

Pakistani Migrants in the United States: The Interplay of Ethnic Identity and Ethnic Retention

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Abstract

This study is designed to explore the process of integration of first-generation Pakistani immigrants in the United States. There are two analytical themes that are the focus of this study. The first is the question of their integration into American society. What are the factors that have led to their maintenance of strong ethnic attachment, and their role in the shifting interplay of integration versus ethnic retention? The second issue is the factors that hinder their integration into American society, and how they perceive their cultural heritage versus mainstream norms and values. I rely on five benchmarks to assess first-generation immigrant integration: socioeconomic status, cultural heritage such as religious and social activities, perceptions, and experiences of discrimination, and gender relations. Based on ethnographic methods such as interviews and participant observations, one level of integration is explained. This level of integration is related to high ethnic identity and low integration, and is explained in terms of identity formation with strong ethnic characteristics but only a functional level of integration.

Keywords: Immigrant, migration, ethnicity, assimilation, acculturation, socioeconomic status, gender, discrimination.

1. Introduction and Background

My contribution to this discourse stems from my own background as a first-generation Pakistani immigrant, and now as a permanent resident of the United States. As such, I write from the perspective of an immigrant who has experienced the process of integration and adjustment of the Pakistani community in the United States. This enabled me to be better prepared to formulate the questions and agenda that shaped the inquiry upon which my qualitative and ethnographic research is based on. Also, very little has been written about the Pakistani American community. Many scholars writing about ethnic communities in the United States tend to piece the community together with the larger Asian Indian community, thereby glossing over the distinctiveness of the Pakistani Americans.

The Immigration Act of 1965 marked a radical break from immigration policies of the past, which excluded all Asians (including Pakistanis), and Africans. After which, the number of Pakistanis immigrating to the United States increased dramatically. The majority of these individuals arrived in America in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Those arriving were well-placed professionals, such as physicians, engineers, software workers, or scientists; many either came directly because of a demand in their profession or as students who stayed back after graduating. Along with these professionals came their less educated relatives, who were either eligible for migration under immigration visa preference for relatives or through the visa lottery scheme. This demographic is largely working blue-collar jobs. These pioneering Pakistanis became the motivation for the voluntary chain migration, which followed. This type of human migration encompasses migrant labor, wherein community members and families follow the primary migrant to another country (Daniel, 2002). This marked the beginning of a distinct Pakistani ethnic community in the USA, based on kinship and networks that supported their cultural heritage.

Pakistan received its independence from British India in 1947. It was created on the basis of religious identity, so that Muslims would have a nation to call their own. Between 1947 and 1965 there were only around 2,500 Pakistani immigrants in the United States (U.S. Census 2013). The population size of Pakistanis increased drastically since 1965, when the U.S. government lifted previously existing immigration restrictions.

According to the Pew Research Center (2011), there are more than 650,000 Pakistanis in the United States, of whom 65 percent are foreign-born as per December 2010. Within its greater metropolitan area, New York City hosts the largest concentration of Pakistani Muslims of any U.S. city, with a population of approximately 50,000, primarily in Queens, Brooklyn, and Long Island. These numbers make the Pakistani Americans the fifth largest Asian-American group in New York City (U.S. Census 2013). Texas and California are other states where the highest concentrations of Pakistanis reside. Most Pakistanis are Muslims and their traditional and religious values are very important to them.

2. Theoretical Perspective

Among the various sociological approaches, it is not easy to find a common sociological definition for the complex process of integration of immigrants into the mainstream society. Although key words like adaptation, acculturation, assimilation, absorption, and incorporation are used in a relatively synonymous way, the sociological concept of integration appears to be a much broader category. Integration is concerned with several macro-processes including economic socio cultural and political adjustment that begins with the first-generation and continues through the second-generation and beyond (Brown and Bean, 2006).

In my use of the term integration, my emphasis is on the interactions between immigrants and the society's socioeconomic infrastructure such as, labor market, housing, as well as their cultural activities and social acceptance by the host society. Through integration, immigrants gain access to a permanent and complex participatory system, one of the different spheres of actions and interactions in the host society. I argue that integration is a reciprocal process in which immigrants become an integral part of the societal structure by participating in the major institutions of society and also retain their original cultural identity. In addition to playing an active role in society, immigrants, as well as the host society, must go through a process of adjustment in order for socioeconomic equity to be attainable by all who are legally settled in the United States.

The integration of immigrants into the host society has been studied in migration sociology from several contemporary theoretical perspectives. Social cohesion and cultural identity are perhaps best interpreted by William S. Bernard, who defines it as, "A process of interpenetration and fusion when migrants become a working part of their adopted society take as many of its attitudes and behavior patterns, and participate freely in its activities, but at the same time retain a measure of their original cultural identity" (Bernard, 1973:87). Looking at these definitions, I argue that integration may make immigrants better off and in a better position to fully contribute to their communities while retaining their ethnic identity.

Since this study concerns primarily a record of experiences relating to adjustment into mainstream American society by the first-generation Pakistanis and retention of their ethnic identity, I found it useful to adapt Berry's (1992) theory of "The Acculturation Strategy." This theory is based upon the observation that in multicultural societies, individuals and groups must confront two important issues. One pertains to the maintenance and development of one's ethnic distinctiveness in society, and it must be determined whether one's own cultural identity and customs are of value and should be retained. The other involves the desirability of inter-ethnic contact, determining whether relations with the mainstream society are of value and practical and should be sought. Berry has maintained that both integration and formation of ethnic identity are continuous phenomenon and can be treated as a dichotomous (high or low) decision, thus generating a twofold model as indicated by Figure 1: Patterns of Integration (located at the end of the article). Each cell in the twofold classification is considered to be an integration option available to individuals and to groups in multicultural societies. The two options are high ethnic identity and low integration. The rationale of Barry's theory has therefore played an important part in my decision to investigate the process of integration and retention of ethnic identity amongst first-generation Pakistani immigrants in the United States.

3. Methods

The data used here was derived from a sample of 55 adult Pakistanis aged 45 to 65 years, among them were 35 men and 20 women, residing in the New York Metropolitan area, New Jersey, and Long Island. All of them were born in Pakistan and resided in the United States for 20 or more years. The interviews were conducted between May 2012 and December 2015. The participants were interviewed a couple of times with each interview lasting between two to three hours. To protect respondents' identities, the names used in this study are not real. All interviews began with the oral consent script that was read to the subjects and their decision on whether or not to participate in the study.

In conjunction with the interviews with my male participants, I was able to talk to female participants as well. Some of my female participants (7 out of the original 20) politely declined to be interviewed. The reason, I believed, are based on my own personal experience from the “culture of patriarchal society,” where customs and traditions are involved by interviewing adult Pakistani women by a male researcher. The Pakistani community in the United States is strictly sex-segregated and it is against societal norms to seek out females for separate interviews. Given the relative scarcity of the elderly in the Pakistani community, I did not interview people who were above 65 years of age. It is likely that these few elders in this community were parents of some of the immigrants who came in the early 1970s.

After I transcribed the interviews, I completed a list of thematic categories to analyze. The interviews were then coded by different variables, such as socioeconomic status, language, social, and religious activities, discrimination, and gender.

As for the selection of each participant, I knew some of them through social gatherings and from my previous research on second generation Pakistani youth in the United States. Many other participants later joined my research through the snowball effect of these initial contacts. These interviews were conducted either at their homes or sometimes during social gatherings such as child naming, memorial and thanksgiving ceremonies, birthdays and weddings or even during cricket matches, a sport, which Pakistanis love to watch. I have also had to entrust upon myself as a participant observer, a role, which I found very exciting to observe my participants life style in their own settings, as well as an effective way of gathering the desired and detailed information that fit very well into Geertz’s (1973) formation of “thick description.” Paul Atkinson and Martyn Hammersley (1983) have described this approach as unique that involves explicit interpretation of meanings and functions of human activities. I also relied on material from secondary sources, which consisted of a review of the literature available on the subject. For example, I took advantage of the great interest of the mass media on the current immigration issues, resulting in the growth of Islam and Muslim communities and other immigrants in the United States. The question was reflected in the presidential election campaign 2016, when Republican candidate Donald Trump gained considerable support for his stereotypical comments towards Islam and immigrants in general. I extract relevant information from national and local newspapers (USA Today, New York Times, Newsday’s etc.), U.S. Census, articles in the PEW Research Center, and Migration Policy Institute.

The interviews consisted mainly of semi-structured interviews composed of both open-ended and closed-ended questions seeking the opinions of my participants with regard to their adjustment into American society. Semi-structured and open-ended interviewing refers to a situation in which an interviewer asks each participant to face certain questions in informal settings. Although the open-ended questions are more time consuming, these types of responses solicit unrestricted and free responses. The participants have flexibility and room for variation in their responses. I also share the same cultural background as my participants and I speak Urdu and Punjabi, the national and local languages of Pakistan. This gave me access to nuances in understanding my participants’ responses and expressions. Thus, I had no problem with immersion in the Pakistani culture and I had no difficulty in asking or interpreting their answers as well. Although, cultural interpretations are sometimes flawed and biased because of personal beliefs and biases, and what Clifford and Marcus (1986) described as subjective and impartial record of human life stories.

Nonetheless, an ethnographer, regardless of his or her individual tastes and attitudes, can take care to guard against biased in the best possible and most impartial way. As Fetterman (1989) points out, that the ethnographers recognize the objectivity in this human equation, which, in turn contributes to the credibility of their findings. From these interviews, I gathered an abundance of rich data, only some of which I present in this study. The information that follows is drawn from the narratives that are most relevant to my questions regarding how the first-generation Pakistanis perceive their integration and identify formation in American society. Instead of describing their individual stories, what follows is a summary of my respondents’ narratives in thematic form about the phenomena of identity and culture, and how each of these affects them in terms of their integration process while keeping intact their ethnic and cultural heritage intact.

4. Results

Five major themes emerged from the qualitative data. These were socioeconomic status, social and cultural activities, religion, discrimination, and gender relations.

4.1 Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status is defined by education, occupation, income, and homeownership (Woolfolk, 2007). He further adds that socioeconomic achievement is important because it is a major deterrent of a person's overall integration and well-being in society. My study found that first-generation Pakistanis are well integrated into American society in terms of human capital characteristics and homeownership. As a result of the legacy of British colonization, most Pakistani Americans are also fluent in English. While many first-generation Pakistani Americans continue to speak their native languages at home, in the labor market and society at large, they generally speak only English. Many American words that have no easy translation, like subways, cable-TV or microwave and oven, have inevitably entered everyday Pakistani American communication. Most of my participants have a college degree (bachelor and beyond), this also includes women. This was also supported by a report published by Migration Policy Institute (2015). According to this report, in terms of education, 65 percent of the first-generation Pakistan-Americans hold an undergraduate or Master's degree, while 15 percent have an advanced degree such as a law, medical, engineering, or doctorate degree.

Participants were questioned about their incomes and how satisfied they are/were with their jobs and working environments. Majority of my participants reported their household income of \$70,000 or more, while some of them reported their annual income exceeding \$150,000. Few also reported their income between \$35,000 and \$70,000. While the US Census bureau (2013) put the average yearly, household income for the first-generation Pakistanis at \$61,890 compared to average US income of \$53,000. All of my participants were satisfied with their working environment and none complaint about working hours and working conditions. The majority of the participants was employed in professional occupations such as law, medical, accounting, and engineering, and was more satisfied with their finances, career, hard work, and successful integration into the American society. "In the United States, Pakistani physicians are more likely to lead departments at hospitals and even universities," said Bashir Ahmed, a 58-year-old family physician in Long Island who arrived in the United States 25 years ago for his residency.

Some of my participants were also entrepreneurs of all types from grocery and gas storeowners to "7/11" franchises, travel agencies, and taxi businesses. One participant with a college degree belonged to the business community and said that he did not expect a higher paying job, so he decided to open his own business with an approximately capital of \$50,000. "Now my annual revenues run from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000. I have five employees in my travel agency," he stated. I asked him how he became successful in business and he replied, "I had no business experience at all, but with the help of my family and friends I did not have any problems with finding a proper location and marketing." He continued with a smile, "I am not a rich man, as my business is very modest, but I do have intentions to increase my business further." His story reflects the fact that owning a small business is another option for those who wish to start their own adventures and may have difficulty finding an appropriate job in accordance with their education and experience. Another participant with a high school diploma, explained, "The income from my unskilled job was not enough, and they never gave me a raise in wages in spite of several requests. I quit my job because I felt that my experience from Pakistan was not appropriate for American working conditions where advance technology is used in the labor market. Today, "I run my own restaurant. I am my own boss, and I hope to break even in the future." I interviewed this participant in 2011 and today, he owns two more restaurants, one in Queens, and the other in Long Island. His annual income now amounts to more than half a million dollars, and he donates \$1,000 each month to the local mosque. This also reflects the fact that if Pakistanis have startup capital and basic entrepreneurial skills then they have possibilities to start a business.

Next, home ownership had a special meaning for Pakistanis because they like to buy homes for both living and investment purposes. When queried as to what type of housing they currently reside in, more than three-quarters of my participants said that they owned their houses. Furthermore, they said that they had a reasonably good housing standard as compared to the early stage of their integration process. They defined good housing as "what is good" for Americans: an accommodation with basic modern amenities such as a bathtub, hot running water, central heating, kitchen with amenities and a laundry room. My participants were happy that the gap between Pakistanis and Americans in housing standards has narrowed, and that Pakistanis are now significantly more likely to own their homes than in previous years. Almost all of the owners have two or three cars depending on how large the family is.

The description of housing tenure by these Pakistanis is important to the issue of integration because the process of buying property implies a degree of permanence and settlement and is positively related to income. The observed trend of positive development in the housing sector for Pakistani immigrants was also supported by recently published data (U.S. Census, 2010). According to this data, the majorities of Pakistani immigrants have access to decent, affordable houses in areas of their choice and thus, live comfortable lifestyle. In short, the interviews revealed that the degree of overall integration into America society is higher in the socioeconomic domain that is occupied by most first-generation Pakistani immigrants. My participants seemed optimistic and perceived their group as a social resource that has a potential to succeed and achieve the American dream while trying to integrate into American society. "We must work hard, always respect American laws, never forget our ethnic values but at the same time try to assimilate ourselves into American society." These were the perceptions of most of my participants living on the American Dream.

4.2 Social and Cultural Activities

At first, the Pakistani immigrants were not critical of their reception in the new society. They thought that it would take some time to make local acquaintances, and once they had become acquainted, it should be easy to make friends. They expected that, as time went by, they would become locals themselves by virtue of having a home in the same city and neighborhood, on the same street, and by sharing the social environment and job opportunities. Most contacts with Americans were limited to a conventional hello upon seeing each other at work or school. Nayyar Imam, a Mount Sinai resident, a respected community leader and the chaplain of the Suffolk County Police Department, is an active member of the community and his contact with Americans was partly due to his own efforts and partly through his family members. He finds Americans to be friendly when they work together, but as soon as work is finished, so is the friendship. He said, "the skeptical nature of the society toward Muslim immigrants poses difficulties to immigrant's integration, particularly when it comes to entering existing social networks. As a result many immigrants feel isolated and have a sense of being left out." Imam was of the opinion (based on his own experience) that those who participate more in social organizations as well as cultural, religious, and political ones, gain more opportunities for contacts and interactions with other Americans and thus are more likely to integrate into American society. Two other participants, both husband and wife, reported that they have had very little contact with Americans outside of work. Although their American colleagues were easy-going and good-natured, they did not want to further their relationship past work with them. The consequence was, as they put it, "a deepening of the isolation that slowed down their integration process."

Most of my respondents (87%) prefer to have contacts with other Pakistanis, as they feel more comfortable interacting in their own language and believe that communication problems make it difficult to establish contact with Americans. Some opined that the amount of contact they have with Americans is about right; and they want neither more nor less. Thus, at the time of interviewing, it seemed that these Pakistanis had a few Americans in their primary networks and mutual interaction probably would demand effort from both communities. These circumstances tie into my argument that successful integration is related to positive contact between immigrants and natives. A negative attitude (on both sides) is related to no or relatively little contact, and what interaction does take place tends to be formal in both content and occasion. This creates a sense of suspiciousness on both sides and results in loneliness and a greater inclination to keep to one's own group, as is apparent in my sample study. It appears that mutual and frequent contact is important to help both sides get rid of stereotypes, and it would help Pakistanis as well as other immigrants in their integration into the mainstream.

Another question, which I asked my participants, was about the extent of their attachment to the traditional values and cultural norms of their home country. Almost all my participants (100%) appeared to be committed to maintaining their cultural identity and heritage. Pakistanis often visit each other on special occasions, such as birthdays, and various religious and national days. One cultural festival that Pakistanis celebrate with enthusiasm is the national day of Pakistan, celebrated on August 14th. This holiday commemorates the day in 1947 when India was divided into two nations. Different cultural celebrations are organized by the Pakistanis, to which the Americans and Pakistani artists and singers are also invited. Such leisure and recreational events enable Pakistanis who participate in these celebrations to feel a sense of belonging to and part of their native country. Less common, but no less enjoyed in large cities with great ethnic diversity like New York, is the occasional cricket match that is organized within the community or across cricket-playing communities like the Asian Indian and West Indian communities on holidays.

In Pakistani milieu people can visit each other whenever they desire. An invitation or appointment is not expected for ordinary visits. Dishes of various kinds of meats are prepared for the guests. Living rooms are the central place for such occasions. Men and women may sit separately because of religious beliefs. However, if visitors are well acquainted with the family then everyone may sit together. They exchange information on different issues. The eating habits of the Pakistani immigrants are almost the same as in the home country. Dinner is often prepared with a Pakistani meal, whereas breakfast may be mixture of a Pakistani and American style. Sometimes American food is prepared to satisfy the second-generation children who like to eat “nontraditional Western “food such as pasta, pizza and spaghetti. Most Pakistanis skip lunch and eat dinner early. Almost all spices used in cooking are available from Pakistani grocery stores. It is the women of the house who undertake the task of cooking for the family, often with the help of daughters. It is still rare for male family members to be engaged in domestic chores like cooking and household cleaning. The houses are decorated in both American and Pakistani styles. One can also find both American and Pakistani flags in their homes, reflecting the fact that Pakistanis tend to consider America as their second home. After residing in America for so many years and establishing families, the first generation find that it is not easy to return to Pakistan. They are well aware of the fact that their children who grow up in America will certainly become influenced by the host society's norms and values, no matter how much traditional culture they exert upon them. As one of my participant said, "These children go to school here, they cannot escape influence from the society around them, we continuously tell them about our traditions and values, we send them to mosque to learn Quran, because we believe that this is a worthy task."

4.3 Religion

Religion plays a central role in defining Pakistani identity. Most Pakistani Americans (90%) are devout Muslims who observe religious rituals and attend local mosques on a regular basis. Commenting about his adjustment into American society, one of my participants said, “I lived in America because I love this country. If I wanted to live in a country with Sharia, I would migrate to Iran. We adopted this country and nobody forced us to come here. I follow my religion, I say my prayers, and follow our cultural and religious rituals.”When Pakistani Muslims from the moderate mainstream migrate to the United States, they adopt a modernist-cum-conservative life style. In order to remain good Muslims they transplant their traditional customs into the American milieu. However, doing so is sometimes problematic since America’s social environment is dominated by a Christian majority. Moreover, Muslim religious routines require facilities that create inconvenience within non-Muslim surroundings. In Pakistan, a close network of mosques provides the location for various forms of Islamic activity. Although by no means do all Pakistani Muslims use the mosques on the various religious occasions, but such religious structures remind them of the presence of Islam. Because religion encompasses strong cultural values, mosque-building activities were quite intensive in these communities. During the 1970s, formal and informal prayers were held in multiple settings such as at community centers. Later in the 1980s, several small mosques were built. These mosques have extended their membership to Muslims from other ethnic groups such as Indian Muslims, Africans and Arabs, but these places of worship are predominantly Pakistani in nature and are characterized by Pakistani language, food and culture.

All of my participants were moderately religious and took a moderate stance towards religion, explaining that because of time constraints and other commitments, such as work, it was hard to practice religion on a day-to-day or regular basis. By visiting their homes, I did not find any extreme or radical approach to life style in religious context. Their homes were modestly decorated with no extreme religious icons such as symbols, drawings, pictures, and images. A majority of my participants express concerns about the possible rise of Islamic extremism, both in the United States and abroad. Some of my participants pointed out that, “If you compare the situation with Europe, where a number of young European Muslims, especially from France and Belgium, have been joining ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in Syria and Iraq, the situation is much better in the United States.”

4.4 Discrimination

Discrimination often limits the level of integration. Recent studies suggest that a high degree of discontent exist for immigrant groups, with the strongest negative attitudes felt toward Muslims and Arabs (Parillo, 2012). A Pew Research Center report, released in 2011, noted that nearly 6 out of 10 American adults see Muslims as being subject to more discrimination than Mormons, Atheists, or Jews. Recently (2016), Donald Trump called for banning Muslims to enter the United States, while Senator Ted Cruz called for surveillance in Muslim neighborhoods in local communities. Donald Trump is now a Republican president-elect for the highest office in the United States in November's 2016 presidential election.

Incidents of deliberate, overt discrimination against Muslims do occur, and explicit discrimination is not unknown in the Pakistani American community. Since September 11, 2001, there have been scattered incidents of Pakistani Americans becoming the targets for hate crimes, and Pakistanis have to undergo more security checks in places such as airports, due to their Muslim background. Some of my participants report discrimination because of terrorist related incidents. One participant said, "I changed my name from Ali to Al to hide my Muslim identity." Another participant, who works with a local travel agency for Pakistani community in New York, said that after 9/11, the Muslim population in general and the Pakistani community in particular felt insecure and preferred to stay within their community. Many of my participants (28) stressed that they often feel insecure interacting with other Americans. One of the participants said she became uncomfortable around Americans because they would stare at her clothing, and especially at her burka (full body covering). She said that she feels alarmed at the rise in anti-Muslim sentiments. A "7/11" store owner with a master degree in economics said, "Because of the image of us that has been created by the media, employers are sometime reluctant to hire Muslim people." Several other participants stressed the negative generalizations about Muslims in the media. A science professor at a local university reacted angrily, "I don't recognize myself in the picture that media makes of us. They generalize out of a particular case, and that is not fair."

Some participants think differently and ignore the issue of discrimination. One stated, "Some have tried to go against us, but others supported us, and that is positive." Many Pakistanis believe there is complete religious freedom in the United States and as chaplain Nayyar Imam Points out "discrimination can be overcome through perseverance and reciprocal contact with one another."

4.5 Gender

First-generation Pakistani Americans in the United States retained their close-knit family pattern centered on the framework of division of labor between husband and wife. The importance of family cohesion and integrity are very important family values and has contributed to stability and a prolonged family life. The basis of successful integration is often seen to lie within the family. The male role is instrumental, mainly that of breadwinner and from that position he derives most of his power and authority. The Pakistani man, in his role as provider, is also seen as the protector of women and children. The wives on the other hand are seen as the center of the family, devoted to childrearing and by doing cooking and cleaning, a traditional Pakistani culture. Sex is a taboo subject at home, and there is a restriction on women sexuality. Women are traditional in their roles to preserve their religious and cultural values. One of the women participants said, "You must respect the American ways of doing things, but you cannot ever forget your own traditions and values." These women stressed the importance of their Pakistani identity and are key to its preservation. Thus, it is Pakistani American women rather than men who maintain their ethnic preservation in the face of "Americanization." As a reply to my question about how she got married, one participant, a school teacher, said, "I chose him from the pictures that he sent to my parents. I was a little hesitant about marrying a man so far from my country, but my mother persuaded me to say yes to the marriage and since then we are happily married." According to a report published in the Chicago Tribune (2012), U.S. based arranged marriages among South Asian communities lead to love, satisfaction and commitment. It is also interesting to note that the men in my sample reported that they found their spouses from their own ethnic background as arranged by their parents and other relatives.

A study by Sam and Berry (1995) points out that the cultural values that immigrants bring with them from their own societies are also important in understanding immigrant family life and their integration into the host society. For immigrants, relating to the two opposing cultural norms and values may not be a problem because of well-developed egos and ethnic identities. Although they do not exactly live according to their old cultural patterns in their new setting, these patterns continue to have a powerful influence in shaping family values and most Pakistanis are proud of them. As one participant, a 48 years old mother of three small children said, "Although I have a liberal attitude toward the division of labor at home, a woman should be a wife and a mother first."

The traditional Pakistani values of a male-dominated society tend to discourage confrontation and open verbal communication between men and women. However, these women often find a position of greater power vis-à-vis their husbands as a consequence of immigration. They value the greater independence of life in the United States. They gradually adopted new roles in their day-to-day life. Some started attending schools, while many absorb themselves in a variety of jobs. Some wives help their men in running the family business. "Participation in socioeconomic sphere hastened our integration into American society and this is important if you want to be a part of American mainstream," as explained by a female participant.

All male participants preferred that their wives stay home to look after the house and the children. Most of them did not encourage their wives to obtain the qualifications and skills that are necessary for successful integration into American society. A few of my male participants did not perform household tasks, even when their wives were fully employed. I did not, however, discuss this issue with all my female participants. Their husbands were present during the interviews and as a male interviewer, I felt uncomfortable asking them questions about the division of labor in their households and such intimate topics such as sexuality and other gender-related issues.

Before I go further, I would like to say a few comments about the cases I have presented above. This study does not significantly address gender issues from the perspective of the experience of immigrant Asian women. My feeling is that gender roles among Pakistani Americans have not been drastically altered from the traditional ones in Pakistan, although their experience in living in American society provides women with a broader potential for recognition as individuals within their families. In addition, most women no longer have to suffer silently under the thumb of male authority, since they generally have more power today and participate more actively in making decisions concerning the family. Almost all of the women participants emphasized a change in their thinking since arriving in the United States. They wanted a clearly defined role, located somewhere between the ideal of equality between men and women and the traditional Pakistani patriarchal model, which provides them with personal independence, self-esteem, and happiness. This change, one of the participants said, "May influence the process of our integration into the mainstream, while remaining intact with our own traditional norms and values."

Finally, as noted above, Pakistani women in America today enjoy more freedom of movement than their counterparts are in Pakistan. It is my hope that the special concerns of immigrant women such as, defining gender role and their rights will receive much greater attention in future research on immigrant women in the United States.

5. Discussion

In the narratives of my participants, it was observed that for first-generation Pakistanis living in the United States, events and discourse pertaining to Pakistan and Pakistani culture are very important. Their situations can be explained in terms of "high ethnic identity versus low integration," as they will retain their ethnic identity and adherence to the norms and values of their native country. Although most are American citizens - a key factor in the social construction of inter-ethnic solidarity and social integration, they still feel more Pakistani than American. These individuals are more likely to have a strong Pakistani social network, while simultaneously showing upward mobility in socioeconomic infrastructure such as, labor market, and education. This situation support Berry's theory of Acculturation, as discussed earlier, which implies maintenance of the ethnic identity of the group, that is, resistance to mainstream norms and values as well as the intention to become an integral part of a larger societal framework. This is indicative of some functional level of integration. Figure 1. Patterns of Integration (high ethnic identity-low integration) at the end of the paper portray a situation where a majority of individuals from the ethnic background maintain their ethnic characteristics and are not motivated or inspired by the mainstream norms and values. They consider the larger society to be self-centered and highly individualistic. These immigrants emphasize their own group's goals in their daily living, and describe him or herself as collectivists. In response to the question of whether the participants consider themselves as American first or Pakistani first, 90% of Pakistani American responded that they considered themselves as Pakistani first.

In my interviews with them, they told me that they identify themselves more and more as Pakistanis than as Americans, and were less receptive to America's norms and values. Therefore, the first-generation Pakistanis fit into the pattern illustrated in this figure and supported by Berry's theory of Acculturation (1992), as they have achieved a functional level of integration into American society but are more comfortable within their ethnic domain. Thus, this model (Figure 1: high ethnic identity-low integration) reflects an integration model available to individuals and groups in a multicultural society. It is hard to predict how subsequent generations of Pakistani origin will make their presence felt. Will they opt for low ethnic identity and high integration, or will ethnic identity be prioritized, prompting them to opt for high ethnic identity and low integration?

Immigration is a continuous phenomenon and cultural diversity in the United States is encouraged and is often summarized by these values: equality, opportunity, and achievement. The underlying assumption of these ideals is that the American society facilitates and encourages a harmonious and multicultural society. Thus, it is no accident that retaining a separate cultural identity, while at the same time adopting certain norms and values of the American mainstream, is the desired option for many current immigrants.

Many of the theories used in this study come from traditional countries of immigration, for example the United States and England, and thus can be applied to the European immigrants of the early 20th century. The non-European immigrant situation is still recent. Future research will be needed to develop clearer theoretical models to account for successful integration and ethnic identity choices for non-European minorities entering a western industrialized society.

Another model that needs to be considered, or should be considered in the future, is the integration of future generation of Pakistanis (where both parents and grandparents are born in the United States) in American society. This generation is probably few in number today, but in future, their presence will be felt to a greater extent in neighborhoods, nurseries, at schools and in the job market. Questions may arise such as; will they then adopt an “American Identity” and reduce ties to the ethnic identity and culture of their grandparents? Alternatively, will ethnic identity be revived in this generation —what the second generation tries to forget, the third generation remembers. This will warrant investigation in future tasks.

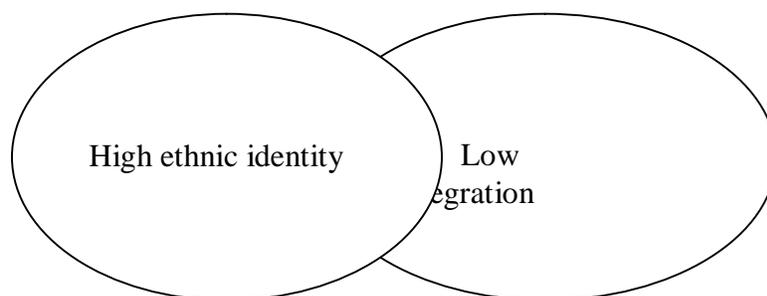
6. Limitations and the Future Research

Since Muslim society is highly sex-segregated, it is not easy for a male researcher to interview his subjects who happen to be female. All of my interviews with the first-generation women were conducted in the presence of male relatives who sometimes spoke on the female’s behalf. This approach gives the study a certain bias toward the study objective. The second limitation is involving only people who have a specific origin. This approach does not capture the full range of integration issues. I believe that the points of view gained from interviewing a specific and small category of people are likely to create a vacuum in our understanding of the multi-faceted issue of immigration and integration in a multi diverse America.

Looking to the future, what are the trends developing regarding immigration and its related issues? There is no doubt that there will be significant demographic changes within the United States in the near future. The number of second and third-generation American-born and educated immigrants from non-Western countries will increase. There will be more educated and skilled children among the first generation immigrants. At the same time, the number of self-employed Pakistanis as well as other immigrants is likely to increase. Further, there will be a significant increase in the number of elderly Pakistanis as well as other immigrants who arrived during the 1970s and 1980’s. The immigrant women will continue to emerge from isolation and attempt to make something out of their lives. However, without social acceptance on the part of the mainstream America, it will be difficult for such groups to achieve positive integration into American society.

As I can see, prejudice and fear of immigrants is a social problem that we will have to live within the future, and it is important to begin systematic research on this subject. Along with the wave of global migration, by the end of 2016, Islam is expected to be the second largest religion in the United States following Christianity (US Census 2013). More research on Islam and Muslim communities in the United States will offer additional insights in the field of race and ethnic studies. In addition, further research on Muslim women in contemporary America is needed since they play an important role in the family and in society and economy. It is important to attend to the voices of these women so we can bridge the gaps that have been created by unequal status positions between men and women in American society.

Figure 1: Patterns of Integration



Outcome: A person is more ethnic and adheres to a single identity: This model shows the overlap between one’s own identity and culture, and applies to the first generation. These immigrants are less receptive to the host society’s norms and values. The overlapping indicates that individuals have achieved a functional level of integration.

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