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Muslim Refugees

in the United States

A Guide for Service Providers

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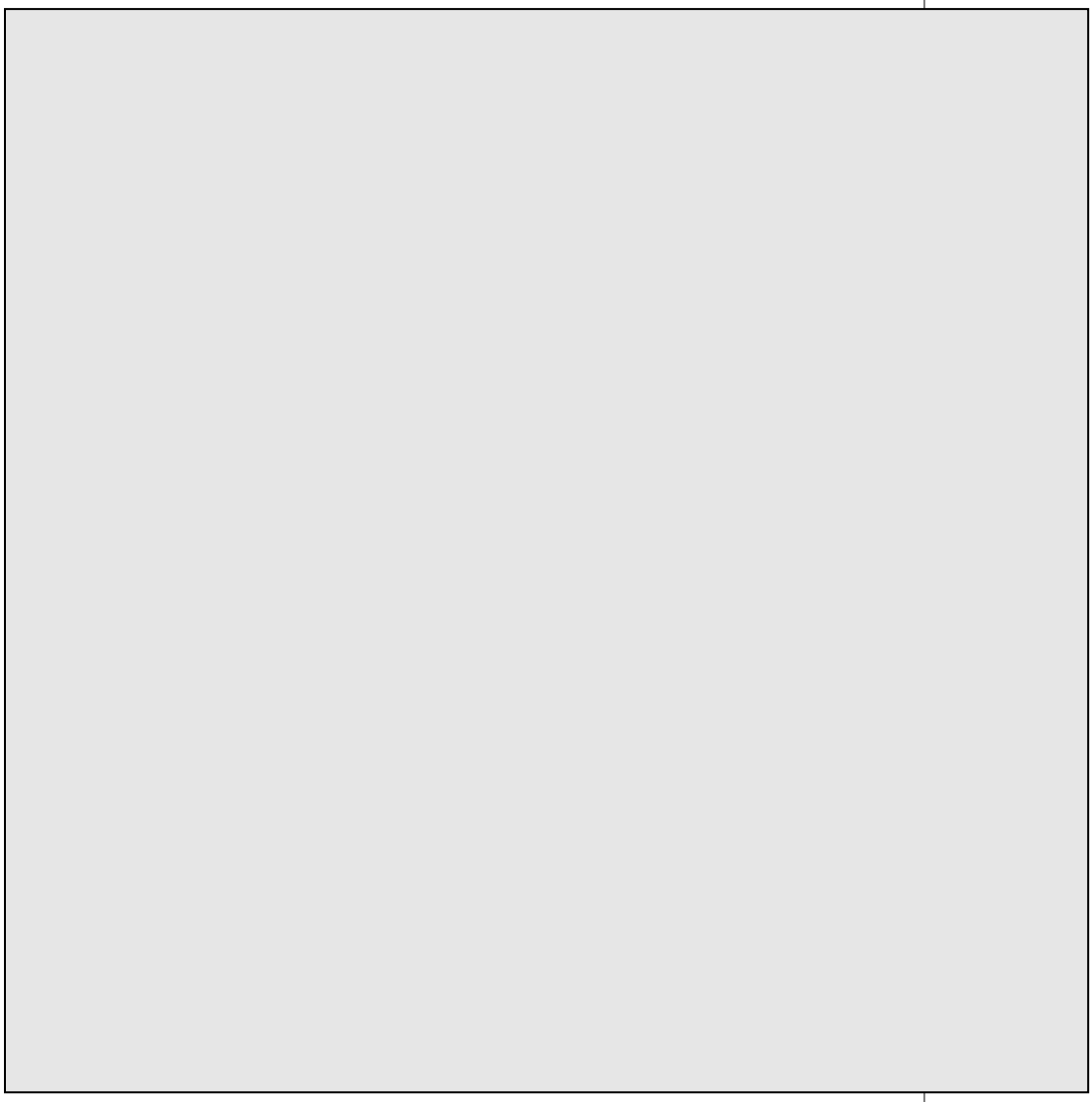

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Preface

This booklet is a basic introduction to the worldview of Muslim peoples as manifested in their religion and culture. It is designed primarily for service providers and others assisting Muslim refugees in their new communities in the United States.

This guide differs from the others in the Cultural Orientation Resource (COR) Center series. Each of the previously published guides has focused on a population of a specific national origin: Afghans, Bosnians, Cubans, Haitians, Somalis, Iraqi Kurds, Iraqis, Montagnards and Somali Bantus. This guide, by contrast, focuses on people from many parts of the world who are distinguished by their adherence to Islam. This guide therefore seeks to address the multifaceted situations that result from the combination of a shared belief system and a diversity of cultural backgrounds.

This guide also encourages service providers to build relationships with mosques and Islamic community organizations that may have programs to support Muslim refugees and immigrants. Existing Islamic communities are an essential resource for newcomers, providing assistance of many kinds and examples of successful adaptation to life in a new environment. Service providers are encouraged to become familiar with these local resources and partner with them to enhance the effectiveness of resettlement agencies' services.

The principal writers of this guide are Dr. Patricia Maloof and Dr. Fariyal Ross-Sheriff. Dr. Maloof is a medical anthropologist who has worked with refugees in the U.S. for 20 years in the areas of administration and program management, counseling, education, employment, and health. Formerly the Director of Refugee Programs with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, she is a trainer for medical interpreters with the Northern Virginia Area Health Education Center, and a part-time faculty member in the Department of Anthropology at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. Currently, she is directing a health survey of Kurdish and Iraqi Arab refugees in the United States.

Dr. Ross-Sheriff is a professor and director of the doctoral program in social work at Howard University in Washington, DC. Her area of specialization is displaced populations, including international refugees as well as homeless persons and disaster victims in the United States. She has worked extensively with refugees in Pakistan to examine the challenges facing refugees and service providers, and in Afghanistan to facilitate the repatriation and resettlement of refugees. In addition, she has conducted research on the role of women in the repatriation process, and has provided training for service providers assisting refugees in countries of first asylum and immigrants to the United States.

The section on Muslims in the United States was written by Dr. Ali Asani, professor of the practice of Indo-Muslim languages and culture at Harvard University. A scholar of Muslim literatures and cultures, he teaches courses on Islam in India,

Pakistan, and Bangladesh; Islamic mysticism; and Islamic civilizations around the world. He also offers instruction in various South Asian and African languages.

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Deborah Kennedy, Editor

Table of Contents

Introduction

Muslims as a World Population

Islam is the second largest religion in the world, with more than 1.2 billion adherents. Muslims reside in 184 countries (Council on Islamic Education, 1995) and represent many different ethnic groups and linguistic backgrounds.

Confusion sometimes arises about the difference between Islam and Muslim. Islam is the name of the religion, comparable to the names Christianity and Buddhism. A Muslim is a follower of or a believer in Islam, as a Christian is a person who follows Christianity and a Buddhist is a person who follows Buddhism. The terms *Mohammedanism* and *Mohammedan* are incorrect and should not be used.

Table 1 (see Appendix) provides the distribution of Muslim populations throughout the world.

Muslims in the United States

Muslim Americans today are a remarkably diverse group, belonging to over 75 different ethnicities and nationalities and representing many different interpretations of Islam. Muslim refugees represent a spectrum of educational backgrounds, social classes, language backgrounds, and ways of expressing their faith. They include people who wear western dress and adapt their religious observances to a western lifestyle, as well as people who maintain customs of dress, food, social relationships, and religious observance that are traditional or normative in their countries of origin. Indeed, no other country in the world has a Muslim population that is culturally and religiously as diverse as that of the United States.

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Muslims have been a part of the population of the western hemisphere since before the United States was founded. The plurality of cultures and interpretations present among Muslim Americans is the result of a multi-layered history of Muslim immigration to America and the emergence of movements inspired by Islamic traditions among African American populations. Although this history, especially in its early periods, is difficult to reconstruct because of the fragmentary nature of the evidence, we can nevertheless discern several distinct phases.

For the earliest phase, there is evidence suggesting the presence of Muslims in Spanish colonial America before 1550. Presumably, these Muslims came to the colonies to escape the religious persecution they were facing in the wake of the Catholic reconquest of Spain after several centuries of Arab rule. There is little information about the numbers involved or their fate, but it can be surmised that they must have constituted a significant element among the population of the Spanish American colonies, making it necessary for the Spanish crown to issue an edict in 1543 ordering their expulsion.

Of greater historical significance in this early phase was the forced "migration" of African Muslims who were brought to America as slaves. It is estimated that close to 10% of the slaves who were transported from West Africa to work on the plantations of pre-revolutionary America were Muslims (Nyang, 1999, p. 13). These slaves represent the first numerically significant Muslim presence in North America. While a tiny number of these enslaved Muslims were able eventually to secure their freedom or repatriation to their homeland, for the vast majority it was impossible to maintain their identities as Muslims or to practice their faith. Almost all were forcibly converted to Christianity.

The next significant influx of Muslims to America took place in the post Civil War period, when various peoples from the realms of the former Ottoman Empire immigrated to the United States. The majority of these immigrants were ethnically Arab and Christian, with Muslims constituting only a small minority. Many were from a rural background. Uneducated, they worked as peddlers and petty traders, immigrating mainly to the Midwest and spreading through the Dakotas and Montana. Michigan, especially Detroit, emerged as a major center for these immigrant groups during this phase. In addition, Muslims from Yugoslavia, Albania, the Ukraine and Central Asia came to America, founding small ethnic communities located mostly on the east coast. Contributing to the heterogeneous nature of Muslim settlement during this period were Tatar Muslims from Tsarist Russia and a small number of Indian Muslims. Although the total Muslim population was small, formally organized communities began to emerge in Michigan, Iowa, Maine, Connecticut and New York states; the first mosque in the country was built in Cedar Rapids, Iowa during this time.

A significant proportion of post 1965 Muslim immigrants have been persons with professional qualifications in fields such as medicine, nursing, and engineering.

The two or three decades preceding the Second World War did not see any significant increase in the number of Muslim immigrants because of legal restrictions on immigration from the Middle East and Asia. After the Second World War, there was a slight increase in immigration of non-Arab Muslims mostly from Turkey, the Indian subcontinent and Eastern Europe. The creation of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent displacement of Arab populations in the region also triggered a steady flow of Palestinian refugees, Muslim as well as Christian, that continues until today.

Changes to United States immigration laws in 1965 that resulted in the abolition of race and ethnic based quotas for immigration had a dramatic impact on the diversity of Muslim communities because larger numbers of Muslims could now come to live in the United States. It was now possible for previously excluded groups, such as Muslims from West Africa (particularly from the Senegambia and Nigeria) to come as legal immigrants. Some scholars estimate that more than half of the immigrants who have come to the United States as a result of the changes in immigration legislation in 1965 have been Muslim (Smith, 1999, p. 52). A significant proportion of post-1965 Muslim immigrants have been persons with professional qualifications in fields such as medicine, nursing, and engineering. To these, we can add the large inflow of students from Muslim nations who came to study at American universities. Upon completion of their

studies, a substantial number of these students decided to settle in the United States.

Muslim diversity in America is not just the result of the inflow of immigrants. Beginning in the early twentieth century, African Americans, descendants of former slaves, also began to form communities that defined themselves as Muslim. In the racially polarized climate of the 1920s and 1930s, some African Americans sought to express their distinctive identities as free men and women by identifying themselves with a variety of movements that associated with Islam and/or appropriated Islamic symbols.

In addition, a growing number of Anglo, Hispanic, and Native Americans have become Muslim, in some cases because of their contact with Sufi orders. These orders, which were transplanted into North America by immigrant Muslims or established by visiting Sufi *shaykhs* (spiritual teachers) and/or their disciples, emphasize mystical or spiritual forms of Islamic belief and practice and have proven to be influential in attracting converts of a European ancestry to Islam (Nyang, 1999, p. 20).

Overall, approximately 15% of all refugees entering the United States since 1988 have been Muslim.

In recent years, as a result of growing political and economic instability and poverty in various parts of the world, a large number of Muslim refugees have entered the United States. The Arab-Israel war in 1967, the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent period of civil strife resulting in the emergence of the Taliban, civil wars in Somalia and the Sudan, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo, and the Gulf war have all contributed to the growing Muslim refugee population in the United States.

Table 2 (see Appendix) presents the numbers and percentages of Muslim refugees to the United States from 1988 through the first half of 2003. This data shows a significant increase; Muslims represented 0.1% of the overall number of refugees admitted to the United States in 1990, and 44.4% in 1999. The 1990-1991 increase reflects the number of Iraqi Arabs who entered the United States as refugees following the first Gulf War. The overall increase reflects the admission of large numbers of Afghans, Bosnians, and Kosovars, as well as Congressionally-mandated changes to the regional ceilings, that increased the percentages for Africa and the Middle East and decreased those for Southeast Asia, with the former having a larger percentage of Muslims represented in their refugee populations.

Overall, approximately 15% of all refugees entering the United States since 1988 have been Muslim. This figure includes persons who were admitted as refugees and those who entered on Visas 92 and 93 for immediate family members of a refugee or asylum seeker (but not persons who were granted asylum and are also eligible for refugee benefits).

The Muslim refugees admitted to the United States since 1988 have come from 77 different countries, and represent a variety of ethnicities within their countries of origin. Table 3 (see Appendix) shows the countries of origin of Muslim

refugees to the United States since 1990. The predominant populations have come from eastern Africa, Iraq, and the Balkans.

Beyond the racial and ethnic diversity of America's Muslim populations, doctrinal and theological cleavages that have occurred throughout the history of Islam have been significant factors in diversification. Like any other world religion, Islam is practiced and interpreted in many different ways. Muslim Americans express their faith through discourses that range the spectrum from liberal to conservative. Some of these discourses may stress outwardly visible dimensions of the faith, such as ritual and the law (*shari'a*), while others may stress spiritual and mystical aspects. In addition, individuals from some West African nations may combine Islamic observance with animist beliefs and practices.

Recognition of the religious, ethnic, and cultural plurality of Islamic communities is crucial to understanding the many different ways of being Muslim in America today. One should be careful not to presuppose that the narrow and exclusionary visions of Islam espoused by some Islamic groups and organizations are representative of the whole.

For some Muslim refugees, religion is a powerful determining factor in life, while for others it may be less important.

Objectives and Content of This Guide

The focus of this guide is Islam and the ways in which it affects the experience of Muslim refugees. It also addresses some cultural practices and attitudes of Muslim refugees that are not necessarily derived from or endorsed by Islam.

For some Muslim refugees, religion is a powerful determining factor in life, while for others it may be less important. This guide presents information on the needs that arise from the practice of Islam, such as the need for an appropriate space for prayer, consideration during the month when fasting is observed (Ramadan), and the need to observe dietary laws. It also outlines behaviors that may arise as responses to the fear that Muslims experience when they encounter anti-Muslim sentiments and actions in the United States. The caseworker's understanding of and sensitivity to the needs and behaviors of Muslim refugees will facilitate these refugees' resettlement in and adaptation to American society.

When working with Muslim refugees, the challenges to service providers are (a) to understand and meet the distinctive needs of Muslim refugees; (b) to work effectively with professionals in other disciplines (e.g., health professionals and educators) on behalf of Muslim refugees; (c) to partner with support organizations in Islamic communities to help meet the needs of Muslim refugees; and, most importantly, (d) to help Muslim refugees adapt successfully to life in the United States. An essential part of this last challenge is helping Muslim refugees recognize the disparities that may exist between their expectations and the actuality of the resettlement experience. Recognizing such disparities, when they exist, enables Muslim refugees to adjust their expectations in ways that give them a sense of control over their new life.

To help service providers and volunteers meet these challenges, this guide has six objectives:

1. To illustrate the demographics and diversity of Muslim refugees
2. To enable service providers to understand the Islamic concept of refuge
3. To give service providers a basis for understanding the beliefs and practices of Muslim refugees
4. To provide knowledge and practical suggestions relating to the conditions necessary for successful resettlement
5. To examine the challenges faced by particularly vulnerable Muslim refugee populations
6. To suggest resources and provide additional information on Islam and Muslim communities in the United States.

Muslim refugees... ... bring strengths that can be used in rebuilding their lives in the United States.

The first two chapters present background information on Islam, illustrating both the beliefs and practices that all Muslims share and the ways in which practices and expectations may differ under the influence of cultural factors. Chapter 1 outlines the Islamic understanding of refuge and asylum, experiences that played a pivotal role in the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the fundamental tenets of Islam and illustrates the ways in which those tenets affect the expectations and actions of individual Muslims. In Chapter 3, five necessary conditions for successful resettlement are presented and illustrated with case studies. Each case study is based on actual events, with certain information changed in order to protect identities. Chapter 4 discusses special considerations pertaining to specific Muslim populations, and Chapter 5 discusses social support networks that can augment the formal support provided by refugee service organizations. At the end of the guide are a glossary and a resource list for those who would like to read more about the topics discussed.

This guide is just a starting point; it does not purport to answer all the questions that service providers and volunteers will face in interacting with Muslim refugees. Muslim refugees, like all other groups, bring strengths that can be used in rebuilding their lives in the United States. Many face major adjustments to their lives when they come to the United States, and most are highly successful in making the transition. This guide seeks to give service providers the basic information they need to help Muslim refugees resettle successfully and add the diversity and beauty of their cultures of origin to the multicultural fabric of American society.

CHAPTER **1**

Muslims as Refugees and Asylum Providers

In early 2002, there were 19.8 million people of concern to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, the equivalent of one out of every 300 people on earth (UNHCR, 2002, p. 2). Approximately nine million of those refugees and internally displaced persons were Muslim. As Table 2 in the Appendix shows, the United States is now receiving and resettling more Muslim refugees than at any other time in its history.

Muslim refugees share a fundamental understanding of *hijra*, or migration, which includes migration in search of refuge and protection. The Islamic calendar begins, not at the time of the Prophet Muhammad's birth or the first revelation from Allah, but at the time of *hijra* when he migrated from Mecca to Medina to avoid persecution.

In Islam, asylum is a right of anyone seeking protection.

According to the Islamic concept of *hijra*, all Muslims who are not free to exercise their basic rights within their state have a duty to flee elsewhere if it is impossible for them to resist oppression. The concept of *hijra* has two components, a practical component related to *hijra* as a movement from one location to another (either by choice or under duress), and a philosophical component of *al-hijra* as an internal migration from the land of humans to the presence of Allah, as practiced by the Sufi traditions.

In Islam, asylum is a right of anyone seeking protection. The Prophet Muhammad stressed the need to grant protection and to have humanitarian attitudes towards both forced and voluntary migrants. Asylum for forced migrants is supported by the Qur'an, and *shari'a* law (revealed law) affirms the practice of providing sanctuary to persecuted persons and the sacredness of some places, such as *Al-Kaaba* (the house of God in Mecca that Muslims face in prayer). Anyone who sought refuge in a mosque or in the home of a companion of the Prophet was safe and secure. However, asylum according to *shari'a* law is not confined only to sacred places, religious people or followers of Islam. Asylum is also granted in homes and designated communal places under the protection of Islam, and should be respected by outsiders. Asylum should be provided without discriminating between free persons and those who are enslaved, rich and poor, men and women, or Muslims and non-Muslims. The medieval theologian Ibn al Arabi suggests that asylum is obligatory from states where there is injustice, intolerance, physical persecution, disease, and financial insecurity (Eickelman & Piscatiri, 1990).

Asylum is also a duty of the political leaders of Islamic communities. As a Muslim and a religious leader, one is obliged to provide protection to anyone who seeks it indiscriminately and unconditionally. Islam provides protection to asylum seekers because of its belief that this is their right.

Shari'a law counsels that when an Islamic community finds it difficult or impossible to grant protection to an asylum seeker at the place where he or she seeks refuge, another refuge should be found in another Islamic community. A person who has been granted protection cannot be attacked after asylum is granted. His or her life, property, and freedom should be safeguarded. He or she is not obliged to follow Islamic rites and rituals or become a Muslim. He or she is free to follow his or her religious practices during the period of temporary asylum or refuge. Islamic laws also call for extension of asylum to family members for family reunification. Protection may also be granted to a tribe. Excluded from protection are warriors (even though they may be family members) and criminals who, if under protection, should be made to surrender and then be brought to justice.

The protection status is temporary. Historically, refuge was granted for a period of one year. After that, the refugees were expected to leave their place of refuge, seek another place of refuge, return home, or become permanent members of the Islamic community.

An understanding of migration as an essential part of the life experience of the Prophet Muhammad, and the perception of asylum as a right and an obligation, underlie some Muslim refugees' understanding of their own migration experience. Recognizing this larger perspective can help service providers identify opportunities and address concerns in ways that cohere with Muslim refugees' world view.

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CHAPTER **2**

Muslims From Varied Cultures: Commonality and Diversity

Islam is considered by Muslims to be one religion, and all Muslims profess the same *Shahada* (declaration of faith). The two major branches of Islam are Sunni and Shi'a. The separation between these two groups dates from the period immediately after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, when different views arose regarding the leadership succession. The Sunni, who make up approximately 85% of all Muslims (Marshall, Green, & Gilbert, 2002, p. 27), take their name from the *Sunna,* or teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The Shi'a or Shiites, the remaining 15%, are primarily found in Iran and Iraq. Within each of the two branches there are various subgroups, each with its own conception of the nature of religious authority and the norms for leading a life of piety. *Tariqat*, or Sufi orders that stress the spiritual aspects of religious experience, represent other expressions of Islam. An individual Muslim's beliefs and practices may vary depending on the type of Islam he or she follows.

While Muslims throughout the world share the same essential beliefs and values, cultural overlays cause differences in the ways individuals and groups observe their faith. In addition, a number of cultural traits of people of Middle Eastern and Asian origin are consistent with Islam, and it is difficult sometimes to sepa-

rate cultural characteristics from religious expectations. These include self-control and restraint in emotional expression, respect for authority, well-defined social roles and expectations, awareness of social milieu, communal responsibility, high regard for the elderly, and the centrality of family relationships and responsibility.

This diversity found throughout the *ummah* (the community of Muslims) is an asset because it contributes to the vitality of the *ummah* as a whole. However, it makes the work of a service provider more complicated. This chapter provides general information about Islam that can help service providers understand the behaviors and attitudes of Muslim refugees, but it is important to talk with individual refugees to learn more about their specific expectations, understandings, and forms of observance. Religious and cultural backgrounds influence newcomer refugees' perspectives, as do their individual interpretations.

The Islamic worldview enjoins people to live in peace.

The Islamic Worldview

Islam is a monotheistic religion based on the tradition of Abraham, as are Judaism and Christianity. Muslims use the Arabic word *Allah* for God, the Creator. This is the same word used by Christians in the Middle East. Islam arose during the seventh century C.E. in the Arabian Peninsula. Muslims believe that Allah chose Muhammad ibn Abdullah to be the last prophet of the monotheistic religions.

The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam. Muslims believe that its text was divinely revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel. The Qur'an forms the basis of belief for Muslims. The *sunna*, or teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, provide additional guidance. The *sunna* and traditions about the life of the Prophet Muhammad are preserved in the *Hadith*, texts that Muslims regard as authoritative although they were not divinely revealed in the same way as the Qur'an. For many Muslims, guidance for every situation encountered in life is provided in the words of the Qur'an, and the teachings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad provide models for behavior.

The Arabic root of the word Islam—*slm*—means peace and submission (to the will of Allah); the word Muslim literally means "submitter." The Islamic worldview enjoins people to live in peace. Allah has placed them as His stewards on earth. Islam directs Muslims to do good and to avoid evil. Humans have free will and can choose which actions to take. An important component of leading a good life is to have *taqwa*, or a consciousness of Allah at all times.

For many of its adherents, Islam is a total way of life, guided first by the Qur'an and then by the *Sunna*. All areas of life—religious, economic, social, and political—are addressed, and guidelines for the faithful are provided. Muslims do not come under one worldwide authority. Instead, a variety of religious leaders and learned individuals interpret the Qur'an and the *sunna* and other religious texts for the faithful. As in any global religion, Islamic religious leaders and scholars may differ widely among themselves on matters of faith and practice.

Shari'a and *adab* are core values in Islam (Ewing, 1988, p. 5). *Shari'a* refers to the concept of the "right way" in Islam, a body of law and a code of conduct. It is outlined by the Qur'an and the *sunna*. According to Metcalf (1984), *adab* refers to rules or a code of behavior applicable to all individuals. She describes it as "a concept of the well-constructed life, the harmonious life of a person who knows his relationship to God, to others, and to himself, and who, as a result, plays a special role among his or her fellows" (p. vii). *Adab* is also used to refer to discipline and training, etiquette, and proper behavior. Parents are expected to raise their children in this correct form of conduct. The understanding of *adab* can also refer to spiritual discipline, that is, inner strength.

Islam clearly defines the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the family and its individual members. Interpretations and theological positions on family law differ among Muslim groups because of differences among legal schools of thought (Rahman, 1980). Nonetheless, all Muslims place a high value on childbearing and childrearing, and emphasize responsibilities to elders. Parents are expected to provide for their children, and adult children are expected to care for their aging parents.

The tenets of Islam and the events of the life of the Prophet Muhammad are integral to the cultures of Muslim peoples.

The family bond is central to the lives of Muslims. A strong family bond may aid Muslim refugees in their resettlement. However, obligations to family members who remain in the home country or in the country of first asylum may be a source of stress because the resettled refugee continues to feel responsible and wants to assist those family members in need.

The Basic Tenets of Islam

Six articles of faith characterize Islam. They affirm a Muslim's belief in a divine being and human responsibility. All are based upon the Qur'an (Al-Misri, 1991; Faruqi, 1998; Smith, 1999). The articles of faith are:

1. Belief in the *tawhid* (oneness) of Allah: The term *tawhid* means both Allah's oneness and the acknowledgement of this by humans.

2. Belief in angels: Muslims believe that angels have an active role in this temporal life and in the afterlife. The Angel Gabriel brought the divine revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad.

3. Belief in the Holy Books: The Qur'an clearly states that Allah sent books, or revelations, to both the Jews and Christians before the revelations to the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that each of the holy books, including the Torah and the Bible, contains Allah's revelations to mankind, with the final revelation being given to the Prophet Muhammad.

4. Belief in Allah's messages: Muslims believe that Allah sent messages to humans in various ways through special people. The latter are referred to as prophets or messengers. Muslims believe that the messengers of God started

with Adam and included Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus. Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad is the last prophet sent by God.

5. Belief in the Judgment Day and the afterlife: The concept of *tawhid* brings together the oneness of Allah and human responsibility. On the Judgment Day, Allah will bring all people together and each person will be accountable for his or her actions during life.

6. Belief in Allah's Decree: Muslims believe that all things happen by the will of Allah. However, this does not preclude the individual Muslim from taking responsibility for his or her condition (Abd Al Ati, 1977). Muslims are exhorted to persist in improving their own condition through planned efforts, but to ultimately leave the outcomes of their efforts to Allah (Ross-Sheriff & Hussein, in press).

The tenets of Islam and the events of the life of the Prophet Muhammad are integral to the cultures of Muslim peoples. For this reason, both observant and non-observant Muslims frequently use certain expressions that may sound "religious" to Western ears. One such common expression is insha *'Allah* (Allah willing), which connotes a sense of hope that one's efforts will meet with success by the will of Allah. Service providers may interpret this expression to mean the client will do his/her best and leave the rest to Allah. When referring to the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims customarily follow the mention of his name with the phrase *es-salamu alaihi* (peace be upon him, abbreviated as *pbuh* in English texts) or *sall 'Allahu alaihi wa sallam* (May God's blessings and salutations be upon him). A common expression of thanksgiving is *wal hamdu l'Illah* (thanks be to God). Service providers may interpret a refugee's use of these expressions either as an indication of piety or as cultural markers common to Muslims of many backgrounds and approaches to faith.

For many observant Muslims, Islam is more than a system of beliefs; it is an entire way of life, founded on the five pillars.

Practices and Holy Days

Many Islamic communities emphasize correct practice, or orthopraxy, in addition to correct doctrine, or orthodoxy. The correct observance of ritual practice is outlined in the five pillars of Islam. For many observant Muslims, Islam is more than a system of beliefs; it is an entire way of life, founded on these five pillars.

1. The *Shahadah*: The profession of faith that affirms belief in the oneness of Allah and in the role of the Prophet Muhammad as Allah's messenger.

2. *Salaat*: Ritual prayers, which are performed five times a day, at *Fajr* (dawn), *Zuhr* (midday), *'Asr* (late afternoon), *Maghrib* (evening), and *'Isha* (night). Prayers may take place in a mosque, at home, or in any place that is clean and appropriate. Muslims wash their hands, mouths, and feet before praying. When praying, a Muslim follows a prescribed series of standing and kneeling postures and focuses the mind on Allah. Not all Muslims pray five times a day; some have combined the prayers into a morning and an evening prayer.

3. *Zakat*: Almsgiving, especially to help the poor. *Zakat* helps to assure support for the needy and provides for an equitable distribution of wealth. The word *Zakat* means both piety and purity, emphasizing the relationship of financial responsibility to virtuous living.

4. Observance of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and the time when Muslims believe the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The Islamic calendar is lunar and consists of 354 days. Therefore, Ramadan begins 10 days earlier each Western (Gregorian) year than the year before, and, over time, it moves through the seasons.

   Ramadan is a time of prayer, contemplation, and reflection on what is important in life, individual behavior, relationships with others, and why the believer is here on earth. It is a time of education when Muslims learn more about themselves, their relationship with God, and their relationships with others. It is a time when the individual Muslim's entire being should be dedicated to and thoughtful of God. Muslims generally try to complete a full reading of the Qur'an during Ramadan, and those beyond the age of puberty abstain from eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual activity between sunrise and sunset. Ramadan is a special time to worship Allah and it is also a time to remember needy people and share with them what Allah has given. So Ramadan is a month for sharing and caring (Maloof, 2002a).

5. *Hajj*: Pilgrimage to Mecca. Each Muslim should try to make this pilgrimage at least once in life, health and finances permitting. The *Hajj* takes place during Dhul Hijjah, the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar.

In addition to the five pillars, many observant Muslims adhere to religious customs regarding aspects of everyday life that are strongly influenced by culture and therefore vary depending on the individual Muslim's country of origin, ethnic group, and personal level of observance.

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According to Hamid (1996), "Islam's moral and legal code assures that everything is allowed unless it is prohibited, and not vice versa" (p. 124). There are clear designations about what is *halal* (permitted) or *haram* (prohibited). When it comes to resettlement of Muslims in other countries, it follows that "local customs not in contradiction with any principle or law of Islam have been incorporated with ease in the cultures of the Muslim peoples" (Hamid, 1996, p. 124). Thus, Muslim refugees combine Islamic teaching, the culture of national origin, and American culture as they build their new lives in the United States.

Food and drink: Islam forbids the consumption, production, distribution, and sale of pork. In addition, observant Muslims eat only meat that is *halal,* that is, slaughtered in accordance with Islamic custom. A *halal* market is a local ethnic market that sells meat and other products that are permissible for observant Muslims to eat. Islam also forbids the consumption, production, distribution, and sale of alcohol. Many Muslims do not give alcohol as gifts, even to non-Muslims. However, not all Muslims adhere strictly to these customs.

Dress and grooming: Modesty in all aspects of one's life is important in Islam, for both men and women. Muslim men from some traditions wear a *kufi* (a small cap), and others regard the wearing of a beard as a religious requirement. The prescription for modesty is more evident, however, among observant Muslim women, who wear a *hijab* or head covering in public. The *hijab* varies from a head scarf to a robe that covers the hair, neck, and body, leaving the face and hands visible, and there is great variety among Muslims worldwide in the requirements for covering and the style of covering that is acceptable. The wearing of *hijab* is not universally observed among Muslim women. In some traditions, girls start to cover as they approach adolescence or as they develop a deeper commitment to their faith. Most importantly, the wearing of *hijab* is not synonymous with oppression of women or restrictions on their liberty. For many observant Muslim women, covering is a choice that symbolizes their commitment to the Islamic way of life.

Friday is the holy day of the week for Muslims, and the day when observant Muslims go to the mosque for communal prayers. Muslims also observe two annual holy days.

Eid ul-Fitr is the festival of breaking the fast of Ramadan. It is a one-day celebration that falls on the first day of Shawwal, the month after Ramadan.

Eid ul-Adha is celebrated at the end of the *Hajj*, beginning on the tenth day of the month of Dhul Hijjah. It is a 4-day feast that commemorates the obedience of the Prophet Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice his son Ishmael to God.

Muslims may also celebrate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. Some also celebrate the birth of Fatimah (the daughter of Muhammad), the birth of Ali (the first Imam), or others. Shi'a Muslims commemorate the deaths of Hassan, the second Imam, and Hussein, the third Imam. At the birth of a child and at weddings, many Muslims have special ceremonies that combine cultural and religious traditions. It is useful for service providers to ask refugees which holy days and practices are significant to them, and sometimes to help them explain their consequent needs to employers or school friends.

It is useful for service providers to ask refugees which holy days and practices are significant to them, and sometimes to help them explain their consequent needs to employers or school friends.

CHAPTER 3

Challenges in Resettlement and Adaptation of Muslim Refugees

Like other refugee groups, Muslim refugees struggle with problems related to housing, income, education, health, and security. They face the challenges of reestablishing their families in a country with traditions and lifestyles that are very different and may sometimes seem at odds with their beliefs: learning about and obtaining access to education, health, and social services for themselves and their children; protecting themselves and their children from becoming victims of prejudice and hostility; managing conflicts within their own households that arise from changing cultures, lifestyles, and family roles; and learning to take advantage of the opportunities available to them in their new home.

Muslim refugees are becoming more aware of their basic human rights and the systems that protect those rights, but they still require support in a number of areas from service providers. This chapter will look at five components of successful resettlement as they relate to Muslim refugees in the United States: housing, employment and income, education, access to health care, and safety and security. A case study is presented for each component, with discussion questions for service provision.

For Muslims, life is defined by the interdependence of the family rather than the independence of individuals or nuclear family units.

Housing

For Muslims, life is defined by the interdependence of the family rather than the independence of individuals or nuclear family units. Muslim refugees, like others who have lived in extended families in their countries of origin, are likely to feel uncomfortable living in apartments that accommodate only nuclear families. They may prefer to reside together in a single housing unit, even if it is too small by U.S. standards or by local housing regulations.

However, refugee families may have to learn to adjust to living in available units without extended family members. Service providers need to be sensitive to the challenges arising from refugees' desire to live with their extended families, addressing this challenge during the orientation period and again during follow-up work, with clear explanations about housing regulations and lease stipulations that indicate the number of people who may stay in a housing unit. Whenever possible, service providers can try to find larger units or large single-family dwellings to accommodate extended families. If larger affordable units or a single large house are not available, then placing members of the extended families in separate units in close proximity to one another may be helpful.

As with other refugee groups, Muslim families are likely to be most comfortable around people with whom they share their culture, language, and traditions. Placing such families in close proximity helps to lessen feelings of isolation and allows the refugees to develop their own networks of interaction and support.

Many Muslims are not accustomed to living in the same dwelling with non-family members of a different gender. Arrangements where males and females share apartments may be a source of stress and resultant adaptation problems for many Muslims from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Sensitivity to this issue can be addressed by planning ahead so that non-related single Muslim refugees are housed only with people of the same sex.

When setting up a household for new Muslim arrivals, service providers need to be sensitive to the possibility that the refugees will prefer to eat only *halal* food, and bring in only items that do not contain animal byproducts, stock vegetarian items, and buy vegetable cooking oil. If a meal is prepared to welcome the new arrivals, it can be a vegetarian meal or prepared with *halal* meat. Fresh fruits and vegetables will be welcome. If a family does only eat *halal* food, then it would be good to reassure them that the pots and pans have been purchased new, or, if they have been donated by a Muslim family, that they have not been used to cook pork.

If the family does prefer to eat *halal*, then the caseworker can help them to identify the closest *halal* market and show them how to get there on public transportation. For some refugees who come from Muslim countries where everything is already *halal*, it may be necessary to explain how to read ingredients so as to avoid those foods and ingredients that are not permitted.

Some Muslims choose to keep dogs in their homes, while others view dogs as very unclean. For the latter, if a dog touches a person's clothes, those clothes must be washed before they can be used for prayers. If a Muslim wants to pray in the house, then the dog must be kept away from the area used for prayer.

Two other issues that concern service providers relate to clothing and jewelry. Like other refugees, Muslims may refuse used clothing for any number of reasons. For many refugees, it reflects a loss of status because they are not able to buy their own new clothing as they did in the past. Refugees may also feel that used clothing is unclean, and a few may believe that the essence of the prior wearer remains with the clothes and can bring bad luck if they do not know who previously wore them.

Muslim and other refugee women from some cultures receive gold jewelry at marriage, and this jewelry carries powerful emotional value for them. They will sell it to obtain food or meet other needs only when all else fails. If they have not had to use their gold jewelry to support themselves and their families during flight, when they arrive in the United States these women will try to keep it. Service providers need to be sensitive to the emotional value that gold jewelry carries for refugee women and understand that selling it is not an option.

Whenever possible after the refugees have found jobs, they should have the option to relocate to an area that is closer to their jobs, in neighborhoods with better schools, and/or closer to a mosque or people of similar background. The local Islamic community has many resources that can support new arrivals as

The local Islamic community has many resources that can support new arrivals as they adjust to life in the United States

they adjust to life in the United States, and relocation may help Muslim refugees take advantage of these.

Case Study

An extended family of twelve persons from Kosovo arrived in Phoenix, Arizona. The grandmother, one son with his wife and their three children composed one core family. A second son with his wife and four children composed the second core family. Of the seven children, four were school-aged, two were toddlers, and one was an infant. The resettlement agency had arranged for each core family to have its own apartment, but the apartments were in two different buildings within the same apartment complex. The management promised the resettlement office that, as soon as an apartment opened in either building, one of the core families could move into the same building with the others. Nevertheless, the refugees in both core families insisted on living together. In the evening, all 12 people would come to one apartment for dinner and then spend the night together. During the day, all family members who were not in school or looking for a job would be in one apartment.

The family was also dissatisfied with this living arrangement because they were too far from the mosque and the *halal* market. They did not mind taking public transportation, but it was expensive and the ride took 1 1/2 hours each way.

After several months of warnings, the management office lost patience with the family for being out of compliance with the lease, since one core family had essentially moved in with the other. The occupancy rules did not allow for this many people in one apartment of the size that they had. There were repeated warnings and discussions with the resettlement office and the refugees. Eventually, eviction was threatened.

The resettlement agency staff had explained the situation several times to the refugees. The case manager had even had them sign a statement for their file indicating that they knew they were in violation of their lease and that this could cause them to face eviction. The refugees had signed the statement willingly. They were very clear on what they wanted—they wanted to live together. They told the caseworker that, regardless of the consequences, they would not comply.

Finally, with the help of the mosque, the family's caseworker was able to find a large apartment closer to the mosque and the *halal* market for the family.

Possible Questions for Discussion:

1. *What happened in this scenario from the perspective of the refugee family?*
2. *What happened from the perspective of the landlord?*
3. *Why do you think the family continued to share the apartment, in spite of being warned of the possible consequences?*
4. *What are some possible approaches that the caseworkers might take to this problem?*

Employment

All refugees hope to find work that matches their skills, abilities, and interests while providing sufficient income and benefits to meet their needs and those of their families. Service providers face the challenge of helping refugees be realistic about available opportunities while taking into account the sociocultural and religious considerations relevant to each individual. In the case of Muslim refugees, the following considerations may affect decisions and guidance regarding employment.

Need for Dual Income

All refugees hope to find work that matches their skills, abilities, and interests while providing sufficient income and benefits to meet their needs and those of their families.

The types of job opportunities available to refugees, especially those with limited English language skills, often mean that families need the income from two working adults in order to meet basic needs. In the case of Muslims from some cultural backgrounds, family members, especially husbands or fathers, may be resistant to having women work outside the home in an unfamiliar environment. Islam stresses the role of the husband as the provider for the family, and Muslim men from some cultural groups may regard the need for the wife to work as an embarrassment, although this is not always the case.

In addition, Muslim women from some cultural backgrounds may be uncomfortable with the idea of interacting on a regular basis with strangers, particularly with men who are not family members. These women may be ill at ease with jobs that require frequent contact with the public, and may express the desire to stay at home. The feelings of these Muslim men and women do not necessarily arise solely from religious considerations; they also grow out of a complex blend of cultural traditions, the desire to be protective of women in the family, and the insecurities that remain from being refugees who have faced serious dangers.

Service providers need to be sensitive to this issue and help Muslim families find ways to meet their financial needs in ways that are comfortable for them. Some families may be willing to accept the idea of the wife or daughters working outside the home, as long as they do not have to travel too far alone to go to work or interact with the public a great deal. In other cases, the solution may be to secure jobs on two different shifts so that a husband and wife can both care for their children at home. Employment that allows women to work from home may be another option.

Some women may want to work, but may initially find it very difficult to leave their children in day care with strangers. If these women worked in the home country, family members probably helped to take care of the children. In such cases, finding a day care provider of the same religion and/or ethnicity may make the transition easier for the woman.

Employment for any refugee is a matter of individual assessment and placement. Certainly there are many Muslim refugee women who are accustomed to working outside the home and are comfortable doing so. These women do not face the same challenges as women who have little experience in the public sector when it comes to employment.

Workplace Relationships

As is the case with some other groups, Muslim men from some cultural backgrounds may have difficulty with the fact that, in many workplaces, women are supervisors or hold other positions of authority. Resistance to the idea of working under a woman can be especially problematic when a man from a culture in which men and women work in separate professional spheres must take a low level service position because of limited English language or other skills. In the United States, women frequently hold supervisory positions in such contexts. This is not an issue for all Muslim men, and service providers need to raise the matter with each refugee individually, in order to determine whether it is a consideration in helping the refugee find employment.

Service providers working with male Muslim refugees who are uncomfortable with the idea of working under a woman can try different approaches:

- They can help the man secure a job where he will report to another man, but women are also present in supervisory positions. This gives the refugee an opportunity to observe and become more comfortable with the types of male-female interactions that characterize the American workplace before a situation arises in which he must handle such interactions directly himself.

- They can reach out to other refugees, particularly those from the man's own cultural background or country of origin, who have made this transition successfully, and ask them to mentor the man during the initial stages of his employment. Service providers may have potential mentor contacts among refugees they have worked with previously, or may be able to find some through local mosques and Islamic service organizations.

Accommodation

Service providers need to help observant Muslim employees understand their workplace rights as these relate to Islamic practice, so that they will be able to work with an employer when in need of religious accommodation. Providers also need to help these employees understand the limits of reasonable accommodation and the ways in which they may need to adjust their own expectations in order to succeed in the American workplace.

Service providers need to help observant Muslim employees understand their workplace rights as these relate to Islamic practice, and understand the limits of reasonable accommodation and the ways in which they may need to adjust their own expectations in order to succeed in the American workplace.

Sumayya Allen (2002) discusses the pursuit and protection of rights in the workplace for Muslims. She makes the following points as she addresses Muslim readers:

- You have the right to fairness in hiring, firing, and promotions
- You have the right to a non-hostile work environment
- You have the right to complain about discrimination without the fear of retaliation
- You have the right to reasonable religious accommodation

The reasonable accommodation referred to in the last statement may include wearing *hijab* or *kufi*, having a beard, being able to pray on the job, and attending Friday prayers. Reasonable accommodation varies from job to job, just as the need for accommodation varies from refugee to refugee. Service providers can help to ensure a good match between refugee and job opportunity by interviewing each refugee to determine which observances are essential to that person (i.e., cannot be adapted), which the refugee is willing to adapt, and which the refugee is willing to forgo. With this information in hand, the service provider will be able to identify employers who are able and willing to accommodate the refugee's needs, and to avoid sending the refugee into situations that will not work for either the refugee or the potential employer.

Service providers can help to ensure a good match between refugee and job opportunity by interviewing each refugee to determine which observances are essential to that person...

Sample Situations

The remainder of this chapter addresses specific situations that have been encountered by Muslim refugees in the United States. These examples do not describe all Muslim refugees, since practices vary widely. They are meant merely to provide insight into situations that may arise.

Shaking hands

Shaking hands upon meeting is a Western gesture. Americans in particular believe that a handshake tells a great deal about a person: A firm, steady handshake with a direct look into the other person's eyes means that the person is honest and self-confident, while a so-called "limp" handshake leaves a bad impression. The impression made by the handshake is especially important in job interviews.

However, for many Muslims, as for many people from other cultures, the customary greeting is a gesture other than the handshake. In addition, some Muslim refugees may be uncomfortable shaking hands with a person of the opposite sex. For many Muslim refugees, this may not be an issue at all, while for others it may create challenges.

Job developers have options for working with refugees who are uncomfortable in shaking hands. If a refugee is not uncomfortable with the action of shaking hands, but simply is not accustomed to the gesture, the job developer can practice with the refugee before a job interview takes place. If the refugee is truly not comfortable with this form of physical contact with a stranger, a job developer

can explain the situation ahead of time to the potential employer. Alternatively, to ease what may be an awkward first meeting between employer and employees, the job developer can give the applicant a résumé or application form that the applicant can hand to the employer instead of shaking hands. Some service providers have developed a technique to block shaking hands by standing between the refugee and the potential employer while handing the employer the résumé or application form; these providers stress that they explain the situation to the potential employer later. Whatever strategy is adopted, the service provider needs to help the refugee understand that the handshake is a common gesture and should be respected, if possible.

Pork and alcohol

When it comes to the identification of appropriate job settings, the presence of pork and alcohol is a consideration. Some Muslims may not be comfortable working in a restaurant that also has a bar. An observant Muslim working in food service may feel uncomfortable having to serve or touch pork products. For some, the option to wear rubber gloves while preparing the food (for example, putting pork toppings on a pizza) is acceptable. For others, any contact with pork is unacceptable.

Office parties or events at which alcohol is served are common in the United States. In the case of formal events such as client luncheons or employee recognition banquets, employees may be strongly encouraged or even required to attend. Some observant Muslims may be willing to attend such gatherings and drink non-alcoholic beverages, while others will not wish to attend at all. Job developers can work with observant Muslims who are not comfortable attending such gatherings to help them find work where they will not be required to do so.

Wearing hijab, kufi or beard

An employer can neither refuse employment to a woman who wears *hijab* nor ask her to remove it. The same is true for men who wear *kufi.* A woman who covers her head should be prepared to make modifications (e.g., tuck in loose ends so that they are not caught in machinery) as needed in the interest of safety and uniform policies, and the employer can ask that the *hijab* be a color or fabric that is consistent with the corporate image. If other employees wear a cap, it is permissible to wear the same cap on top of the *hijab.*

A Muslim man who keeps a beard for religious reasons cannot be required to shave his beard. He may be asked to wear a covering such as a hair net or mask for safety and health reasons.

Praying and holy day observance

Muslims who observe the practice of praying five times each day will need to take brief breaks from work at the proper times and have a private space where they can go to pray. In a regular 9-to-5 workday, this will only be necessary for the noon and late afternoon prayers. Not all Muslims pray five times a day; some

Muslims who observe the practice of praying five times each day will need to take brief breaks from work at the proper times and have a private space where they can go to pray.

combine the five prayer times into morning and evening prayers, while others do not feel compelled to meet this requirement at all.

Ritual cleansing with water is performed before each prayer time. Job counselors can ask a local imam or other Muslim community leader to make refugees aware that they need to perform this cleansing without leaving a great deal of water around the sink in the restroom, and to help them understand that the practice of washing feet in the sink may be offensive to members of other cultural groups. The imam can encourage refugees to bring a small pitcher, a bowl, and a towel to work to use in ritual cleansing, and can also help refugees recall that it is possible to avoid washing their feet at work. If a Muslim takes an ablution and then immediately wears socks, foot washing does not need to be repeated for 24 hours. All that is required is to wipe off the socks with the palm of a wet hand. This type of information is best conveyed to refugees by another Muslim, rather than by a non-Muslim service provider.

Friday is the holy day for Muslims. Some employers allow flexible time so that Muslim employees can leave early on Friday or leave for an extended period on Friday in order to participate in communal prayers at the mosque. Another accommodation is for a Muslim employee to work on Saturday or Sunday and have Friday off for prayers.

Observance of Ramadan can be challenging for Muslim employees. Preparing the food for the breaking of the fast each evening is an important part of Ramadan observance, and it is difficult for women who work all day to maintain this tradition. Although most Muslim refugees quickly find ways to adjust to the demands of job and observance, service providers can help Muslim women in particular with this challenge by helping them understand the expectations of the workplace, by identifying employment situations with flexible or otherwise appropriate schedules, and by helping women build support networks so that they are able to help one another. Through their partnerships with local mosques, service providers can also help refugees become connected with Islamic community organizations that host nightly fast-breaking dinners and other Ramadan activities. Refugees may also locate such resources for themselves and develop ways of making necessary accommodations as they discuss matters of observance with extended family members and others in the Islamic community.

It can be difficult for Muslims to be able to celebrate the yearly *Eid* holy days when working because these days fall at different times each year and rarely coincide with the holy days of other religions or with secular holidays. With enough notice and flexibility, employers have been known to work out schedules where Muslim employees have their holy days off and then cover for other employees on the holy days of other religions.

The great majority of refugees and immigrants to the United States who are observant Muslims have successfully integrated the observances that are important to them with the expectations and requirements of the workplace. They can

The great majority of refugees and immigrants to the United States who are observant Muslims have successfully integrated the observances that are important to them with the expectations and requirements of the workplace.

be an invaluable resource for service providers needing to give guidance and support to newly arrived refugees. For service providers working with employers, RefugeeWorks has a helpful brochure titled *Islam and Work.*

Case Study

Two single sisters from the Sudan were resettled in Seattle, Washington. During employment orientation, the job developer at their resettlement agency discussed the issue of wearing *hijab* in the workplace, explaining that, for safety reasons, the women might need to make some accommodations in their attire while at work.

Case Study

A few weeks later, the job developer took one of the sisters to an interview at a hotel. She was surprised to see her client come to the interview without the *hijab*. The employer was very pleased with the interview, and the Sudanese woman was hired to work as a housekeeper at the hotel.

The following day, however, the job developer got a call from the employer. The employer said that the Sudanese woman had arrived for her orientation at the hotel that morning with her head covered, and had explained to the employer that her religion required her to cover her head and to wear long sleeves under her uniform. The employer wanted to know why the woman and the job developer had not addressed this need during the interview.

In the meantime, the other sister had found a job at a fast food restaurant with the help of her job developer. During the interview, the refugee woman and the job developer explained to the employer that the woman was planning to wear a *hijab* and long sleeves at work, and inquired whether this would be a problem. The employer was hesitant at first, but the job developer suggested that the woman could wear the *hijab* under her cap and a long-sleeved shirt as a part of her uniform. The employer seemed pleased with this suggestion, and the woman was hired to work as a cashier.

Possible Questions for Discussion

1. *Compare the two scenarios in this case study. How are they different? How are they similar?*
2. *Why was the first employer upset with the new employee and the job developer?*
3. *Why do you think the first sister came to the job interview without her hijab?*
4. *How do you explain the second employer being more accommodating than the first one?*
5. *What successful orientation strategies on the part of the job developer can you identify? What less successful ones?*

Education

Education for refugee families includes both adult education and education for school age children. With respect to adult education, adult Muslim refugees have some of the same needs and experience the same limitations as other

refugee groups. Those who are skilled must learn how to market their skills in a new environment and, in some cases, must augment existing skills or acquire new ones. Current expectations for resettlement in the United States do not allow a refugee to spend much time in skills training. Often refugees do training on their own time while employed in a first job. Some refugees are fortunate enough to be placed in jobs where a training component is provided.

Many refugees need some level of English as a second language instruction. While lack of English language skills may not be a barrier for some types of employment, it does limit a refugee's job options. Lack of English language skills can also be used as a subtle form of discrimination by potential employers. For most refugees, underemployment is the norm until they can acquire job experience in the United States and more proficient English skills.

Muslim refugee women who choose to work at home also have educational needs. Service providers can help them find ways to learn English, adapt to life in the United States, and be able to participate actively in their children's education.

Children often adapt more quickly to life in the United States than their parents do. In school, in addition to learning English and other subjects, they are socialized by peers and significant adults (teachers, counselors and school social workers) to function in U.S. society. However, many children of refugee and immigrant families are expected to function in two different environments—the home environment, which reflects the religious and cultural norms of the countries of origin of their parents, and the school and neighborhood environment, with influences from peers and teachers reflecting American cultural norms. The differing expectations of these two environments require education and accommodation by both parents and teachers to facilitate healthy development of Muslim refugee children. Teachers, counselors, and school social workers who are knowledgeable and sensitive to cultural and religious needs of children can be helpful in developing relationships with parents in the interest of children. Muslim community leaders can also assist with orienting newly arrived refugees to the expectations of educational institutions.

Teachers, counselors, and school social workers who are knowledgeable and sensitive to cultural and religious needs of children can be helpful in developing relationships with parents in the interest of children.

The examples below suggest ways for caseworkers to educate parents and school personnel to meet the needs of Muslim children. These examples also reflect opportunities for educating and socializing refugee parents and increasing their participation in their children's education.

Work with the local school system to inform them when Islamic holy days take place. Many teachers acknowledge holy days observed by children in their classes, and use them as opportunities to teach about religion and culture.

Teachers are generally willing to accommodate the legitimate needs of children in their classes. As far ahead of time as possible, ask the school to avoid scheduling major exams on holy days, or to allow observant Muslim children to take them at an alternate time. Call the school to let teachers and administrators know that the child will be absent in order to celebrate these holy days. Students are not generally penalized for missing school for legitimate reasons.

Encourage parents to take an active role in their children's education. Explain the expectations of schools with regard to parents' participation, and work with the school to provide interpreters for parent-teacher conferences and meetings of the Parent Teacher Association. Help the school to identify mechanisms that they can have in place to support parents in an active role.

Help the school to identify mechanisms that they can have in place to support parents in an active role.

Explain to parents who eat only *halal* food how to read school menus so they can advise their children on eating at school.

Help teachers be sensitive to children who are observing the Ramadan fast. Usually children start observing the fast around the age of puberty, but some may begin earlier. If a child is fasting, it may be helpful to ask the homeroom teacher to provide a lunchtime pass to the library instead of having the child sit in the cafeteria. If the weather is warm during Ramadan and the student is fasting and taking physical education classes toward the end of the day, advise the teacher that the child may not be able to perform at optimum capability. Also, children often stay up past their usual bedtimes during Ramadan, participating in the family's breaking of the fast. Teachers need to know that these students may be less attentive than usual under these circumstances.

An older child may want to attend Friday prayers during Ramadan. Prayers would be around 1 p.m. Such requests need to be discussed within the context of class schedule, feasibility of transportation, and so on. High school students have been known to make this request.

Concerns about modesty may extend to gym class. If a Muslim girl feels uncomfortable in gym uniforms with short sleeves and short pants, ask if she may wear a long sleeved t-shirt and long sweatpants instead of or under the required uniform. The teacher can designate the color to be worn.

In some public high schools in the United States, Muslim girls have a "girls only" prom where they celebrate their school achievements. However, the school does not necessarily have to make all the adjustments. Students have the option not to participate in a school organized activity such as a prom.

Some Muslim parents may choose to home school their children. Service providers can rely on their partnerships with Muslim community organizations as they seek to provide resources for these parents.

Case Study

The Tahir family arrived in Manchester, New Hampshire as refugees from northern (Kurdish) Iraq. Although the parents had not attended school, their two daughters had both had some schooling. The daughters, Elham and Mahassin, began attending high school immediately after their arrival. The father, whose English proficiency was limited, worked two jobs to support his family; the mother, who did not speak any English, was a homemaker.

The Tahir family came from a religious and conservative culture whose traditions they maintained in their new home. The girls were not allowed to appear in public without wearing *hijab*, and they were not allowed to have male friends.

At school, the social worker observed that the two girls were not socializing with American students. Most of their friends were other refugee girls. The social worker was also aware that the girls were a target of mockery from some of their classmates because of their accent, their demeanor, and their conservative dress. Although the girls were making strides academically, socially they tended to be isolated and act shy around others.

In an effort to help Elham and Mahassin, the social worker decided to invite their parents to come in for a talk. She sent an invitation letter home with the daughters, who translated it for their father. After he had heard the contents of the letter, the father asked his daughters if they were having problems in school. In the Tahir family's culture of origin, the purpose of school is understood to be academic learning, and socialization is an intra-family matter. Problems in school in this context would mean problems with academic achievement. The girls replied that they were not having any problems in school, and their father decided that he did not need to meet with the social worker. Although the social worker sent the father similar requests later, the parents did not acknowledge her requests at all.

Finally, the social worker contacted the Tahir family case manager at the resettlement agency, and the caseworker arranged for an imam from the community to visit the family. The imam described the differences between the functions of school in the United States and its functions in the family's culture of origin, and described how observant Muslim parents could meet the expectations of a school system in the U.S. in ways that were consistent with the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. He explained that local law required the daughters to be in school, and showed how the basic tenets of Islam supported the father's involvement in his daughters' education.

Following this conversation with the imam, the parents agreed to meet with the school social worker. Before they did so, they visited again with the caseworker, who helped them understand more about the school system, especially the importance of non-academic aspects, so that they felt prepared to talk with the social worker. The caseworker also visited with the social worker before the Tahirs' appointment to discuss the family's culture and religion.

Possible Questions for Discussion:

1. *How would you explain the behavior of the classmates, the Tahir girls, and the father?*
2. *What are the cultural issues in this story?*
3. *If you were the social worker, would you deal with this matter differently? How?*
4. *Why do you think the parents did not respond to the social worker's requests at all?*
5. *In your opinion, how can service providers prevent situations similar to this one from taking place?*

Health Care

Like all refugees, Muslims are confronted with understanding the complexity of health care in the United States—the decentralized structure, the principle of choice regarding health care providers and insurance plans, the need for health insurance, the emphasis on preventive health, and more. Further compounding this complexity are the expectations regarding health care and providers that come from experiences with the health care systems in the home countries, the countries of asylum, and the refugee camps.

Muslims are strongly inclined to seek medical care and treatment. The health of each individual is of concern to the family as a whole.

Knowledge about aspects of Islam that influence health care and health practices may be helpful in understanding Muslim refugee behaviors and choices. Muslims are strongly inclined to seek medical care and treatment. The health of each individual is of concern to the family as a whole; therefore, Muslim men frequently accompany their wives and children to medical appointments. However, Muslim refugees, like members of other refugee groups, do not always follow a particular set of behaviors or make decisions related to their health care based on religious and cultural considerations. For example, some select physicians on the basis of their expertise, while others select physicians based on their gender and ethnicity in addition to their expertise. Individual interpretations of Islam and the influence of cultural practices means there are no universal Islamic health care practices and beliefs.

The following are offered only as guidelines for aiding refugee families. Service providers can discuss these points with each refugee to ascertain individual views and possible constraints regarding health care.

Modesty in all aspects of one's life is important in Islam. When it comes to health care, Muslim women, like many others, may prefer female health care providers. For them, interpreters of the same sex as the patient would facilitate communication between patient and physician. If a same-sex interpreter is not available, and if there is concern that the female patient is not responsive because she is uncomfortable with a male interpreter, an alternative would be for the interpreter not to be visible to the patient or to interpret by telephone or speaker phone.

Some Muslims may not feel comfortable disclosing detailed information about themselves and their families to strangers. They may try to give as little information as possible, and this may make proper initial diagnosis diffi-

cult. Personal questions about the lives, sexual habits, and sexual relations of Muslims can be embarrassing to them, and may be avoided unless the answers are needed by a physician. Caseworkers can seek out culturally sensitive physicians for their Muslim clients in order to avoid embarrassment and problems. Muslim physicians are widely available in the United States.

Dietary restrictions include pork, pork products, and meat that is not *halal.* This means that observant Muslim refugees need to be served vegetarian meals in hospitals or permitted to eat food brought by family members. Most hospitals have dieticians who are sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of patients and will make the necessary accommodations if informed. Alternatively, some Muslim patients and their families may make the necessary accommodations to meet their own health and dietary needs.

Caseworkers can seek out culturally sensitive physicians for their Muslim clients in order to avoid embarrassment and problems.

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims at the age of puberty and older fast from dawn to sunset. Fasting includes avoiding food, water, and medicine. There are a number of exemptions from fasting, including illness, menstruation, and old age. Caseworkers may discuss the ramifications of fasting with pregnant or nursing women and parents of young children who may not have recovered physically from malnutrition or other conditions that affect their health. A culturally sensitive health professional, school counselor, and Muslim community leader can be helpful to a worker who believes that it is not in the interest of her client to fast.

Rituals related to dying and funerals may be of concern to caseworkers because observant Muslim refugee families are likely to be upset if these rituals are not followed. These include recitation of Qur'an, burial in an Islamic cemetery or an allocated space within a non-Islamic cemetery, and having funerals take place as quickly as possible unless an autopsy is required by law. Local Muslim clergy and community leaders can be helpful to Muslim refugees who do not have regular contact with their mosques. A caseworker whose assistance is sought by refugee families can help most effectively by connecting refugees with an imam or Muslim community leader from the refugees' culture or tradition.

Muslim male children are usually circumcised at birth or within the first seven days of life. Islam does not require a comparable procedure for female children.

Female circumcision, known by several terms—female genital cutting (FGC), female circumcision, female genital mutilation, and female genital surgery—is practiced by Christians and Muslims in at least 37 countries throughout Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. The practice of FGC is sometimes defended on the basis of religion, even though it actually represents a cultural practice that predates Islam by many centuries. If clients ask about this practice, caseworkers can tell them that it is illegal in the United States (Federal Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act of 1995), and that parents who have it done to their daughters in this country may face

criminal prosecution. If parents suggest that they might send their daughters out of the United States to have this procedure performed, they need to understand that, while they will not face criminal prosecution for this, they risk having a provider report them to Child Protective Services. If this happens, they may find their child placed in foster care while it is determined whether the parents have been negligent or abusive. It is important for parents to understand the serious physical and psychological consequences of female genital cutting. It may be helpful to have a religious leader in the community explain that Islam does not require it.[1]

Case Study

A family of nine, mother, father, and seven children aged 3 months to 12 years, arrived in Louisville, Kentucky, from a refugee camp in Kenya. The four school-aged children were soon enrolled in school and seemed to be adjusting well.

A month after the start of the school year, the parents received a phone call from a school administrator, asking them to come to school immediately. The father, who spoke some English, was concerned and called the family case manager at the resettlement agency, but could not reach her.

When the parents arrived at the school, they were led to the nurse's office, where they were met by the school counselor. She informed them that their 8-year-old son Ali had slipped on the playground and scraped his arm. When the nurse examined him prior to dressing his injury, she noticed burn marks on his stomach. The counselor explained that the school was required to report any signs of suspected child abuse to Child Protective Services, and that the parents could not take their son home until a social worker had had a chance to talk to them.

The concerned parents saw their son talking to a social worker in the next room. They did not understand what kind of "abuse" the counselor was talking about. Soon the social worker came in to interview the parents. He asked about burn marks on Ali's stomach and forehead. The parents explained that the traditional healer in their village had burned small holes in Ali's skin in order to cure ailments he had had as a baby and toddler. The father insisted on taking his son home, but the social worker explained that he would have to take Ali to the hospital for further tests, and that the child could not be returned home until it had been determined that he would be safe there.

Possible Questions for Discussion

1. *Why are Ali's parents suspected of abusing their son?*
2. *What is the social worker from Child Protective Services likely to do next?*
3. *What are the cultural communication issues in this story?*
4. *In your opinion, how could service providers prevent this kind of scenario from happening?*

[1] Countries where this practice has been reported include: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Upper Volta, Zaire, Bahrain, Iraq, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Indonesia, and Malaysia (Gruenbaum, 2001, p. 11).

Safety and Security

Many of the safety and security challenges that Muslim refugees face are similar to those faced by other refugees and immigrants. Their residence locations are likely to be in low-rent neighborhoods, either because they cannot pay higher rent or because they are trying to be frugal. They may thus be exposed to physical and social dangers that can be present in such locations.

Refugee parents are unlikely to understand the dangers, peer pressures, and social dynamics their children experience in school and other social settings. Additionally, some parents' interactions with their children may be based on experiences of danger in refugee camps or countries of first asylum. Parents may cope by becoming overprotective, restricting their children's movements and activities, or refusing to recognize their children's vulnerability. Refugees who have had negative experiences with the authorities in their home countries may refuse to avail themselves of the services of the police. They may be poor advocates for themselves and their children, and so be unable to seek help from school officials or other authorities to resolve dangerous situations. Refugees' language constraints and lack of knowledge of American culture—especially in low-rent neighborhoods—may constrain their ability to assess and mitigate risks.

One issue of safety and security that is distinctive to Muslim refugees is vulnerability to the social prejudices and hostilities that can be directed at Muslims in the United States. Haddad and Smith (1994) point out that the challenge for all Muslim communities is

> *the necessity of understanding their [Muslim] identity and role within American society and culture in the context of a long-standing and continuing atmosphere of prejudice and misunderstanding. From such obvious things as continuing government surveillance of the Nation of Islam and Arab Americans, and the recent verbal and physical assault on mosques and groups as a result of international events, to more subtle but continuing "micro-moments of racism" experienced in their daily lives, Muslims see evidence of the realities that face them as they struggle to live as persons of faith and integrity in what is an alien and often hostile environment. (p. xxvii)*

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Caseworkers can help Muslim refugees to recognize such prejudice and mitigate its effects, especially for women who wear *hijab* and children who experience discrimination. In some cases, service providers may need to help Muslim refugee individuals or families to seek support from organizations that provide conflict resolution services.

Support from local Islamic community organizations may be solicited in identifying programs that facilitate access to culturally sensitive services and community advocates. For example, a county may have an ethnic affairs committee that includes all foreign-born, including Muslim refugees and immigrants, in its portfolio, or there may be opportunities for special exhibits in the local libraries or at local community festivals to include Muslim refugee groups in the planning and

participation. Leaders of churches, synagogues, and mosques around the country have initiated a number of programs designed to build understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Caseworkers in educational settings may be of special assistance not only to refugees but also to teachers, counselors and youth leaders for whom misunderstanding about the concept of *jihad* has been corrupted by the media and used to generate fear of Muslims. *Jihad* means "struggle." The main reference is in relation to the inner struggle of the individual to strive to be good and to follow the "straight path." *Jihad* can also mean to fight on the side of what is right, but it does not allow for being the aggressor.

Case Study

An Afghan refugee family consisting of a widow and seven school-age children resettled in a city in the eastern United States. Service providers found subsidized housing for the family in a public housing complex, which was the only place with an apartment that was both affordable and large enough for the family.

Several weeks after the family moved into the apartment, the children began to be targeted by other children in the housing complex, who called the Afghan children names. On two occasions, rocks were thrown through the window of the family's apartment. After the first rock-throwing incident, the mother reported the situation to the caseworker, but resisted the idea of going to the housing authority or the police. After the second rock-throwing incident, however, the caseworker was able to persuade the mother that the authorities could help to remedy the situation.

The caseworker was able to convince the housing authority to convene a residents' meeting to discuss the situation. As can often be the case in public housing, none of the residents had actually had an opportunity to meet the members of the Afghan family face to face. At the meeting, the caseworker talked about the difficulties the Afghan family had endured as refugees and facilitated personal introductions.

The metropolitan police department was also responsive and had an officer stay at the complex overnight. As a result, two children were apprehended in the act of throwing rocks. After these events, the name calling stopped and the Afghan family and some of their neighbors developed more cordial relationships.

While working on the family's resettlement, the caseworker had contacted a local mosque that ran several programs for newly arrived Muslim refugees. In one of those programs, the mosque partnered with a local Christian church to locate housing for refugee families. The caseworker had asked the head of that program to find a better housing situation for the Afghan family.

After three weeks of calm at the public housing complex, the Afghan family began to be harassed again, and someone sprayed several of the children with

mace through the screen door of their apartment. By that time, however, the housing program had found a farmhouse for the family, and the service agency was able to move them out of the public housing complex.

Possible Questions for Discussion

1. *What are the cultural issues in this story?*
2. *Why do you think the mother resisted the idea of going to the authorities at first?*
3. *Can you suggest other things that the caseworker might have done to help resolve the problem at the public housing complex?*

CHAPTER **4**

Muslim Refugee Populations and Special Concerns

Refugees' responses to individual challenges and opportunities are determined by a number of factors, including religion, gender, culture, ethnicity, social class, and previous life experiences. For Muslim refugees, these may include specific cultural or religious factors of which service providers need to be aware. This awareness will enable service providers to understand each client within the context of these factors and the client's total experience.

Women

Islam emphasizes the equality of all people, and, according to the teachings of Islam, men and women are equal in the eyes of God. Each is responsible for his or her actions, and each is to be knowledgeable of the faith. Islam gives women the right to decide on marriage, divorce, and inheritance. They may maintain their own personal property and wealth, even if they are married. Women play important roles within the family and in the community in socializing children, and in significant activities related to charity, life cycle rituals, transmitting religious beliefs, and family and religious traditions.

However, there are considerable differences among Islamic communities regarding the role of women. Some Islamic countries have laws that limit active roles for women in the public sector. Most Muslim families are patriarchal, with males in the households holding positions of authority, and some Muslims interpret their religion as requiring the submission of women. Many Muslim refugee women have lived in cultures where they have been subordinate to males in their households.

In the patriarchal societies of origin, men are socialized as heads of households and breadwinners, while women are usually socialized to take responsibility for child care, elder care, management of illnesses, and household work (e.g., cleaning, cooking, washing, acquiring water and fuel, purchasing food, clothing, and other household supplies, and tending kitchen gardens and small livestock). Muslim women, like women from most cultures, are socialized to consider the needs of other family members before their own.

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However, this is not to say Muslim women refugees have not been active outside their homes. In most Islamic cultures, women participate in many farming tasks, operate small businesses, have blue-collar and white-collar jobs, and advance in professional vocations. Only in a few Islamic cultures are women generally confined to their homes. These customs vary widely, not only across Islamic countries, but also within the countries.

Interpretations of Islam that lead to subordinate roles for women may raise challenges in the resettlement process, specifically in terms of education, health, and employment. At the same time, however, women's experiences in the countries of origin or countries of first asylum may have prepared them better than men for the adjustment to household responsibilities in the United States and for entry-level employment. The roles for which women have traditionally been socialized, such as parenting, caring for family members, sustaining traditions, and managing the day-to-day operations of the household, remain the same upon resettlement. In addition, refugee women may find and be willing to accept entry-level or blue-collar jobs more readily than the men in their families. Thus, women play significant roles during resettlement, not only in nurturing their family members, ensuring the socialization of their families, and sustaining cultural and religious continuity, but also in contributing to the economic self-sufficiency of the family.

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Some of the challenges for Muslim refugee women in America arise from their real or perceived subordination to men and from related misperceptions or prejudices against them. These include:

Employment: Many Muslim refugee women are employed in the United States, while in some families the men may be more likely to be unemployed, intermittently employed, or underemployed. For some families, this situation will be so contrary to cultural norms that it will cause significant stress between men and women in the household.

Multiple burdens: Whether they have jobs or not, and even when their husbands are not employed, women are expected to be the homemakers, to take responsibility for the children's behavior, and to develop the children's religious and cultural knowledge. Newcomers to American society also have to learn about parental responsibilities such as participating in Parent Teacher Associations, advocating for children who may be underachieving at school, and guiding children as they face social risks quite different from those the parents knew in their home countries. This combination of responsibilities can be daunting and exhausting for Muslim women refugees.

Social support: Muslim refugee women in the United States often lack the traditional supports they have relied on from their family of origin, in-laws, or friends and neighbors. Reluctance to rely on non-relatives or professional counselors and social workers can be a barrier to be overcome during the first few years of resettlement. Women bear the burden of developing new sup-

port networks and learning to accept help from professional service providers.

Predispositions of men: Muslim men from some parts of the world are active participants in the education of their children and in certain household responsibilities, such as grocery shopping, while others may not have been socialized to take a share of the burdens of household chores and the responsibilities for day-to-day care of children. When helping Muslim refugee women sort out the management of day-to-day responsibilities, service providers need to determine what role(s) are played by the man or men in the household and not assume that all such tasks fall to the women.

Clothing: One of the challenges for Muslim women arises from their choice of clothing. The injunction to dress modestly is incumbent on men and women, but the social impact is strongest on women. As with any other religious or cultural practice, family/peer/community pressures are important factors in a woman's decision about covering. The *hijab* often evokes negative feelings in people from Western cultures. However, service providers can be understanding of and support the choice of a woman or a young girl, not viewing it as a sign of oppression, but rather as a commitment to her beliefs.

Gender segregation: Muslim refugee women come from both gender-segregated and gender-integrated societies. Women from gender-segregated societies develop strong and effective networks parallel to those of men, and have the capacity to make decisions and manage their responsibilities. Service providers can encourage Muslim women to transfer these skills and adapt them to their lives in the United States.

Muslim women's roles during resettlement, and the consequences of resettlement on their lives and on their place in their families and in larger society, have not been extensively researched. Feminist literature on women refugees often states that women face more serious challenges than men, are more oppressed, and receive minimal resources, and Muslim refugee women are often presented as passive, helpless recipients of harsh treatment. However, such limited perceptions of women's experiences prevent observers from understanding how Muslim refugee women actively participate in multiple roles to resettle themselves and their families successfully.

It is important not to underestimate the capabilities of Muslim women because the stereotype of being submissive is so strong. Muslim women's organizations such as the North American Council for Muslim Women, Muslim Women in the Arts, and local associations in mosques, have been established to celebrate achievements and to address challenges Muslim women face in the United States. In addition, Islamic communities are recognizing the challenges involved in adapting to U.S. culture, especially for those with limited resources, those with limited formal education, those from rural areas, and those who are homebound. As a result, many mosques have developed programs with functions that

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range from tutoring for children, English language classes, job searching, and housing assistance, to more socially sensitive programs, such as response to domestic violence and support for youth confronting social perils.

Service providers can benefit from learning about these groups and helping refugee women to connect with them when appropriate. In refugees' countries of origin, mosques are often not social service organizations, so Muslim women may not realize that mosques have taken on this function in recent years in the United States. Service providers can thus be an invaluable link between refugee Muslim women and organizations that can help them.

Children

Refugee minors have three significant non-material needs: identity, language, and religion. A Muslim refugee child must negotiate at least four sets of values: 1) his or her family's culture, 2) U.S. cultural norms as learned within the context of the education system, 3) the culture communicated by peers and the mass media, and 4) the teachings of Islam.

Negotiation of identity is ongoing as the child settles into a new life in the United States. Parents are often not in the best situation to help their children through this bewildering process, because they may be busy focusing on survival issues and may have their own losses to deal with and adjustments to make. In addition, parents' concept of American society is often limited by what they have seen in the news and entertainment media and by information from recently arrived refugees and immigrants.

Observant Muslim parents are obliged to ensure that their children are raised with an understanding of Islam and live their faith. However, some parents may not recognize the differences between cultural traditions from the home country and Islamic practice as taught in the mosque. For example, although the Qur'an does not address career choices and does not indicate that parents should choose children's marriage partners, many Muslim parents do choose their children's careers and spouses, believing these are Islamic injunctions.

Adults may invoke the authority of religion when exhorting youth to acquiesce to tradition. Teenage refugee girls in particular may struggle with traditional cultural practices if they are in a family that severely constrains women. While it is useful for service providers to know something of what is religion and what is culture, it is also important that service providers not undermine family cohesion—and the family's trust in the service provider—by suggesting to the youth that the family adults are wrong about whether constraints on women or other customs are rooted in Islam.

Parents often try to manage problems by pressing their children to conform to their cultural behavioral expectations. Many Muslim refugee children embrace the traditions and manage to integrate themselves well into American society.

Many Muslim refugee children embrace religious and cultural traditions and manage to integrate themselves well into American society.

Some others are able to negotiate parental demands and expectations; others manage by hiding their activities from their parents; and still others may be attracted to risky behaviors. They may turn to their peers for answers to their questions, or to school counselors, or to youth leaders in their mosques. Enlightened Muslim community leaders and caseworkers can play significant roles in guiding children to mitigate social risks.

Refugee children may experience prejudice or hostility at school, largely because they are foreign-born, are refugees, have a different appearance, and may have language constraints. For Muslim minors, the negative public stereotypes about Muslims exacerbate these causes. The prejudice or hostility can be manifested as cruel humor, as shunning, as hazing, or in outright physical abuse. Muslim refugee children who experience prejudice and hostility may come to feel inferior and ashamed or may become angry and defensive. Service providers who know the refugee family can support parents and the community in responding to such incidents as they arise and in advocating policies and programs that discourage such behavior and encourage better attitudes. On a personal level, the service provider can encourage family members to acknowledge the hurt and the social wrongness, while helping the child feel worthwhile and important. The broader approach needs to include not only Muslim refugee children, but also non-refugee and non-Muslim students.

...as children mature, their self-identity deepens and their awareness or interest in religious beliefs may waver between strong belief and doubt.

As is the case with all refugees, some Muslim children become separated from their families or orphaned, and some of these are eligible to enter the United States through the refugee unaccompanied minors program. In addition, Muslim children enter the foster care system for a variety of reasons, including death or illness of a parent or guardian, neglect, and abuse. An accepted best practice of social work, encouraged by the U.S. State Department and other agencies, is to place children in foster or adoptive families that practice the religion into which the child was born. The number of Muslim refugee children needing such placements is relatively low because informal adoption in home countries is widely practiced. However, it is important to place Muslim children in Muslim families, and this may require special recruitment efforts on the part of service providers because the idea of formal foster care is a new one in Islamic communities in the United States. Child Protective Services and local Islamic communities can reach out to each other to ensure the availability of licensed Muslim foster parents. A brochure is available from the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (Maloof, 2002b) as a starting point in the recruitment of Muslim foster homes.

If a Muslim child is placed in a non-Muslim home, it is important for the foster family to be sensitive to the religious and cultural needs of the child. The section on education contains suggestions for working with the child's school. The concepts of modesty, food restrictions, and concerns such as dogs in the house are also important to keep in mind. In addition, as children mature, their self-identity deepens and their awareness or interest in religious beliefs may waver between strong belief and doubt. Girls may choose to wear *hijab* or to discon-

tinue wearing it. Young people may or may not follow through on their daily prayers. It is important for non-Muslim foster parents to help the Muslim children in their homes to work through these issues by listening and talking with them. The foster parents should learn about the holy days the child is used to celebrating, including a) why these days are important; b) how the child would want to celebrate them; c) the child's level of comfort at a particular mosque; and d) if there is a person or family from the same ethnic and Islamic community who can serve as a religious mentor.

Like all refugee children, Muslim children need time to heal as they try to cope with the traumas they have experienced in their home country, during their perilous journeys, in the country of first asylum, and in the strange country of resettlement. They need to overcome the effects of these traumas in order to develop a bicultural identity and a positive sense of who they are. All of this takes time, negotiation, and guidance.

The Elderly

Many experiences of elderly Muslim refugees parallel those of other elderly refugees. Refugee seniors experience the most losses compared to other age groups. There are unique struggles resulting from the heavy demand for new learning. They may experience a lifetime language barrier, lack access to medical care, lose esteem within the family, and lose independence. They may have lost their social network, and often find it is difficult to recreate one. It is common for the elderly to become isolated. Those who are frail and homebound are at greater risk of injury and depression.

Elderly refugees are expected to make two major adjustments: (1) a change in status, from being heads of households who are revered for their age and experience, to being dependent on their adult children and grandchildren, who may consider the elder's experience and knowledge to be mostly irrelevant; and (2) a change in lifestyle, from being immersed in a community of co-nationals and co-religionists to being on the edge of a community of unfamiliar people from different backgrounds. This is in addition to each refugee's adjustment to the personal losses and traumas of the refugee experience.

As refugees, many elderly Muslims are dependent on their adult children and extended families for coping with the day-to-day challenges of life in the United States. In addition to the stress of adapting to a foreign culture and economic dependence, they have to manage problems arising from their changed roles, intergenerational conflicts, language barriers, social isolation, and health problems related to the aging process, which is often compounded by their mental health status.

Elderly Muslim refugees who have endured the deaths of their spouses and of some of their children may want to cling to their grandchildren and may fear that those grandchildren will be lost to a different lifestyle, different cultural

Many elderly Muslim refugees have adapted to life in the United States and have become sources of support within family contexts, taking responsibility for rearing and socializing their grandchildren when both parents have to work.

mores, and perhaps even anti-Muslim sentiments. Their grandchildren's participation in activities such as shopping in malls with friends unaccompanied by adults, wanting to go out on dates, and making decisions on their own without consulting with parents may generate a great deal of anxiety. They may become resentful or depressed if their traditional responsibilities as grandparents are minimized because their grandchildren do not see the grandparents' experiences and stories as sources of guidance.

However, not all elderly refugees are helpless and dependent. Over time many have adapted to life in the United States and have become sources of support within family contexts, taking responsibility for rearing and socializing their grandchildren when both parents have to work.

Within Muslim families, parents traditionally are highly revered and the elderly are greatly respected. Adult children and grandchildren may feel guilt because they are not able to support their parents as is expected. Family members may manage these guilt feelings by minimizing communication with their elderly relatives. Family members may also think that accepting assistance for the elderly member(s) of the family is tantamount to acknowledging that they or other family members are neglectful.

In addition, while family members are responsible for caring for their elderly relatives with respect and dignity, the responsibility for elderly persons who do not have living children or extended family falls on the larger Islamic community. Like other ethnic refugee communities, Islamic communities have established support programs to serve elderly refugees and their families. The programs vary and include services such as emergency support in times of crisis, transportation to prayer halls and social gatherings, and in some cases, access to culturally competent health and mental health service providers. Senior outreach programs from the Islamic community or from the larger community can help service providers recognize those elderly who need assistance and provide resources or solutions to which the service provider can direct elderly Muslim refugees and their families. Service providers may also be able to help families understand that giving and receiving assistance or services from outside the family is a normal and acceptable part of living in the United States.

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Men

Muslim men are socialized to be providers and family heads. In the public arena, they are "the face of the family;" at home, they are closely involved in family life and the care and raising of their children. They accompany their wives and children to medical appointments and on other family excursions, and take a close interest in their children's academic progress. This behavior grows out of the traditional context of caring and taking responsibility for one's family, rather than from a desire to exercise power and control. Service providers can build on this by taking care to involve Muslim men in as many family-oriented decisions and activities as possible.

The refugee experience and resettlement in the United States can be as daunting for Muslim men as it is for male refugees from other backgrounds. Those who lack English language skills, or whose professional credentials and work experience are not recognized by U.S. institutions, may not be able to find work in their professional fields or in any comparable area, and some may not find work at all. They may feel completely dislocated from the social and professional contexts that have been the source of their identity and self-esteem throughout their adult lives.

In response, some Muslim men may turn to self-destructive behaviors as coping mechanisms. Others may turn to a stricter observance of Islamic traditions as a way to hold on to something familiar and protect themselves and their families from the new and alien environment. They may require their wives to wear *hijab*, even if they did not do so in their country of origin, and may become more controlling of where, when, and with whom their wives and children may go outside of the house.

The tension and threat that Muslim refugee men feel can be exacerbated when their wives are more successful than they at finding work and adapting to the new environment. When the wife becomes the main source of support for the family, the role change challenges fundamental concepts of the relationship between men and women. Some men may respond to this challenge by becoming verbally or physically abusive toward their wives, their children, or others.

Service providers need to be aware of these tensions and their potential repercussions, and understand that attempting to exclude problematic male members of a family may exacerbate the situation. Instead, service providers can include husbands and fathers as frequently as possible in meetings with their wives and children. Doing so will encourage development of a relationship of mutual trust that will help the men become more willing to accept assistance and recommendations.

Service providers also need to be aware that many Muslim men will not feel comfortable discussing problems, or even acknowledging the existence of problems, with a stranger, especially with a woman. Providers who have connections with support services provided by local mosques and other Islamic organizations may be better able to connect Muslim refugee men with sources of assistance with which they feel comfortable.

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CHAPTER 5

Social Support Networks

For many refugees to the United States, the formal support system that includes employment counseling and job development, English as a second language classes, skills training, health screening, and other remedial, educational, counseling and advocacy services is complemented and augmented by informal supports within the refugees' communities. In the case of Muslim refugees, informal support comes from relatives, friends, and co-nationals, and also from community-based services developed by mosques and Islamic organizations in many larger cities.

Family members, friends, relatives, co-religionists, and co-nationals are natural helpers who provide emotional support, share resources, help with problem solving in accustomed ways, and interact in a familiar language. Many refugees are cut off from their natural networks and feel isolated, but this problem may be especially intense for Muslim refugees in the United States because of the extent of the cultural differences from their countries of origin. When family members are not available, service providers may help refugees find extended relatives, co-nationals, and refugees with similar cultural and religious backgrounds and experiences who may serve as "fictive kin" during the initial stages of resettlement.

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Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs), which are run by and for refugees, also have been effective in contributing to the successful resettlement of refugees. The MAAs that exist within Muslim ethnic communities can form a bridge because they are non-profit agencies that are funded with federal, state, and/or local funds and work effectively at the grassroots level in assisting with the integration of refugees into the local communities.

Islamic countries provide first asylum to over half the refugees around the world. Islamic laws of asylum are similar to contemporary refugee laws, and embedded within the cultural context of the Islamic communities in the United States. Thus Islamic organizations have emerged as a source of significant support for the resettlement of refugees, and service providers can turn to Muslim community leadership and congregations to provide social support for Muslim refugee individuals and families adapting to life in the United States. Islamic organizations and community leaders can serve as a source of support for newly arrived refugees, support resettlement agency personnel serving Muslims, and mediate in cases of challenge and conflict. Islamic organizations can serve as bridges between the new and the old for the refugees.

Islamic communities have established mosques in major metropolitan areas in the United States. These serve as "community centers, bringing people together for prayer, religious instruction, marriages, and funerals and for general activities such as dinners and bake sales" (Abu-Laban, 1991, p. 15). Nyang (1999) has documented the evolution in U.S. Islamic communities of formal and informal

institutions aimed at providing support services for both indigenous and immigrant Muslims. These social and cultural programs at local mosques include gatherings for elderly and women, Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, youth summer camps organized at regional levels, and chapters of Islamic student associations at a large number of universities around the country. These groups can be a source of great social and emotional support to Muslim refugee families. They can provide a sense of belonging as well as a set of resources to enable Muslim refugees to manage crises, stress and life transitions using mechanisms that are familiar and likely to provide comfort.

Leaders from local Islamic communities can refer Muslim refugees to regional and national level organizations that bring youth and young adults together to foster a positive Muslim American identity. Additionally, they can provide insights into and support for solutions of problems that require a nuanced understanding of religion and culture.

Service providers can use Islamic community services in many practical ways. Local communities may have networks of volunteer Muslim doctors who treat Muslim and non-Muslim patients at no or low cost. Islamic community center personnel can augment the work of resettlement agencies to help refugees find employment, provide information on where other Muslims live, make recommendations and referrals for housing and culturally sensitive educational and health services, and provide overall support to facilitate their successful adaptation to life in America while maintaining their religious and cultural heritage.

Resettlement offices can reach out to local mosques and Islamic schools and look for ways to collaborate on projects that will strengthen the resettlement network and provide a more coordinated support system for newly arriving refugees. The most effective support for refugees occurs when resettlement office staff and leaders of Islamic community organizations know one another and work together on a regular basis, rather than waiting until a crisis (individual, community, or world wide) needs to be addressed.

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Conclusion

Resettlement can be a challenging and overwhelming experience for refugees from every cultural background and country of origin. Service providers perform essential functions as they help refugees identify strengths to build on in making the transition and find ways to honor cultural and religious traditions while adapting to a new sociocultural environment.

Working with Muslim refugees involves both special challenges and remarkable rewards. Muslim refugees' cultural backgrounds and approaches to religious observance vary widely, and individual Muslims' understanding of the world and their place in it grows out of a complex combination of cultural and religious factors. The challenge for service providers is to understand the strengths and meet the needs of each individual; the reward lies in seeing the creative ways that each individual finds to adapt to the United States and become a contributing member of its population.

This guide provides information on the beliefs, customs, and traditions that may inform the worldviews of Muslim refugees, and suggests ways of helping them integrate those beliefs, customs, and traditions successfully into their new lives in the United States. The authors hope that the information and suggestions given here will make service providers' work with this diverse population both more successful and more rewarding.

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Glossary

Eid ul-Adha: A four-day feast that commemorates the obedience of the Prophet Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice his son Ishmael to God. Celebrated at the end of the *Hajj*, beginning on the tenth day of the month of Dhul Hijjah.

Eid ul-Fitr: The festival of breaking the fast of Ramadan. It is a one-day celebration that falls on the first day of Shawwal, the month after Ramadan

Hadith: Texts that preserve the teachings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Hajj: The pilgrimage to Mecca. Each Muslim should try to make this pilgrimage at least once in life, circumstances permitting.

Halal: Permitted according to Islamic law. Halal meat comes from animals that have been slaughtered in accordance with Islamic custom.

Hijab: A covering worn by some Muslim women. The hijab varies from a head scarf to a robe that covers the hair, neck, and body, leaving the face and hands visible, and there is great variety among Muslims worldwide in the requirements for covering and the style of covering that is acceptable.

Haram: Prohibited according to Islamic law or custom. Most Muslims regard all pork and pork products as haram.

Insha'Allah: God willing; connotes a sense of hope that one's efforts will meet with success by the will of Allah.

Jihad: The struggle; refers both to the individual's inner struggle to follow the way of Islam, and the struggle on the side of what is right.

Kufi: A small head covering worn by Muslim men from some traditions.

Qur'an: The holy book of Islam. Muslims believe that it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by the Angel Gabriel.

Ramadan: The ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Each day during Ramadan, observant Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. Observance of Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

Salah (plural salaat): Ritual prayers, performed five times a day at specified times by observant Muslims. Some Muslims have combined the prayers into a morning and an evening prayer.

Shahadah: The profession of faith that affirms belief in the oneness of God and in the role of the Prophet Muhammad as God's messenger .

Shari'a: The "right way," a body of law and code of conduct outlined in the Qur'an and the sunna.

Sunna: The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, preserved in the Hadith.

Tawhid: The oneness of God.

Zakat: Almsgiving, one of the five Pillars of Islam. Muslims are required to give 2.5% of their wealth to support the poor.

References and Resources

This resource list does not include addresses of Web sites because the content and quality of sites that address Islam in general, and Muslim refugee resettlement in particular, can vary substantially over relatively short periods of time. Service providers can locate helpful Web sites by searching on these terms, among others: Islam, Muslim community, Islamic community, Muslims, Islamic community centers.

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Appendix