon their personal interactions to provide information about the Muslim world. This knowledge, filtered through the lens of sympathetic immigrants, often colored their views on issues. For example, when asked whether his views on the Palestinian cause were influenced by being Muslim, the above-mentioned Palestinian replied, "If I wasn't Muslim, if I were a random American then, if I study the issue, which I probably wouldn't, then I would probably come to the same conclusions, because the issues make sense to me logically" (3-new). This respondent feels that because he

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associates with other Muslims, he is aware of the issue, but that his position is guided not only by theology or even affective ties, but by the information that this association brings to his attention.

Similarly, it was not only Palestinian immigrants who drew upon sympathetic accounts of the plight of the Palestinians. In discussing extremism, one respondent not of Palestinian descent asserted that "it is a very sore spot to talk about Palestine. They have been so brutalized for so many years that I don't even touch it. I could never pass judgment on them [the Palestinians]. Whatever they do, I will not say that it is right or wrong" (9-new). The concern did not stem primarily from religious group affect – i.e. the perpetrators are Muslim and therefore they should be excused. This is clear because the respondent asserted that she was firmly against "Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden and all of the people that follow him and the extremists that are coming about from the wars that we have created in Afghanistan and Iraq" (9-new). Instead, she reflected, "The current situation, especially in the Middle East, and the war and the fighting – it's ridiculous. It went beyond normal fighting or normal ways of doing business politically, and the world standing on the side and watching from a distance and seeing people being killed on a daily basis is a bit too much to handle" (23-cmes). The respondent thus located her response in sympathetic accounts, available to her, as to other respondents, because of association with other Muslims. Similarly sympathetic attitudes were found in many respondents. Another example comes from a respondent who asserted, when talking about extremism, "It is the last resort of the desperate." He continued, "I understand the suicide bombers. I understand they are wrong…but I understand where they are coming from. As an observer I would say they are so desperate… It's despair. Nobody wants to kill innocent people. Why are they doing it?... Despair" (4-new).

These quotes should not be taken to suggest that all or most respondents supported terrorism. As I pointed out in the introduction, there is reason to believe that American Muslims

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are less supportive of violence against civilians than the general population. Even some of the respondents quoted above asserted that this form of violence could not be justified, but their views are softened by their sense of religious group commitment as well as a detailed, if highly subjective, sense of the plight of their co-religionists.

The above quotes suggest a prominent role not only for religious group association but also for religious group affect. This second aspect of religious group identity was also highlighted explicitly by a number of respondents as figuring significantly in their social attitudes and behaviors. In support of the idea that American Muslims see group affect as part of religious identity, one respondent explained:

> My political views are shaped by my Islam – my religion, but also my Islamic identity and the Islamic cultural perspective…. I care about what's happening to other Muslims around the world. I take it personally when, for example, President Obama decides to escalate the war in Afghanistan. That's going to mean there are more innocent people killed, and most of those people are going to be Muslim, because Afghanistan is a Muslim country. I'm a little bit more upset about that than I would be about us going and attacking Russia. If [it] was an unjust war, it's an unjust war, and both of them I would be mad about and wouldn't support, but I would be more angered by the fact that there are Muslims being killed. Any innocent human being shouldn't be killed. I'm not saying it's okay for non-Muslims to be killed. I'm saying I'd be angry and upset by all of it but I'm more upset because it's Muslims. (1-new)[2]

As this quote suggests, it is not only association that influences social attitudes but also affect. In addition to having knowledge drawn from association with co-religionists, which makes them sympathetic, respondents were often especially sympathetic when the victims were Muslim. For example, when responding to a question asking about the "war on terrorism," one respondent asserted, "If it is sincere, I'm behind it, because the first ones who are affected by it are Muslims. So I'm all for a war on extremism, because it's really a war on ignorance. Someone is manipulating the faith to say it is ok to kill *Muslims"* (24-new, emphasis in original). The

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[2] The first sentence of this response is cited above in my discussion of affect.

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respondent's emphasis on the fact that extremism hurts Muslims suggests that he has particularly strong affective ties to co-religionists that influence his political views.

The strong pattern of tying religious group commitment to religious identity should not be taken as a suggestion that every respondent asserted that religion was completely communal. There were respondents who were definitely of the opinion that it didn't (or, more frequently, shouldn't) matter who you're associated with. For example, while some respondents asserted that intermarriage was dangerous because the strong fellowship ties with a non-Muslim might dilute one's faith, others asserted, "I think that it's perfectly fine for a Muslim to marry a non-Muslim because religion is personal expression and presumably the marrying of a non-Muslim wouldn't change that interior expression of religion" (5-new). Similarly, though Respondent 2 asserted that he was more in tune with the concerns of Pakistan because he was Muslim, he also asserted that one of his religious role-models was the basketball player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, because he asserted publicly "that you don't necessarily need a big religious community to do the right thing" (2-cmes). Clearly, these and other respondents remained committed to the idea that religious group commitment, while important, is not the totality of religious identity.

Measuring Religious Group Commitment

Despite the belief among some respondents that it is possible to be religious without a community, there was a common understanding that religious group commitment has a significant influence on the social attitudes and behaviors of American Muslims. However, as we saw with religious belief orthodoxy, the actual relationship between religious identity and social attitudes does not always align with the assumptions of the respondents. This last section of the chapter tests the relationship between religious group commitment and the distinctive social attitudes of American Muslims, as measured by the Pew survey.

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In my articulation of the above model of religiosity for American Muslims, I demonstrated that the degree of one's ritual practice is an indicator of religious group involvement. Unfortunately, the data I have available does not make it possible to separate ritual practice into affective and associative components. Further, the causal relationship between ritual practice and group commitment is unclear, since it is likely to act both as a cause for group commitment as well as an effect of it. Therefore, the latent ritual practice factor extracted from the two-factor model in chapter 4 will be used as an indicator of group commitment without further modification.

In addition to the ritual practice latent factor developed in chapter 4, a more direct indicator of religious group commitment exists – namely, how many of a respondent's close friends are Muslim. Respondents were able to select from the following 5 options: "All of them," "Most of them," "Some of them," "Hardly any of them," or "None of them." Cognitive interviews suggest that the meaning of the "Some of them" category was ambiguous. Certain respondents interpreted this category as more than half, saying "Some…more than 50%" (25-new), while others answered, "Some of them… I think it's fairly distributed among religions" (23-new). Further ambiguity arose in that respondents did not all have the same understanding of "close friends." Some respondents may not even have recognized that the question asked only of close friends. At any rate, it is difficult to distinguish association from fellowship (association with affect). Despite the fact that this ambiguity makes it impossible to separate pure association from fellowship, the question remains a useful overall indicator of group commitment.

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Table 6.1: Logistic Regression – Group Commitment and Social Attitudes [a] [b]

ordered logistic	ritual		friends	
Q.H1. Violence against civilians is not justified to defend Islam	-0.16		-0.37	*
Q.H5. Unfavorable opinion of Al Qaeda	-0.20		-0.36	*
Q.G1. The quality of life for Muslim women in the U.S. is worse than in Muslim countries	0.14		0.23	
Q.H3. Arabs were responsible for 9/11 attacks	-0.62	**	-0.59	***
Q.D3. The coverage of Islam by American news is unfair	0.34	**	0.27	*
Q.B2-d. Homosexuality is a way of life that should be discouraged by society	0.61	***	0.37	**
Q.B2-a. I worry the government is getting too involved in the issue of morality	-0.33	**	-0.26	*
Q.H4. The war on terror is not a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism.	0.22		0.25	+
Q.C1. Military force in Afghanistan was the wrong decision	0.28	*	0.51	***
Q.C2. Military force in Iraq was the wrong decision	0.47	*	0.21	
Q.B3. Big government is good	-0.09		0.48	***
Q.B1. Disapprove of President Bush	0.18		0.18	
Q.B2-b. Immigrants are a burden on the U.S.	-0.25		-0.09	
Q.H7. Not bothered that Muslims are singled out for additional security	-0.38	*	-0.28	+

*** p<.001, ** p <.01, *p<.05,+p <.10

[a] Statistics drawn from the 2007 Pew Survey of American Muslims. Actual question wording can be found in appendix A.

[b] Controlled for gender, age, and race/ethnicity. I also tested with both religious belief and ritual practice in the same regression model; the results differed only slightly

To derive the above table, I measured the level of group commitment of each respondent using the respondent's level of ritual practice and number of Muslim friends. The predictive power of group commitment was tested on each of the 14 social attitude questions upon which American Muslims are significantly different from the general population. Because the social attitudes are ordinal variables, ordered logistic regression was necessary. As table 6.1 shows, there is a significant relationship between the two indicators of religious group commitment and most of the social attitudes, even with control variables in place for race/ethnicity, age, and gender. Eight of the fourteen social attitudes have a significant relationship with the number of Muslim friends a respondent has, with another two having a suggestive relationship (.05<P<.10). Seven of the fourteen social attitudes have a statistically significant relationship with the

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respondent's level of ritual practice. Unlike the results of our previous analysis of religious belief, group commitment clearly impacts many of the social attitudes held by American Muslims.

In addition to the strong indication that religious group commitment is an indicator of many social attitudes, the overlapping patterns of ritual involvement and Muslim friends offers further support for the idea that the two are both indicators of group commitment. Every indicator that is even marginally significant (plus all but one of the non-significant coefficients) indicates influence in the same direction.

Discussion

When taken together, the quantitative and qualitative data offer some insight into the mechanisms by which social attitudes and behaviors are influenced by religious group commitment. One of the most salient examples of religious group commitment influencing social attitude may be the finding that American Muslims who have higher levels of group commitment are more likely to be bothered that Muslims are singled out for additional security. It seems likely that both affect (in the sense of not wanting co-religionists singled out) and association (the experience of hearing first- and second-hand accounts of this sort of singling out) are at work in shaping the lower level of acceptance of this aspect of the government's anti-terrorism policies.

Both affect and association are likely also at work in encouraging those respondents with higher levels of religious group commitment to believe that the U.S. made the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan and Iraq. Respondents with strong affective group commitment are more likely to be disturbed by the idea that Muslims – their co-religionists – are being subjected to violence at the hands of the American government. In addition, association is

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likely, once again, to be an important factor in respondents having access to personal accounts of Muslim suffering from the use of military force. Interestingly, the predictive role of respondents' ritual involvement is stronger in the case of Iraq than Afghanistan, but the actual number of Muslim friends is only significant with regard to Afghanistan. The fact that ritual involvement has less of an impact on views regarding Afghanistan may be because the invasion of Afghanistan had a more widely accepted political justification, as a reaction to the attacks of 9/11/2001. By contrast, the fact that having more Muslim friends significantly decreases support among respondents for the invasion of Afghanistan but not for Iraq may be explained by an increased skepticism of the media's portrayal of the plight of the Afghan people under the Taliban, since some respondents had favorable views of the "legitimate jihad" that ejected the Russians from Afghanistan and placed the Taliban in control.

The belief that media coverage of Muslims is generally unfair is, itself, significantly related to both measures of religious group commitment. This is likely to be explained primarily by religious group association, given that, in my interviews, respondents asserted that they felt their personal experiences with Muslims contradicted what they saw in the media. The sense that the American media does not accurately portray the Muslim community finds some objective veracity in the fact that only 1% of American Muslims believe violence against civilians is "often justified," but much more than one percent of the media coverage of Muslims addresses terrorism. While this may be the result of a general focus on sensationalism in the American media, it leads American Muslims – and Americans who have a great deal of interaction with the Muslim community – to feel, not surprisingly, that this coverage is "unfair."

The sense that the media is unfair, and therefore unreliable, plays a role in explaining why American Muslims with strong religious group commitment are less likely to believe that

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the 9/11 attackers were accurately identified by the American media. Manifesting especially powerfully with regard to this issue, that distrust can be explained, at least in part, by the fact that Muslims with strong religious group association are likely to "know" from personal experience that Muslims and Islam are against terrorism.

Similarly, a distrust of the media, coupled with knowledge of the goals of al-Qaeda, leads to a more nuanced – and therefore more sympathetic – view of the organization. The fact that less unfavorable views are closely tied to a respondent's number of Muslim friends, but not to ritual involvement, suggests that al-Qaeda is more likely to be discussed in non-religious contexts (say, at dinner with Muslim friends) than in religious ones (such as in the mosque). This distinction is supported by the interview data, which showed that American Muslims tend to view al-Qaeda through a political rather than a religious lens. Violence against civilians, in contrast, is clearly viewed as a religious issue in most cases, so the less absolute rejection of it among those with Muslim friends (though again, not among ritual involvement) seems most likely to be tied to access to sympathetic accounts carried by Palestinian refugees.

The ideas that big government is good and that the government should be involved in issues of morality are both tied to the number of Muslim friends, perhaps because respondents who are around other Muslims are more likely to believe that Muslims can have a significant impact on the political landscape. In my interviews, a number of respondents spoke about a Muslim "block vote," but it seems likely that people with few or no Muslim friends would be less certain of that possibility. Interestingly, the idea that the government should be involved with issues of morality is also tied to the level of ritual involvement. One reason for this may be the sense among some Muslim communities that America is, at its roots, a Christian country; therefore, government involvement in morality is likely to result in a common Abrahamic

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understanding of said morality. The significance and prevalence of the view that America is a Christian country will be explored in more depth in the next chapter.

The strength of the association between the rejection of homosexuality and both ritual and non-ritual group commitment is not surprising, given the fact that this attitude is tied to religious belief orthodoxy as well. It seems likely that association with co-religionists reinforces this commonly held attitude (only 27% of American Muslims surveyed responded that homosexuality should be accepted by society). In addition, there is likely to be an inverse relationship between association with American Muslims and association with openly gay persons. My interviews reinforce the findings reported in Edward Curtis's book: it is rare for Muslims to be openly homosexual (Curtis 2008). This lack of contact would further strengthen a pattern of non-acceptance.

The four issues that had no significant relationship with religious group commitment are also worth considering. The ideas that immigrants are good for America and that the quality of life for women in Muslim countries is better than in the U.S. might both be expected to be tied to group association, if not affect, given that the American Muslim community has such a high proportion of immigrants. Yet neither idea correlated. The cognitive interviews shed some light on this surprising lack of correspondence. When answering the question, respondents often felt that the complexity of Muslims and the Muslim world made both questions unanswerable. This sense of complexity likely led both to a higher level of non-response and to a general sense that both good and bad exist among Muslim countries and individuals.

The lack of a significant relationship between religious group commitment and the last two questions – namely, the sincerity of the war on terrorism and disapproval of George W. Bush as president – was also somewhat surprising. The fact that attitudes on these issues are not

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related to religious group commitment points us toward the final aspect of religious identity: religious group context. Though only 15% of American Muslims believed George W. Bush was doing a good job as president in 2007 (as opposed to 35% of the general population), it appears that their concerns are not tied to religious group commitment generally. Rather, their disapproval stemmed from issues specific to subgroups and to the general social context of Islam in America. Similarly, though only 26% of American Muslims believe that the war on terrorism was a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism (compared to 67% of the general population), this too may reflect a respondent's attitude more generally of how Islam interacts with American society, rather than association with or affect for Muslims.

It should be clear from the preceding analysis that group commitment plays an important role in influencing the social attitudes of American Muslims. Both survey data and in-depth interviews show that affect and association play a role in many of the social attitudes and behaviors that are distinctive to American Muslims. In addition, it is important to recognize that group commitment is an aspect of religious identity. The inclusion of group commitment in religious identity is grounded in theology, recognized by American Muslims, and validated by statistical support. This support emerges when certain elements distinctive to Islam are given due consideration, from the lack in Islam of a distinctively private aspect of religious ritual involvement to the high degree of overlap in the effects of ritual involvement and number of Muslim friends.

Taken together, religious belief orthodoxy and religious group commitment help to explain why the social attitudes of American Muslims are different from the larger society. However, the patterns described in these two chapters still fail to account for much of what American Muslims view as their religious identity. Many American Muslims feel that their

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religious identity is relevant even in situations that lack any correlation with belief orthodoxy or group commitment. To understand this phenomenon, the next and final chapter will explore how these Muslims infuse their racial and civic identities with religious meaning.

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Chapter 7: Composite Identity

If I was completely non-religious, this course of career would be nonsensical. (Moe)

Moe feels that his career in the non-profit sector is guided by his religious identity. Despite his assertions to the contrary, Moe is completely non-religious, at least according to the measures I have discussed so far. His religious belief orthodoxy is almost zero: he doesn't believe in heaven, hell, or judgment; he views the Qur'an as a historical document and not the word of God; in fact, he's not completely sure God exists – although he "likes the idea of God." His religious group commitment is not much higher than his belief orthodoxy. Rather than being identified by his distinctively Islamic given name, he goes by a nickname even in professional circles. He feels uncomfortable around other Muslims. He has few, if any, Muslim friends and what little affective tie he feels toward the country of his parents' origin apparently stems from familiarity with the country, not from any particular tie to the Muslim *ummah*. He feels the same affective ties to the country in which he lived during his time in the Peace Corps.

Moe is not unique. The Pew survey shows that respondents with low religious belief orthodoxy and low religious group involvement frequently asserted that religion is very important to them. This assertion – that religion is very important to them – is made by 50% of respondents that never go to the mosque for prayer, as well as by 49% of the respondents who said that none or almost none of their friends are Muslim. The same assertion was made by 6 of the 20 survey respondents who asserted that they didn't believe in God. In my interviews, Moe was not the only respondent who invoked religious identity as an explanation for social attitudes and behaviors despite low religious belief orthodoxy and low religious group commitment.

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The previous two chapters explored the effects of religious belief orthodoxy and religious group involvement on the distinctive social attitudes and behaviors of American Muslims. These chapters shed light on religious identity; however, the importance of religious identity among American Muslims extends beyond these two factors. The perceived importance of religious identity, even after accounting for religious belief and group involvement, suggests that it may be helpful to consider how Islam can be implicated in ostensibly non-religious aspects of identity such as civic and racial/ethnic identity. This chapter explores civic and ethnic identities specifically because they are of particular import for Muslims in the American context, and because they are themselves so closely related to issues of class, immigration, and conversion among American Muslims.

This chapter finds that many American Muslims feel it is possible to simultaneously enact an American civic identity, a Muslim religious identity, and any one of a variety of racial or ethnic identities. In order to ensure that these identity claims are not in conflict, American Muslims work to align certain religious norms with civic and ethnic norms. This involves both adapting the religious norms to the local context and selectively internalizing racial and civic norms. I begin the chapter by highlighting the role of racial and civic identities in explaining the social attitudes of American Muslims. I then show that the intertwining of religious identity with racial and civic cultural commitments is a practice that American Muslims both acknowledge and support with theological evidence. Finally, I describe some of the ways in which religious identity shapes these cultural commitments as well as how cultural commitments can influence religious identity.

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The Influence of Racial and Civic Identity on Social Attitudes

Table 7.1: Logistic Regression - American Muslim Attitudes by Race [a b c]

LOGISTIC REGRESSION	White	Arab	South Asian	Iranian	European	African
Q.B2-d. Homosexuality is a way of life that should be discouraged by society	-0.80*	0.32	-0.15	-0.18	-1.26**	-0.04
Q.B2-a. I worry the government is getting too involved in the issue of morality	0.13	-1.17***	-0.36	-0.58	-0.19	-0.40
Q.H4. The war on terror is not a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism.	-0.72	-1.03**	-0.94**	-0.48	-0.32	-1.03*
Q.C1. Military force in Afghanistan was the wrong decision	-2.03***	-1.12**	-1.59***	-1.38**	-1.57**	-1.40***
Q.C2. Military force in Iraq was the wrong decision	-1.18+	-1.15*	-0.54	-0.52	0.42	-0.59
Q.B3. Big government is good	-0.53	0.13	-0.34	0.16	-0.49	0.30
Q.B1. Disapprove of President Bush	-1.33+	-1.92***	-2.38***	-1.93***	-0.51	-1.68**
Q.B2-b. Immigrants are a burden on the U.S.	-0.90	-1.15**	-1.99***	-1.42**	-2.76***	-1.50**
Q.H7. Not bothered that Muslims are singled out for additional security	-0.11	0.38	0.14	0.81	0.16	-0.56
Q.H1. Violence against civilians is not justified to defend Islam	0.36	0.28	0.50	0.46	0.22	0.64
Q.H5. Unfavorable opinion of Al Qaeda	2.53***	1.26***	2.27***	3.76***	1.42**	1.77***
Q.G1. The quality of life for Muslim women in the U.S. is worse than in Muslim countries	0.40	0.98**	-0.62+	-0.56	-1.19*	0.18
Q.H3. Arabs were responsible for 9/11 attacks	0.88	-0.79*	0.03	0.60	1.13+	0.20
Q.D3. The coverage of Islam by American news is unfair	0.03	-0.59	-0.46	-0.36	-0.57	-0.59

*** p<.001, ** p <.01, *p<.05,+p <.10

[a] Statistics drawn from the 2007 Pew Survey of American Muslims. Actual question wording can be found in appendix A.

[b] African American as baseline

[c] Also controlled for gender, age, and religious commitment

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Table 7.2: Muslim Attitudes by Country of Residence

	America	Britain	France	Germany	Spain	Egypt	Turkey	Indonesia	Pakistan	Jordan	Nigeria
Muslim before nationality	47%	81%	46%	66%	69%	59%	51%	36%	87%	67%	71%
Conflict between being a devoted Muslim and modern society	32%	47%	28%	36%	25%	28%	29%	43%	48%	34%	33%
Concerned with Islamic Extremisms around the world	51%	52%	35%	29%	29%	22%	15%	30%	43%	31%	24%
Violence against civilians never justified	78%	70%	64%	83%	69%	45%	61%	71%	69%	43%	28%
Believe Arabs carried out attacks of September 11, 2001	40%	17%	48%	35%	33%	32%	16%	16%	15%	39%	47%
U.S. War on Terrorism is a sincere effort	26%	--	--	--	--	--	20%	--	6%	11%	17%
A way can be found for Israel to exist so the rights of the Palestinians are cared for	61%						33%	26%	23%	14%	

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Table 7.2 compares the social attitudes of American Muslims to that of Muslims in other countries. The table shows wide differences in social attitude across countries. American Muslims are less likely to put religious identity before civic identity than are Muslims in Britain, Germany, Spain, Egypt, Pakistan, Jordan, Nigeria, and perhaps Turkey. They are more likely to put religious identity head of civic identity than Muslim in Indonesia and perhaps France. This variation, whether toward stronger or weaker pre-eminence of religious identity, reinforces the idea that Islamic theology is insufficient for understanding the social attitudes of Muslims and suggests that civic identity plays an important role in shaping these attitudes. A similar pattern of variation exists when Muslims are asked whether there is a conflict between being a devoted Muslim and living in a modern society. In all of these cases, American Muslims clearly have a distinctive understanding about how their religion fits into modern Western society.

Many of the questions which form the core of this dissertation's inquiry simply have not been surveyed in Muslim populations overseas, but there are 3 exceptions: the international survey cited above asked whether violence against civilians can be justified, whether the 9/11 attackers were correctly identified, and whether U.S. war on terrorism is a sincere effort. Responses to all three questions show significant variation across countries. None of these questions were strongly related to religious belief orthodoxy, and only one – whether or not the 9/11 attackers were correctly identified – correlated to religious group commitment. It seems clear that civic identity plays an important role, yet civic identity cannot be the only difference, given that these three questions were selected because American Muslims differ from the broader American public with which they share a civic identity. This suggests that civic identity and religious identity must be interacting in some way.

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Table 7.1, which addresses variation in racial or ethnic identity among Muslims in the U.S., shows even more dramatic variation. Of the 14 questions that form the core of this dissertation, 11 show variation across racial subgroups. This suggests that racial variation is as strongly related to the social attitudes under investigation as is religious group commitment. It seems clear that racial and civic identity both play important roles in determining the social attitudes of American Muslims.

Admittedly, categorical racial self-identification, country of origin, and country of residence are very crude indicators of ethnic and civic identities. They do offer, however, gross indicators of these identity claims. While it seems almost certain that each of these identities vary in levels of group involvement and abstract commitment – just as religious identity does – more precise measures are neither readily available for the American Muslim community nor, in truth, necessary for this study. The focus of my inquiry is religious identity, and these alternatives are relevant primarily inasmuch as they are infused with religious meaning. I will restrict their consideration, therefore, to the categorical identity claims of the respondents. This is inherently limited. Even so, topics where self-identified Muslims hold social attitudes which are distinctive from the broader American public offered a useful starting point for exploring religious identity in detail; similarly, topics where racial and civic subgroups of Muslims hold distinctive social attitudes are also a useful starting point for more detailed analysis.

Categorical analysis of this type is also problematic because both civic identity and ethnic identity are, themselves, intertwined with a host of other identities. For example, when compared with immigrant Muslims, African-American Muslims are likely to have less education and a lower income and to have converted to Islam. In contrast, almost no Arab or South Asian

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Muslims are converts: the vast majority are first-generation immigrants from a country with a long history of Muslim governance and very large Muslim populations. In addition, these immigrants tend to be highly educated and economically successful, many having gained permission to come to the U.S. specifically due to their professional skills. Patterns like these make it difficult to separate racial, ethnic, economic, cohort, and period effects within the American Muslim community. The overlap makes it difficult, if not impossible, to determine statistically which of these identities is at work. A large body of ethnographic and interview data suggests, however, that racial and ethnic identity is at the core of response variation (Leonard 2003).

Islamic Norms Regarding Composite Identity

That racial and civic identities influence social attitudes likely comes as little surprise. My respondents often pointed out the influence of "culture" on social attitudes and behaviors themselves. However, many of my respondents saw these differences in racial and civic identity as being intertwined with religious identity and meaning. A number of them offered theological evidence supporting the need for these cultural commitments to be viewed through the lens of religious identity. For example, one respondent explicitly asserted, "There's this principle in Islamic law that good culture arbitrates…we have the same concept in American law – that cultural norms and customs, if they're good, can form the basis of the law" (6-cmes). A number of respondents cited a popular Chicago-based scholar of Islam who has written: "In history, Islam showed itself to be culturally friendly and, in that regard, has been likened to a crystal clear river. Its waters [Islamic identity] are pure, sweet, and life-giving but—having no color of their own—reflect the bedrock [ethnic and civic identities] over which they flow" (Abdullah

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2004). Some version of this quote was offered more than once as evidence that religious identity should be integrated with other identity claims rather than inhibiting them, in the same way that clear water does not obscure what lies beneath it.

In classical Islamic sources, the idea that alternate identities should matter for Islamic social attitudes is strongly suggested by the importance of custom (*‘urf)* in deciding what context-specific social norms can be approved by Islamic law. As one scholar explains:

> Custom was not one of the formal sources of law (*uṣūl*, sing. *aṣl*) in classical Islamic law. In practice, however, custom was frequently drawn on as a material source of law. Eventually, in the 16th century, it gained something close to formal recognition; but before that time attempts were made to incorporate custom in the law without granting it formal recognition, particularly (but not only) by Ḥanafī jurists. (Levy 2011)

Though the idea that alternate identities should matter is generally well-supported in Islamic law, Muslims in America are particularly aware of this fact. A number of immigrant respondents reported that, in their countries of origin, they did not feel the need to think about what was or was not Islamically appropriate. One Arab immigrant, when talking about her life before she came to the U.S., asserted, “I don’t need to think about what is or isn’t okay because I grew up in a religious house and so everything we did ritually had already been vetted by generations of religious knowledge” (4-new). Since coming to the U.S., however, she had experienced the need to re-negotiate religious issues.

Interview subjects were very aware that their views of Islam were influenced by identity claims that were not inherently religious. Some reported that the influence of these other identity claims extended beyond issues of social attitude to encompass ritual elements of Islam. For example, knowing that the Islamic prayer ritual (*salah)* is generally gender segregated, one respondent asserted the following when discussing how mosques should be organized for prayer:

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"Equal participation of everyone is one of the most important things – especially across genders. I have a problem with separate but equal – this is my historical baggage" (6-cmes). Both immigrants and U.S. born Muslims asserted that their "historical baggage" or "cultural seating" (7-new) played an important role in their understanding of Islam.

Some Muslims went even further, by recognizing (and sometimes critiquing) how Islam has been influenced by competing identities in other countries. For example, when discussing burial customs, one Egyptian immigrant grumbled, "In Islam there are many things that are very straightforward, but Egyptians do wrong things when it comes to death" (4-new). More than one respondent asserted that America offered a better context in which to practice their religion than Muslim majority countries for a variety of reasons. One South Asian immigrant, who lived in Saudi Arabia for a time, explained, "I feel more comfortable practicing my faith here than in other countries." When asked if this included the Muslim-majority countries he had lived in, he assented: "Yes. For example, in Saudi, gatherings are not permitted. Political gatherings or religious oriented gatherings were very difficult. Here, there are no problems" (25-new).

For many respondents that were raised in Muslim households, the interplay of religious identity and other cultural norms was so common that it was impossible to disentangle the two. As Moe expounded, "Religion and culture are hard to separate…what part of your upbringing is religion and what part is culture is a pretty complicated mix." Similarly, another respondent, when talking about her parents (who were South Asian immigrants) explained, "Their religion is very closely tied to their culture and that would be South Asian culture" (10-new).

The interplay of religious identity with civic identity, both in the U.S. and in other countries, was recognized by all of my interview respondents. The presence of this intertwining

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is helpful in understanding why the views of American Muslims differ significantly from those held by general American public in only 3 of the 7 questions for which cross-national data is available – while differing from Muslim publics in other countries on all 7. The significance of the questions on which American Muslims differ from the general American public should not be discounted, of course. Instead, they give some support to the insistence of American Muslims that the influence of culture on their religious identity, while obvious, does not reflect a simple watering down of their religion.

American Muslims generally feel the reconciliation as an active – and selective – process. One immigrant from the Arab world described what she felt was the ideal synergy when discussing her nephews:

> My uncle [an immigrant] did a very good job raising his two boys [in America]. They are the ideal human beings. They straddle the two worlds like ballet dancers. They are totally successful in an American context and religious to the point of mysticism. They would play soccer competitively and still fast during Ramadan in the summer and never complain. Always with a smile. Very happy, well adjusted, tolerant..." (4-new)

This active need to reconcile is highlighted by scholars studying American Muslims (Jackson 2005) as well as immigrants (El Kacimi 2008). It was also felt and discussed by my respondents. In the words of one respondent, "it's very hard to create a middle road where your kids can be good Muslims and good Americans in every possible way" (4-new). Though American Muslims do not feel there is an inherent conflict between being a good American and a good Muslim, they recognize the potential for conflict and feel that avoiding it requires work.

Because this process is felt to be active, respondents believed that some American Muslims were better positioned to undertake it – to reconcile their identities – in a healthy way

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than others. The respondent quoted above went on to contrast her successful uncle with a poorly educated immigrant she knew:

> My hairdresser talks about us vs. them. He's not that educated and doesn't know English that well so he can't help his kids very much. I feel sorry for him. He'd rather be in Egypt but there's no economy there. So he has to work constantly. His kids will just be apart from society. I think an educated parent will probably be more able to raise a well adjusted child. (4-new)

The general agreement that religious identity can and should fit with a person's culture is one reason why the public implications of religious identity vary so widely by context. While it is not difficult to find conflicts between commonly held Western social attitudes and the social attitudes propagated, and attributed to Islam, by the Taliban in Afghanistan or by the Saudi Monarchy, the portion of American Muslims who feel that there is a conflict between being a good Muslim and living in a modern society (32%) is roughly the same as the portion of the general American public that feels that way about being a good Christian (29%). For the majority of respondents no inherent conflict exists. In cognitive interviews, one respondent went so far as to claim, "If someone is a good Muslim, he is a good American too" (25-new). Another asserted, "I don't understand what the conflict would be. Why couldn't you be a devout Muslim and also live in America?" (10-new). That this feeling is tied to the civic identities of Muslims living in America is suggested by table 7.2, which shows that this sense of alignment is not felt by Muslims in all countries: 47% of Muslims in Britain and 48% of Muslims in Pakistan feel that there is a conflict. Yet Muslims in America are much less likely to believe that there is a conflict than to believe that there is not one. Though certain ideologues in the West and the Muslim world alike posit an inherent conflict between Islamic norms and American values, American

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Muslims often see their Islamic principles pushing them toward being better citizens. Furthermore, some view their presence in America as helping them be better Muslims.

Both qualitative and quantitative data show American Muslims going to great lengths to reject the idea that American and Islamic identities are in conflict. When asked during the survey whether they viewed themselves as American first or Muslim first, one in four respondents rejected both of the close coded responses, insisting instead that neither was accurate. These respondents asserted that they were "both" American and Muslim equally (18%), "neither" American first nor Muslim first (6%) or refused to answer the question (1%). Given that "both" and "neither" were not actually offered as responses, insisting on these responses required the respondent to work against the survey instrument (and the survey administrator). This behavior suggests not just a mild dislike for the dichotomy but an adamant rejection. Table 7.2 shows that, in cross-national comparisons, American Muslims are especially likely to reject the need to choose. This objection to a conflict between American and Islamic identities was even more strongly evident during the cognitive interviews, in which these questions often elicited frustration and anger. One respondent declared: "That question is obnoxious!" (5-new). Even respondents who answered the question without difficulty still insisted on qualifying their answers or expressing some reservations. For example, Moe asserted that he saw himself "first as an American" but quickly went on to say, "I don't necessarily see those things as oppositional" (new).

In addition to the frequency with which respondents saw no conflict between Islam and a modern society, and the frequency with which respondents showed an unwillingness to prioritize American versus Islamic identity, the Pew survey offers a third indicator of the respondent's

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sense that their civic identity influenced their religious identity. When asked whether Muslims coming to the U.S. should "adopt American customs and ways of life" or "remain distinct from American society," we find that one in four survey respondents insisted that either "both" or "neither" be recorded as their answer. In the cognitive interviews, more than one interview subject asserted that Muslims in the U.S. should do both. One explained, "You want to frame the question as either/or and it's not… There's room in North America for a Muslim to practice Islam and still contribute to the society at large" (5-new).

Cognitive interviews found that, though the three questions linguistically address different issues, respondents often treated each of them as probing the level of conflict between Islamic identity and American civic identity – a question which is not directly asked by any of these questions. Rather than finding that religious identity is in conflict with or is parallel to other identity claims, my interviews revealed that the integration of religious and non-religious identity was the norm. Not only did respondents reject the need to choose between being a good American and a good Muslim, but they also felt it was possible to fulfill both duties at the same time. They further refused to bracket certain issues as related to Islam and others as related to American society. One respondent explained it in this way:

> Most of these duties are general and universal. The question is where do I look to [in order] to find them. Some people look to nature, some people look to the bible, or their culture, or the family. Whereas me, where I look to [in order] to find my duties is the Qur'an, the revelation from God, or I look to the example of the prophet Muhammad. So when I want to know what does a father do, I look and see – he was a father, he had children – how did he interact with his children?" (6-cmes)

Interview subjects claimed an Islamic basis for a wide range of civic behaviors, including recycling, tolerance, honesty, education, and good manners. In doing so, the respondents often invoked canonical sources of Islamic law, such as the Qur'an and hadith, which suggests that

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they feel their positions to be well grounded in Islamic theology. By aligning generally accepted pro-social behaviors with their Islamic identity, American Muslims are able to feel simultaneously American and Muslim, rather than either feeling in conflict or switching between "religious" and "secular" roles.

The Public Consequences of Composite Identity

Though my respondents felt that they were both American and Muslim at the same time, the reconciling of the two identities sometimes left them with a perspective on what it means to be American clearly affected by their religious identity. For example, when describing his objection to blatant sexuality on television, one respondent asserted, "It's a conflict and because we don't have the same liberal views of how society should be as those people who are creating these problems, and until we can change the ways of the influence makers, there will always be a problem" (12-new). Significantly, the respondent asserts that his conflict isn't with American society in general, but with "those people who are creating these problems." He goes on to assert that these problem causers are only a small minority of the larger society. Much like the rhetoric of certain Christian conservatives, there is a perception among many American Muslims that America is a Christian nation and so conservative religious principles are well suited to its moral environment.

These distinctive perceptions of America were often intertwined with racial overtones. While immigrants and their children often made assertions about how America was basically a Christian country, African-Americans seemed more skeptical. A number of the African-American respondents asserted, instead, that American civic identity was very poorly defined. More than one African-American respondent make claims such as, "No one has given me a

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definition for American that I can accept" (24-new). A more diplomatic phrasing came from another African-American respondent: "There are many different interpretations of American life" (7-new). In contrast, immigrants, and even the children of immigrants, seemed to perceive America through a somewhat idealized narrative of opportunity, religiosity, and fairness. These respondents were often both surprised and disturbed when that narrative failed to apply to them. This came up quite clearly in my interviews with Moe. At one point, he asserted, "So the Tea Party guy can say whatever he wants about the government and he's a patriot. Heaven forbid that anyone like me say any of the same things." He went on to observe:

> The Hutaree anti-government militia group that just got caught - if those had been 6 Muslims, how different would this be? Different sets of rules for different people is very troubling for me and that's the world we've been in for the last 10 years. Granted, African-Americans have always been in that world but it's a little weird for Muslims to be in that world when they really weren't before. (new)

Arguably the distinctive social attitudes of American Muslims with regard to the institutions of civil society – such as the media and the federal government – are further evidence of the impact of religious identity on civic identity. American Muslims were often less trusting of these institutions than the general public. Significantly, as the previous chapters showed, these differences are strongly tied to issues of religious group commitment.

As my interviews demonstrate, many respondents viewed much of the racial and ethnic difference shown in table 7.1 as tied to their religious identities. Previous scholars have highlighted certain aspects of this pattern as related to the theological tension between a universal and a context-specific religious commitment, or as arising from the tension between concerns for local Muslim communities (*assabiya*) and global Muslim communities (*ummah*) (McCloud 1995). These interview and survey results make it clear that the variety of social

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contexts across subgroups of American Muslims does indeed often play a central role in decisions about what individual Muslims view as general Islamic concerns.

This point is made explicitly by interview subjects. For example, the two upper-middle-class Caucasian Muslim converts that I interviewed both saw political involvement as an Islamic duty. One of them explained the relationship between his political involvement and his religious commitment in this way:

> I'm very much involved [in the political process]. It started before I was Muslim. I grew up on campaigns and going to political events and it never really stopped. At various points, I had a lot of questions about how ought I be involved and to what extent [because of] religion, but I never ceased to be involved… To a certain extent, there are these commitments that were part of who I was before I was Muslim, and when I became Muslim and was doing my studying, everyone I encountered said that the things, not only are they compatible but often a good Muslim would do these things. So when these get challenged later I don't feel as much that I have to defend those." (6-cmes)

Even though the respondent's commitment to political involvement predates his becoming Muslim, he asserts that this involvement is "compatible or even encouraged" by Islam. The fact that not all Muslims agree with this position, with some having challenged him on the Islamic grounds of his belief, has not prevented this respondent from giving Friday sermons extolling his fellow Muslims to be politically involved.

Similarly, when explaining the reason why he felt that addressing the concerns of African-Americans (Muslim and non-Muslim) was a religious duty, one African-American Muslim explained, "I can't be a Muslim and not be concerned with my tribe" (24-new). Similarly, a Palestinian Arab Muslim asserted that the conflict between Israel and Palestine was a religious issue because it concerns "Islamic lands" and inflicts harm on "Islamic peoples" (3-new). At the same time, he also ascribed his political behavior to his ethnicity, claiming: "If I were not an Arab I would not be going into politics" (3-cmes).

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Why Composite Identity is Not Just Secular

Though most respondents felt that religious identity was frequently intertwined with other identity claims, most respondents also felt that there were times when religious identity was in conflict with racial or civic commitments. One respondent summarized the impact of Islam in this way:

> If you are brought up in a household where your parents didn't get along or where your dad was violent – that's a learned behavior – and you're more likely to replicate that practice in your adult life. Islam, though, helps somebody to overcome some of these cultural practices and learned practices because Islam is very explicit about what is allowed and what is not allowed. And it can help in choosing behaviors that can help a believer stay clear of these things. (5-new)

Another respondent spoke about the dehumanizing aspects of *laissez-faire* capitalism, asserting that ritual practices, such as fasting, act as a counterweight to modern life:

> These practices are not an obstacle to progress if you take a wide view of what it means to be human. When I became overwhelmed by modern life and working etc., I realized that I should be grateful that there's a legitimate reason to be less than optimally productive for a whole month. There's something in all religions that's prescient. It foretells the rat race. I love modernity – driving, hi-tech hospitals, etc., but you don't have to be very intelligent to see the downside of modernity. Religion has a gentle reminder that there are other things that are important. (4-new)

Even the respondent who asserted that being a good Muslim necessitated being a good American acknowledged that, as a Muslim, he had some values that were different from non-Muslims: "For example, we don't eat pork. We don't consume alcohol" (25-new). He also invoked religious ideals when addressing his belief that homosexuality should be discouraged by society. In fact, most respondents, while asserting the lack of inherent conflict between Islamic and American values, still identified some potential for conflicts between the two. In some cases, these differences were restricted to acts of ritual practice, such as abstaining from pork or

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alcohol. In others, they extended to social attitudes and actions (such as views on homosexuality or fornication) or even to more general principles (such as a focus on economic success that doesn't consider its human costs). Other social issues that were invoked as being incompatible with Islam included a range of anti-social behaviors. For example, when asked if there are certain aspects of Western culture that are not compatible with Islam, another respondent assented: "I'm sure. The pornography, fornication, gambling. Some criminal acts – murdering people and chopping them up" (7-new).

When addressing these conflicts, most respondents evoked Islamic justifications for their objections to the acceptance of homosexuality in society. They did not limit their justifications, however, to Islamic sources. Instead, they often took steps to broaden the basis of their arguments. For example, when talking about homosexuality, respondents made claims such as, "all religions, kind of, deny the practice of homosexuality" (4-new), and "if it is based on any of the Abrahamic faiths, then all three reject homosexuality" (25-new). Some respondents went beyond religious argument completely, attempting to make secular arguments. One such argument stated: "It's counter productive. If you're going to take it purely from a scientific perspective, there's no way for the society to reproduce itself" (24-new).

It is worth noting that most of these arguments are not particularly novel, being widely available in American society. In fact, many of the aspects of American civic identity which respondents identified as incompatible with Islam were also objectionable to non-Muslim subcultures. Furthermore, issues such as the limits of free speech and the human costs of economic success are topics of active discussion in the secular public sphere. An exception to this pattern appears in some of the issues regarding sexuality, which have very little support in a

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secular worldview. Interestingly, a number of the less theologically and ritually involved Muslims that I interviewed seemed to realize this fact during the interview itself. For example, Moe initially stated that the acceptance of homosexuality by society should depend on whether or not it was caused by genetics or a personal choice. He then admitted, "I feel bad about [that position] now that I've said that. I should be a better person." When asked to clarify, he retracted his original (conditional) support for homosexuality, declaring instead: "Good for them [homosexuals]… Who is anyone to judge?" (new).

Discussion

This chapter has shown that American Muslims often view their social attitudes through a religious lens even when these attitudes instead correlate strongly with civic or ethnic identity. The interweaving of religious identity with these "cultural" identities suggests that American Muslims can view religion as an important factor in their social attitudes without feeling a need to impose a timeless and immutable *shariah* law on American society. As scholars of culture have long known, identity commitments often have a more limited role in causing actions than individuals believe (Swidler 2001). Similarly, scholars of religion have long said that it is possible for religions to retain a symbolic pride of place without substantive significance (Berger 1967). Some scholars of religion have assumed that members of most religious traditions would follow the mainline Protestant denominations in limiting their claims to regulate behavior in other spheres of life (Bruce 2002). It seems, however, that American Muslims continue to assert the relevance of religion on a wide range of issues, but adapt their religious identities to the local cultural context.

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The interaction of cultural context with religious identity is recognized by American Muslims and can be seen in the correlation of social attitudes with ethnic and civic identification. When considering civic identity, we find that American Muslims often feel that the American context is well suited to their religious needs and that their religious values are shared with Americans of other faiths. Of course, the American experience is not the same for all Muslims, with various ethnic subgroups often holding different views on how best to reconcile American and Islamic values. Though most American Muslims adhere to a universalistic notion of Islam, their racial subgroup has a profound influence on how their religious commitments manifest in their social attitudes. In working to reconcile American and Islamic social attitudes, American Muslims draw on Islam's theological room for cultural variation.

There are a variety ways in which ethic and civic identity can influence the public consequences of religious identity. In some cases, such as when asserting that America is a Christian nation, a strong religious identity influences how American Muslims perceive their social context. In other situations, it appears that American Muslims feel conflicted between their religious identity and their civic and ethnic identities. In most cases, however, it seems that racial and civic identity work to mediate the relationship between religious identity and social attitudes and behaviors.

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Chapter 8: Religious Identity: Pervasive but Flexible

> There is disagreement [about whether or not Muslims should recycle] because there's disagreement about everything, almost, in Islam. Unless it's those core things… (Dalila)

It turns out Dalila is right. There are only a handful of topics, such as ritual practices and views on homosexuality, which correlate consistently with religious belief orthodoxy. Yet Dalila, like 90% of American Muslims, insists that her religious identity is important. This insistence holds despite the fact that few attitudes or behaviors can be predicted based on abstract religious beliefs. In fact, every respondent I interviewed pointed to some aspect of their public behavior as stemming from their religious identity. Dalila believes that recycling is a religious duty, while other Muslims whose abstract theological beliefs are as orthodox as hers, do not. Many respondents recounted disagreements with co-religionists about what course of action was dictated by their shared religious beliefs. Because that variation is not predicted by belief orthodoxy, it would seem to support the assertion, found in many previous studies of culture and religion, that identity claims rarely matter. However, my study has found that having an Islamic identity does matter, although its impact is only demonstrable when we consider religious identity broadly.

The importance of religious identity can be seen in the power of theologically grounded concepts (like *ummah*) and practices (such as communal prayer) in ensuring that Muslim is not merely a category of identification but, instead, an actual identity group – one with its own collective interests and concerns. This importance emerges in the desire, among American Muslims, to tie their social attitudes and behaviors to their abstract beliefs and theological

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commitments, such as a belief in God, the Qur'an, and Judgment. Finally, it can be seen in the relationship between abstract religious beliefs and the other "core things" that Dalila mentions.

Religion – Just another Identity Group?

Perhaps the most striking evidence for the public consequences of religious identity comes from its ability to encourage group solidarity. Recall Aneesa's story, from chapter 6. She identifies as Sunni Muslim but has very unorthodox religious beliefs. Despite these beliefs, she was raised in a Muslim household, has quite a few Muslim friends, and a Muslim boyfriend. She has no doubt that her religious identity affects her – primarily by giving her access to specialized "in-group" knowledge, and by encouraging a concern about the group and its members. As with all personal accounts drawn from in-depth interviews, her account is unique in some ways; however, the link she demonstrates between group commitment and social attitudes is a common one. The existence of this link among American Muslims is well supported by statistical evidence from the Pew survey as well as individual interview accounts.

Of the 14 social attitudes which are the primary focus of this dissertation, all but 3 of them are significantly correlated to some aspect of religious group commitment. The proportion of a respondent's friends that are Muslim – one of two measures of group commitment that I used – is significantly correlated with 8 of the 14 social attitudes ($P<.05$), with a suggestive relationships to two more ($P <.1$). The second measure of religious group commitment – level of involvement in religious rituals – is correlated both with the first measure and with 7 of the 14 social attitude questions. While practices like prayer and fasting may be private for some religious communities, American Muslims follow a pattern suggested both by classical

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sociologists like Durkheim and by classical Islamic theologians in seeing these practices as collective expressions, even when they are performed alone.

The extent to which a respondent is involved with other Muslims – whether the focus is on involvement through religious rituals or through friendship – has direct bearing on most of the social attitudes. In fact, there is a high degree of overlap between the 7 social attitudes which were significantly related to ritual practice and the 8 that were strongly related to the number of Muslim friends a respondent has. In addition, many respondents, like Aneesa, asserted that their religious identity was strongly related to their ties to other Muslims. In sum, both the interview data and the statistical analysis show that religious group commitment plays an important role in shaping the social attitudes of American Muslims.

The Effect of Group Commitment on Social Attitudes

When religious identity manifests through group commitment, the effects are striking, in part because the issues on which they manifest and the reasons implied in the attitudes have much more to do with social psychology than theology. Three of the ways in which group commitment has public consequences that have been identified by social psychology literature are: a heightened concern for in-group members, distinctive opinions about the group, and distinctive opinions about out-groups. These three consequences are recurring themes in the interviews that I conducted. They can be highlighted by looking at some of the issues which are most strongly associated with level of group commitment among American Muslims. Although there are other motivations and factors that have bearing on these issues, the survey and interview responses highlight these recurring patterns well.

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The first pattern that appears is heightened concern about the welfare of in-group members. This is manifested clearly in the hesitation among American Muslims to support the use of military force in Afghanistan. Recall that only 35% of American Muslims believe that the U.S. made the right decision in using military force in Afghanistan, while 61% of the general public holds this view. In cognitive interviews about this issue, respondents often highlighted their concern that Muslims would die (and by the time of the interviews, a large number actually had died) in any invasion of the country. Afghans make up a very small portion of Muslims in the U.S, so it seems unlikely that even relatively involved American Muslims know many Afghans personally. However, my respondents are well aware of the fact that Afghans are Muslims, and more than one respondent referred to the death of fellow Muslims as being especially jarring.

A second pattern that appears is the development of an in-group self-representation that is viewed as objective knowledge. This manifested in concern over media coverage generally and doubts about the identity of the 9/11 attackers specifically. American Muslims who are embedded in the community have a variety of direct, personal, visceral sources of knowledge about Islam and Muslims. When the media coverage does not align with the community's own self-perception, the more distant media knowledge is less trusted. In the case of media coverage generally, American Muslims often feel that the American media portrays Islam as a violent religion and suggests that most Muslims are terrorists – points that their personal experience with the religion and with Muslims belies. Respondents who know more Muslims and are more involved in the community are even more skeptical of the media's claims than those that are not as actively involved in the community. Similarly, the idea that the 9/11 attackers were correctly

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identified seems to contradict well established personal knowledge – that most Muslims aren't terrorists and that Islam is against terrorism.[1]

A special sort of in-group knowledge, knowledge of out-groups, is manifested in views on homosexuality and on the proper role of the government in regulating morality. This is clearest in the case of government morality. As one person explained in the cognitive interviews, whether or not the government should be involved in issues of morality "depends on if they agree with me" (14-new). It is not surprising that people want their own views to be represented in government. In the case of America, a democracy in which most people are not Muslim, the government playing a role in morality requires trust that the morality that the government will enforce is acceptable to the respondent. As I mentioned in chapter 7, many Muslims view America as a Christian country, and I believe that this perception is reinforced by filtered knowledge through a network of Muslims.

Homosexuals are not, strictly speaking, an out-group. There are homosexuals that self-identify as Muslims, though most do not. However, homosexuals are clearly viewed as an out-group by most Muslims. Muslims that are homosexual are generally not very open with their sexuality, so more involvement in the Muslim community means less contact with homosexuals. In fact, many of my respondents spoke about homosexuals as a hypothetical, making comments such as, "If I knew a homosexual then…," rather than referring to homosexuals that they knew. This lack of recognizable contact allowed for the creation of shared ideas regarding the

[1] This interpretation – rather than the assumption drawn by some readers of the initial Pew report that most Muslims are conspiracy theorists– is further supported by the fact that nearly a third of respondents expressed uncertainty about the assertion that "a group of Arabs carried out the attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001", while less than that number actually rejected the assertion.

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"homosexual way of life" that has little grounding in the actual lived experiences of many homosexuals.

Reasons for Strong Group Comment

As is evident from my analysis, much of the effect of group commitment has little to do with theology – it is much more closely related to affective ties to the group, creating heightened concern for in-group members and shared group knowledge. These phenomena are well documented in social psychology literature across groups and are not unique to religion. Regardless, my respondents view them as an extension of their religious identity, and I am inclined to agree with them. That not all categories of identification result in identity groups is a point that Rogers Brubaker highlights in his discussion of identity. Yet Muslims are clearly an identity group in the American context, not just a collection of individuals who share a common self-identification. And, while group commitment is not uniquely religious, its reasoning is intertwined with the theology as well as the practical situation of American Muslims.

Abstract Theological Beliefs as Reasons for Strong Group Commitment

I highlighted some of the theological support for group commitment among Muslims when I developed a model of religious identity in chapter 4, including verses from the Qur'an and quotations from the *hadith*. In addition, I pointed out that this theological evidence not only exists in the abstract but also is well known and recognized by my respondents. Not only did my respondents explicitly reference theological evidence for groupness, but the concept of groupness has pervaded much of the Muslim vernacular, such as the practice of referring to co-religionists as "brothers" and "sisters." In addition, I highlighted the fact that the concept of a Muslim

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ummah has played an important role in the historical development of Islam and has, arguably, been one of the cores of Islamic orthodoxy at least since the Constitution of Medina was signed by Muhammad in 622 C.E.

Not all categories of identification have such a wealth of tools to encourage group commitment, and few have group commitment as an issue so fundamental to their construction. Brubaker highlights this fact when, considering "women, blacks, Native Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and other Spanish-speaking Americans, Asian Americans, gay men, lesbians, working-class people, poor people, old people, and mentally and physically disabled people," he asks, "What constitutes the 'groupness' of these 'groups'?"(Brubaker 2004: 58-59). Even religious groups vary widely in determining the theological importance of groupness. For example, Islamic prayer rituals are enjoined for groups and ought to be done individually only when necessary. In contrast, some Buddhist mediation rituals are intended to be done individually, and collective mediation is viewed as a learning tool, a crutch to be overcome (Pagis 2009). Thus, while many of the mechanisms for a religious identity's public consequences can be tied to group commitment, their reasons for salience are, in part, due to abstract religious beliefs.

External Categorization as a Reason for Strength of Group Commitment

For reasons of space, the dissertation explicitly avoided one of the three aspects of identity that Rogers Brubaker highlights – "Identification and Categorization." I will briefly address this aspect, however, as there is reason to believe that the impact of categorization by non-Muslims in the American context plays an important role in linking religious identity to group commitment.

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As Wayne Brekhaus points out, not all categories of identification are “marked” by the larger society as having significance (Brekhus 2003). He argues that there are “default” identities for many categories, and only variation from that is considered significant. For example, the homosexual (which he is) is considered a marked category while being suburban is an unmarked one. Similarly, whiteness is often considered as an unmarked category in the American context, while Blacks and Hispanics are marked. Clearly, Muslims constitute a marked category in American society.

It is a commonly accepted fact among both Muslims and non-Muslims that being identified as Muslim is likely to cause difficulties. As a result, 54% of American Muslims and 45% of the general public believe that there is a lot of discrimination against Muslims, and that “the government’s anti-terrorism policies singles out Muslims in the U.S.” (Pew 2007). This is less true in the African-American community, where the success of the Nation of Islam in improving communities and individual lives has led African-American Muslims to create their own specialized knowledge about Islam, distinct from media portrayals. However, the views of general American society regarding Muslims are both stark and suggestive. Of course, my research focuses on the Muslim community, which offers only limited insight into how they are viewed and treated by the larger society. For example, my research suggests that nearly a third of American Muslims that flew in the 12 months before the Pew survey was conducted (in 2007) felt that they had been singled out for airport security.

My findings are more helpful in understanding how American Muslims think they are viewed by the larger society. This is, arguably, more important than any objective measures for understanding the role of categorization in the formation of their group commitment, as

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American Muslims keenly feel that they are viewed in a negative light. In the words of one of my respondents, “Islam is a compromised identity.” In fact, the category of Muslim is so powerful in America that it can pre-empt racial categorization. This is seen in complaints from some of my African-American Muslim respondents that they were sometimes asked their country of origin or were complimented that they “speak very good English” when they wore the Islamic headscarf or *hijab.* Even respondents that were apparently well integrated into American society – with good jobs and comfortable lifestyles – felt singled out: “After 9/11 everyone who had a certain name or dressed a certain way… was made to feel a little bit different. I think we all had a moment when we felt like we had to justify something to somebody” (2-cmes). Another respondent felt that “Muslims are disenfranchised. Muslims are not full members of society” (1-new). This perception of otherness is, arguably, more closely related to American civic identity than religious identity or theology; however, the Islamic theological doctrines also play a role in creating this social distance.

To be clear, I do not think that Islamic theology creates this distance by promoting violence or other distinctive social attitudes. My research shows that there is little support for violence among American Muslims; furthermore, no statistically significant relationship between belief orthodoxy and support for religious violence emerged from the data. Rather, Islamic doctrine plays an important role because, in order for Muslims to be categorized effectively by the larger society, markers of identification must exist within the Muslim community. Identifiability is likely to be the more direct cause of groupness, but more orthodox Muslims are likely to be more identifiable.

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This is most obviously true for women who wear headscarves. In the words of one of my respondents, "if a woman is strong enough to still cover her hair, it's been told to me that it's like the flag of Islam. That person is much stronger than you or me because there's not doubt in anyone's mind that they are Muslim" (13-new). The markers of identification that respondents frequently linked to belief orthodoxy were not limited to women, however. Distinctive naming, for example, makes categorization by others easier, as do the style of beard that certain Muslim men wear and the wearing of Middle Eastern and South Asian garb, even by Muslims not from those areas.

Like group commitment generally, external markers of identification are clearly not a constant across all categories of identification. Certain identities have fewer visible trappings than others. For example, there are few visible trappings to mark off contemporary American Catholics, atheists, and Protestants, yet racial identity tends to be highly visible. Even among Whites, name variation is more helpful in determining ethnicity than it is in distinguishing, for example, evangelicals from atheists.

These visible religious markers are often intertwined with both civic and ethnic identities. This is true among African-Americans, as non-Muslims sometimes take on traditional Islamic names (Jackson 2005) as well as among immigrants from the Middle East and South Asia – where a Hindu, Sikh or even Christian from these countries might be mistaken for a Muslim if they are wearing their traditional dress.

Boundaries of American Muslims as an Identity Group

These reasons for groupness also hint at the boundaries that American Muslims draw around their community. Though abstract theological beliefs are often viewed as the reason for

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religions to exist, it is often assumed – both by scholars and lay Muslims – that these beliefs define the boundaries of the group. In fact, all but the least orthodox of my interview subjects said that accepting the core theological beliefs was both necessary and sufficient for membership in the community. However, my research suggests that this is not actually the case. Ironically, theology plays little role in practical boundary definition.

Any theological definition of Islam would require belief in God, and most of my respondents wholeheartedly agreed. A number recognized that not everyone was equally ritually observant, and some were themselves either only engaged in ritual practices intermittently or routinely engaged in activities for which there are clear doctrinal prohibitions, such as drinking alcohol or eating pork. However, my respondents generally asserted that, as long as someone accepts the core beliefs, that person is Muslim. This definition is not an example of theological elitism by sectarian Muslims who are quick to excommunicate non-believers. The respondents who held this view were certain that anyone who said they were Muslim was also implicitly saying that they accepted these principles. For example, when asked whether it was possible for someone to dissociate belief in God from being Muslim, one respondent said, "They might have a mental disorder…" (9-new).

The perception that everyone who says they are Muslim (or, even, as some respondents clarified, Sunni Muslim) accepts these core tenets is inaccurate. The Pew survey shows that self-identified Sunni Muslims run the full spectrum – from rejecting all of the core beliefs to accepting all of them. However, the agonistic and atheist Muslims, like homosexual Muslims, tend to be invisible to their co-religionists. For example, one of the respondents who told me that

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all Muslims accept the core abstract beliefs referred me to another Muslim who told me that he is agnostic and merely "Muslim by birth."

I believe the key to understanding this pattern is that the practical boundaries for being Muslim are not theological, even though the theoretical ones are. My respondents did not generally talk to other Muslims, especially those that were not ritually observant, about theological beliefs. Practically, Muslims recognize each other through indicators such as distinctive dress, accent, and language. For example, when a woman is wearing a *hijab*, Muslims assume she's Muslim and that she believes in God. It is considered rude to ask someone dressed in this way concerning her belief in God when she is so visibly garbed Islamically. In fact, the few respondents who recounted stories of such skepticism were quite disturbed by the occurrence.

Beyond visible dress, the next level of recognition is likely to be language. Knowledge of the Arabic greeting *al-salamu alaikum,* and perhaps proper pronunciation of it, is often taken as declaration that someone is Muslim. (Among the African-American community, it is sometimes used by non-Muslims as an acknowledgement that the person being greeted is Muslim.) In any case, lack of knowledge of that greeting, or lack of ability to give the proper response, is likely to be taken as an indicator that someone is not a Muslim. Even so, no one would claim that knowledge of the greeting is actually theologically necessary to be considered Muslim.

As one of my respondents explained, Muslims recognize each other. It is assumed that this is the case, but the ways in which they recognize one another rarely include theological quizzes. Though I did not find religious knowledge to be a statistically distinct aspect of religious identity, I believe this was because the questions in the Pew survey probe the wrong sort of

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knowledge. I suspect that a survey that explores knowledge regarding markers of identification will find that they are an important aspect of religious identity. Interestingly, this boundary drawing is also intertwined with racial/ethnic identity. For example, Arabs are assumed to be Sunni Muslim, while African-Americans are assumed not to be – or not to know their religion well even if they are.

It is also very possible that the associative and affective boundaries for religious identity are not the same. When considering affective ties to communities with whom respondents have little or no contact, it seems at least plausible that explicit self-identification would play a more important role than knowledge of, and comfort with, markers of religious identity. For example, conflicts in Kashmir, Iraq, and Bosnia are considered Muslim issues because numerically the regions are made up primarily of self-identified Muslims, not because they all dress "Islamically" and say *al-salamu alaikum* to each-other.

Affective ties to Iraq raise another interesting issue regarding group boundaries – the Sunni/Shii split. The definition of the "supporters of Ali" (Shii sect) and the "the followers of the traditions of the prophet Muhammad and the Muslim community" (Sunni sect) are well established in Islamic history and have strong theological warrants. Though both sects accept all of the core theological precepts measured by the Pew forum, their differing views on the nature of authority after the death of Muhammad and the trustworthiness of his disciples have powerful implications for everything from the relationship between Islam and democracy to the acceptability of certain marriage customs. In fact, most classical scholars from each sect view the members of the other sect as heretical. Yet this sectarian boundary holds little meaning for many American Muslims. When asked, 29% of Muslims refused to select a specific Islamic

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denomination in the Pew survey. The number of committed sectarian Muslims is likely to be even lower than this number suggests, since even my interview subjects who said they were Sunni often said it with little enthusiasm: “Sunni – if anything” (2-new), or “I guess I’m Sunni but I don’t like to label myself” (9-new). This suggests, again, that theology, while held to be the *sine qua non* of religion, is not generally used among American Muslims as a sharp marker of religious group membership.

Pervasive Perceived Consequences of Religious Beliefs

Respondents generally did not deny the power of group commitment, though they sometimes failed to recognize the extent to which their boundary markers were disconnected from actual abstract beliefs. Even so, most respondents did not feel that group commitment was the primary cause of religious identity’s social consequences. Most respondents – and all of the respondents with highly orthodox religious beliefs – felt that their abstract beliefs had a more direct impact on their social attitudes and behaviors. As many of my respondents asserted that they drew their attitudes on a wide range of issues from their abstract theological beliefs, the cognitive interviews suggest that this sort of linkage is exactly what survey respondents had in mind when 90% of them said religion was personally important.

Emerging from the national survey data and confirmed in my interviews, this strong pattern contradicts the view, maintained by some theorists of secularization and of identity more generally, that people turn identities on and off. This “chameleon view” of identity is of little help in understanding my respondents. All of my respondents felt that their religious identity had sustained consequences throughout their public lives, rather than being something they turned on and off. In everything from business dealings to political involvement, respondents asserted that

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their abstract beliefs – in God, in the Qur'an, in an eventual divine judgment, etc. – played a pivotal role.

Yet there is another story as well. Though perceptions of impact were pervasive, the predictive power of religious belief orthodoxy was rarely present to any measurable degree. Religious belief orthodoxy has a significant correlation with only 2 of the 14 social attitudes which are the focus of this dissertation, though all of my interview respondents drew upon religious beliefs to explain their answers to more than 2 of the 14 questions.

My in-depth interviews point to three sets of public consequences which American Muslims perceive as being tied to their religious beliefs. The first set includes issues (social attitudes and behaviors) on which American Muslims disagree among themselves as to what their abstract religious beliefs imply. The second set concerns those issues on which American Muslim views resonate with the larger American society. The final, and smallest, set of issues is those wherein American Muslims hold consistently different views from the larger American society.

Disputed Public Consequences among American Muslims

A lack of agreement among American Muslims regarding how religious beliefs should influence social attitudes is the pattern most clearly indicated by my analysis of the Pew survey data. Clear statistical evidence for this lack of agreement emerges from the lack of correspondence, in that religious beliefs are only strongly correlated with 2 of the 14 social attitudes I tested. Arguably, one reason for this startlingly high degree of variation among American Muslims is a lack of central authority figures.

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Most denominations of Islam not only lack a single national or international authority figure but also de-emphasize the religious authority of mosque leadership, with some *sufi* and *Shii* groups providing notable exceptions. In many Muslim majority countries, the lack of theological centralization is mitigated by two factors which are not present in the American context. The first is a high level of government involvement in religious affairs. In most Muslim majority countries, the state funds most houses of worship as well as houses of religious learning (often outlawing non-state-funded alternatives). In contrast, the American government does not directly fund the religious practices of institutions or religious learning, and no privately funded alternative has achieved the level of influence that would be necessary to maintain significant control over the relationship between religious beliefs and social attitudes. Without institutions in a position to ensure that systematicness and coherence are maintained, the relationship between beliefs and social attitudes fragments.

In addition, because most Muslim majority countries have had a large Muslim population for centuries, the norms that have developed often hold a taken-for-granted status among residents. The active process of working through how religious beliefs should impact social attitudes is replaced with a passive assumption that societal norms have "already been vetted" (4-new). Though my research focuses on Muslims in the U.S., the accounts of immigrants from Muslim-majority countries supports this view, which finds further resonance with Ann Swidler's concepts of "settled" and "unsettled" times (Swidler 1986).

In the American context, the taken-for-granted status of religious moral norms is challenged by a variety of factors which make it different from Muslim-majority countries. These include the novelty of certain situations (since the active nature of application that happens

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in unsettled times lends itself to higher diversity), the plurality of religions in society, and perhaps most importantly, the plurality of religious patterns within the American Muslim community. Because there are Muslims living in America who have historical roots throughout the Islamic world, there are a wide variety of Islamic traditions to draw upon. The taken-for-granted nature of what attitudes and behaviors are "Islamic" is called into question by contact with alternative interpretations.

This pattern of a strong core of abstract beliefs but little agreement on their public implications is not shared by all categories of personal identification. Specifically, Brekhus argues that there is a common understanding among his respondents that "gay New York" offers the ideal type of homosexual identity. As such, he organized his respondents along dimensions of how intensely they are homosexual and how frequently they draw upon their homosexual identity (Brekhus 2003). He suggests that these dimensions can be useful in categorizing other identity groups; however, American Islam (and, I suspect, many other religious identities) offers a different set of distinctions.

A key theological requirement for being Muslim is belief in God, and only a few self-identified Muslims reject this tenet (though the existence of these few Muslims suggests that even this requirement is subject to debate). Belief in an omniscient God that cares about people does not lend itself as well to temporality as sexual orientation does. The core of being gay is simply not relevant in situations which are devoid of sexuality or sexual tension, though the auxiliary practices may be relevant in a variety of settings. Further, the absence or presence of a concerned other is important. By contrast, there can be no situations in which an omniscient deity is absent, though it may be argued that there are situations in which God has no preference.

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Thus, to my respondents, asking whether or not God cares is, itself, evidence of religious identity's consequences.

Common Public Consequences for Muslims and non-Muslims

As I alluded to in chapter 7, there are a number of issues on which American Muslims are not different from the general American public. This set of issues is markedly different than those on which Muslims themselves vary. In many cases, American Muslims vary more from Muslims in other countries than from American non-Muslims, suggesting that religious identity is not a relevant factor in the decision-making on these issues. My interviews suggest, however, that American Muslims often do see these issues as related to their Islamic identity.

Many of the social attitudes that American Muslims attribute to their religious beliefs are tied to a general sense of morality, yet the desire to act morally is not a uniquely religious (much less Islamic) concern. Because I focused my study on issues where American Muslims have different views from those of the larger American public, my analysis of the survey data yields little information about this set of issues; however, they came up repeatedly in my interviews. Interview respondents frequently spoke about issues like stealing, killing, and honesty as Islamic concerns. Recall the respondent who said that he had opportunities to steal but didn't because he was concerned that "God is watching" (3-new), as a representative example. It is not clear from my data why American Muslims attribute most pro-social acts to their religious identity, but it is clear that they do.

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Distinctive Public Consequences for American Muslims

American Muslims draw upon their religious beliefs to justify their positions even when their positions are either ones on which American Muslims disagree among themselves or on which they agree with most other Americans. Significantly, however, a handful of issues exist for which religious belief orthodoxy is predictive of views. The most prominent of these issues are devotional public practices, such as prayer, fasting, and reading the Qur'an. The link between orthodox beliefs and these practices is suggested by the way in which many of my respondents spoke about them almost interchangeably. For example, when listing the core beliefs, respondents would sometimes detour in the middle to mention the ritual practice, as when one respondent said: "You have to believe in the five pillars of Islam. You have to believe in the *shahadatain* [there is only one god and Muhammad is the messenger of God]*,…* *salah* [prayer]- this is not a pillar but…" (3-new). More evidence for this link exists in the fact that the factor model (diagram 4.2) shows that religious belief orthodoxy and ritual orthopraxy are both driven by a single underlying factor. Among my interviews and in the survey data, not everyone agreed that these ritual practices were important. But those that did were likely to have more orthodox beliefs in the case of my survey data – and invariably did have them in the case of my interview respondents.

A similarly strong pattern exists with regard to 2 of the 14 social attitudes that my analysis focuses on – namely, strong agreement that the attacks of 9/11 were un-Islamic and strong agreement that homosexuality is sinful. In addition to ritual practice and to these two social issues, my interview respondents repeatedly suggested other issues that are likely to correlate strongly with belief orthodoxy: foremost among these were drinking alcohol, eating

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pork, and participating in pre-marital sex. These three doctrinal issues present instances of orthodox Islamic views that are at odds with the larger society but that represent a largely consensus view among American Muslims who have orthodox religious beliefs.

Discussion

One interesting finding is that these sets of issues cut across the public/private distinction, which suggests that scholars who assume that Islam is more hesitant than other religions to relinquish influence in the public sphere may well be correct. However, though Muslims invoke Islam in explaining a wide range of behaviors, abstract Islamic beliefs rarely have direct causal influence. There are a number of ways to interpret this, and my data does not offer a great deal of insight into which of them is the most helpful.

One could assume that abstract religious beliefs are primarily post-hoc, a view Stephen Vaisey characterized as "Skinnerian" (Vaisey 2008). People act in response to a variety of material and social pressures, including those that exist because of membership in the religious group and those that come about due to alternative identities such as racial and civic identity. Yet they then rationalize these acts to themselves and others as being derived from and consistent with their religious beliefs. Since the beliefs are so abstract, they can be used to justify nearly anything without requiring hard choices to be made. This view would be rejected out of hand by my respondents; however, their opinions do not provide sufficient evidence to refute it. Clearly, theological beliefs have some power – they both encourage group commitment and are correlated with a handful of social attitudes and a number of ritual practices. These correlations could be viewed, however, as exceptional cases.

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An alternative concept assumes that these abstract religious beliefs are first principles, informing the diverse situations in which individuals find themselves – including religious group categories and alternative identities such as race and civic identity. A version of this idea is suggested by scholars of religion such as Fred Kniss (Kniss 1996), and seems to resonate strongly with my respondents. Kniss suggests that abstract beliefs (symbols) can be arrayed from highly abstract to relatively concrete, and more abstract beliefs yield less consistent results. Based on his typology, the Islamic beliefs that I measured (belief in God, the Qur'an, etc.) are highly abstract. This allows respondents to draw upon them in addressing a wide range of issues. However, because they are so abstract, they do not dictate public consequences directly and, therefore, consistently.

"Moral dilemmas do not disappear by virtue of faith, as if God had decided that there can be no conflicts between values or between moral obligations among believers" (Joas 2008: 17). Despite this fact, many Muslims believe that their religion makes them more moral people than they would otherwise be, a belief that may well be true. Respondents could often cite specific social attitudes and behaviors that they had derived from or allowed to be influenced by their religious belief. Invariably, these were instances in which they felt they had been pulled beyond the boundaries of worldly self-interest. It may be, as Hans Joas argues, that religion increases the probability that an individual will have such self-transcendent experiences and that "if she has them, does not repress them." Religion thus, according to Joas, "increases the probability that one will grow beyond a mere morality of prudence…" (Joas 2008: 16) When asked, some respondents made a distinction between religious belief as a motivating force for positive social attitudes and behaviors and religious belief as defining what these attitudes and behaviors should

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be. “It does not necessarily influence my idea of what’s right” one of my respondents explained, “but I do see it as a tradition of standing up for what’s right” (10-new).

If we accept this concept of religious beliefs as directing people toward morality, rather than as defining morality, then we cannot expect a strong statistical relationship between specific social attitudes and religious belief. We would see, instead, only variation in how people think about the issues. This relationship is further complicated by the fact that, in a pluralistic society, there are alternative sources of morality. Even so, two facts emerge clearly: that American Muslims see themselves as an identity group and that membership in this group has significant public consequences.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questions and Responses

Q.E3 How important is religion in your life – very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

Belief Orthodoxy

Q.E4 Which comes closest to your view? The Koran is the word of God OR The Koran is a book written by men and is not the word of God
Q.E5 And would you say that The Koran is to be taken literally, word for word OR That not everything in the Koran should be taken literally, word for word.
Q.E11 As I read from a list, please tell me if you believe in each of the things I read. Do you believe, or not?

- Q.E11 a. In One God, Allah
- Q.E11 b. In the Prophet Muhammad
- Q.E11 e. In Day of Judgment
- Q.E11 f. In angels

Group commitment

Q.E1 On average, how often do you attend the mosque or Islamic center for salah (sal-AH) and Jum'ah (joom-AH) prayer?
Q.E2 And outside of salah (sal-AH) and Jum'ah (joom-AH) prayer, do you take part in any other social or religious activities at the mosque or Islamic center?
Q.E6 Concerning daily salah (sal-AH) or prayer, do you, in general, pray all five salah daily, make some of the five salah daily, occasionally make salah, only make Eid (EED) prayers, or do you never pray?
Q.E10 Here are a few religious activities…for each one, please tell me if it is important to you or not.

- Q.E10 a. Giving charity, or zakat
- Q.E10 b. Fasting during Ramadan
- Q.E10 c. Undertaking a pilgrimage to Mecca
- Q.E10 d. Reading or listening to Koran daily

Q.D2 How many of your close friends are Muslims? Would you say: all of them, most of them, some of them, hardly any of them, none of them.

Composite identity

Q.D4 Do you think there is a natural conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society, or don't you think so?
Q.D5 Which comes closer to your view:

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Muslims coming to the U.S. today should mostly adopt American customs and ways of life

[OR] Muslims coming to the U.S. today should mostly try to remain distinct from the larger American society

Q.D7 Do you personally think it is okay for a Muslim to marry someone who is not a Muslim?

Q.E12 Do you think of yourself first as an American or first as a Muslim?

Social attitudes

Q.B1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?

Q.B2 Here are a few pairs of statements. For each pair, tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own views – even if neither is exactly right.

Q.B2 a. The government should do more to protect morality in society

[OR] I worry the government is getting too involved in the issue of morality

Q.B2 b. Immigrants today strengthen the U.S. because of their hard work and talents

[OR] Immigrants today are a burden on the U.S. because they take our jobs, housing and health care

Q.B2 d. Homosexuality is a way of life that should be accepted by society

[OR] Homosexuality is a way of life that should be discouraged by society

Q.B3 If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services, or a bigger government providing more services?

Q.C1 Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan?

Q.C2 Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force against Iraq?

Q.D3 Do you think that coverage of Islam and Muslims by American news organizations is generally fair or unfair?

Q.G1 Overall, do you think that the quality of life for Muslim women in the U.S. is better, worse, or about the same as the quality of life for women in most Muslim countries?

Q.H1 Some people think that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that this kind of violence is often justified to defend Islam, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified.

Q.H3 Do you believe that groups of Arabs carried out the attacks against the United States on September 11 2001, or don't you believe this?

Q.H4 Do you think the U.S. – led war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism or don't you believe that?

Q.H5 Overall, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Al Qaeda? [If favorable, follow with: And is that very favorable or only somewhat favorable? If unfavorable, follow with: and is that very unfavorable or only somewhat unfavorable?]

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Q.H6 Do you think that the government's anti-terrorism policies single out Muslims in the U.S. for increased surveillance and monitoring, or don't you think so?

Q.H7 And how much does this bother you?

A lot, some, not much, not at all.

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Appendix B: Glossary of Arabic Terms

Though many of these terms are complex and have a variety of highly specific and technical meanings in various religious contexts, the following definitions summarize the way in which they are used by my respondents.

Allah: God.
Akhi: Brother.
Aqeeda: Islamic theological beliefs.
as-salamu alaiku: Common greeting among Muslims.
caliph: Title of the political (and sometimes spiritual) leader of the Muslim empire.
deen: religion.
duah: Supplication to God.
eid: lit. Feast. Generally used to refer to the two largest Islamic holidays.
fiqh: Islamic theological guidance on action. Islamic law.
hadith: Collected saying and actions attributed to the Muslim prophet Muhammad.
hajj: pilgrimage to Mecca
halal/zabiha
hijab: Head covering worn by some Muslim women.
ibadat: Acts of worship.
imam: Prayer leader. In some shii denominations, the title conveys additional theological authority.
jumah: Friday congregational prayer
muamilat: Mundane actions. Sometimes contrasted with *ibadat.*
mu'min: Believer. Sometimes used interchangeably with Muslim.
salah: Prayer ritual.
saum: Fasting.
shahada/shahadatain /la ilaha illa allah Muhammad rasul allah: Declaration of faith.
sharia: Body of Islamic recommendations, requirements, and prohibitions.
sulalahu alayhi wasulum: Honorific prayer sometimes recited when speaking about the Muslim prophet Muhammad.
surah: Chapter in the Qur'an.
taqwa: God consciousness.
ulima: Religious scholars.
ummah: Global Muslim community
'urf: Custom.
Zakat: Tithe.

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