

Muslim Marriage Goes Online: The Use of Internet Matchmaking by American Muslims

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Abstract

This paper analytically explores the recent rise of Internet use among American Muslims who are looking for marriage. Because American Muslims are a heterogeneous community consisting of individuals who, while confessing to a single article of faith, come from a plethora of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, finding a suitable mate within one's religious, cultural and emotional sphere has become a complex and, at times, problematic journey. As a result, American Muslims are increasing their use of the Internet to overcome existing spatial and cultural barriers. This paper introduces the background of the Islamic marriage tradition, examines American Muslims' marriage practices and then analysis how current online match-making sites are accommodating as well as challenging the American Muslim communities' traditional practices in matters of finding love and marriage partners.

The Concept of Marriage in Islamic Tradition

[1] Islamic tradition has always put a strong emphasis on marriage, making it a religious duty for those who can afford it. Since the family is the fundamental unit of the Muslim *ummah* (the Muslim nation/community of the faithful), marriage is the seed from which Muslim families are established and, therefore, the main mechanism of reviving and preserving Muslim society(ies). Along these lines, the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said, "marry among you and proliferate because I will be boasted by your number with other prophets on the Day of Resurrection."¹ Consequently, marriage has a tremendous religious status in Islamic teachings, so much so that it is sometimes called "half the faith," and even recommended for those who cannot afford it. Thus, the Qur'an encourages the facilitation of marriage for those who are financially or socially disadvantaged, equating this facilitation and assistance to performing other virtual Islamic religious rituals and practices.²

[2] Furthermore, Islamic teachings recognize the physiological functions of marriage, firmly rejecting the practice of celibacy and denying it the sanctified position that it holds in other religious traditions. Accordingly, the Prophet is also reported to have said, "marriage is my tradition; whoever keeps away from my tradition, he is not from me."³ Aside from its social and religious benefits, the institution of marriage is also recognized for its personal and physical benefits of providing an outlet for sexual drive. Another saying related to the Prophet states, "O group of youngsters, whoever amongst you has the means should get married, because it keeps the gaze down and it is the best protection for the private parts. Whoever does not have the means should fast, because that breaks the sexual temptation."⁴

[3] This emphasis on the need and, at times, the necessity of marriage is further reflected in the type of demographic restrictions that Islamic tradition places on the institution of marriage. For a Muslim male, it is permissible to marry a female of any religious tradition, while for a Muslim female, it is only permissible to marry a Muslim male. Despite this difference, both Muslim males and females are encouraged to base their choice of a mate on piety, which is reinforced by a saying attributed to the Prophet that states that although mates are often chosen based on four qualities, beauty, noble lineage, wealth and piety, it is piety that is the best quality upon which to base that decision.⁵

[4] The Islamic tradition's emphasis on the importance of marriage has resulted in a degree of flexibility regarding the condition and validation of the marriage ritual in order to make marriage attainable and affordable for almost every member of society. The legal requirements of an Islamic marriage are: (1) the contract between the man and the woman on whatever they agree upon; 2) presence of witnesses, and the woman's guardian; and 3) the payment of an agreed-upon dowry to the wife-to-be by the husband.⁶

Marriage within the American Muslim Community

[5] The term American Muslim community is a misnomer for American Muslims, who are in not monolithic in their sectarian or ethnic identities. The source of this misnomer is in the Islamic conception of identity based on religion rather than on ethnic or social differences. For this reason, Muslims in America have historically tended to characterize their organizations in broadly defined identities like “Muslim,” “Islam,” and “nation,” among others, and broadly national terms like “American,” regardless of the ethnic and sectarian identities of its members. This tendency of broad characterization can be seen in the names of earlier Muslim organizations in America such as: the Lost Found Nation of Islam in America (the first name of the nation of Islam),⁷ the Nation of Islam, the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), the World Community of al-Islam in the West,⁸ the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Bilal Muslim Mission of Americas (BMMA), and the American Muslim (TAM).

[6] However, in the last couple of decades, many factors have contributed to the popularity of the term “the American Muslim community” as it has become the common term in all leading American Muslim magazines and journals such as ISNA’s *Islamic Horizons*, ICNA’s *Message International*, *Azizah Magazine* and the *American Muslim Magazine*, which is published by the American Muslim Society. This change has to do with two factors: the first is the significant growth of *Sunni* Islam, which has become the mainstream face of Islam in America. Sunni Islam ascertains the normative meanings of the faith that Islam always append to the faithful by calling them one *ummah*, one nation, regardless of geographical, ethnic or societal differences. The second is the general mood in America’s intellectual milieus to move away from narrow definitions based on “class,” “gender,” or “race” as primary organizational categories around which to construct one’s identity.⁹

[7] The American Muslim community, therefore, connotes heterogeneity, consisting of individuals who, while confessing to a single article of faith, stem from a plethora of ethnic and cultural backgrounds: immigrants mainly from South Asia, the Middle East and Africa, second- and third-generation Muslims of immigrant descent, and African-American and other groups of converts. The African American group is the largest indigenous American Muslim community, and it is estimated to account for one-third of the American Muslim Community.¹⁰ Some African-American Muslims are converts/ reverts to Islam,¹¹ while many are second- and third-generation US-born.¹² Several sources estimate the number of American Muslims to be between 6-7 million.¹³ Despite this diversity, American Muslims are, to quote Pew Research's findings in a nationwide survey of the Muslim community, "decidedly American in their outlook, values and attitudes. This belief is reflected in Muslim American income and education levels, which generally mirror those of the public."¹⁴

[8] This diversity in backgrounds and economic status has emerged negatively to challenge the meaning and manifestation of one *ummah* and unity within the community. There is often a passive tension between Muslim immigrants and African American Muslims, as well as conflict between various Muslim immigrant groups. At the first level, two elements contribute to the often uninvited African American perceptions of other Muslim groups: the segregation legacy of "black church and white church" in America is widely translated in many cities such as Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, etc., to "black mosque and immigrant mosque." Second, the legacy of black nationalism of most African American Muslims who happened to come to Islam through the Nation of Islam or its offshoot, has also been another source of insecurity in their relationship with the immigrant Muslim community.¹⁵ Within the immigrant Muslim community, the challenges of reconciling the cultural identity of the motherland with that of the

adopted land has remained problematic. Nyang has pointed out how Muslim immigrants' self-identification and self-differentiation contribute significantly to shaping ethnic identities within the Muslim community.¹⁶ Ternikar uses the term "tribalism" to describe the difficulties that American Muslims face as they struggle to reconcile their different cultural identities in their adopted social spaces.¹⁷

[9] In light of this considerable diversity of the American Muslim community, it is not surprising that there is no universal mechanism of marital match-making used by American Muslims. Since marriage is a social institution constrained by custom and religious and legal codes for the communal good, a group's perception of what constitutes communal good weighs heavily on how members react toward the available pool of potential spouses. In traditional societies¹⁸, which characterize most parts of the Muslim world, and despite the various traditions of the Muslim world, the institution of marriage is formulated based on primordial relationship in terms of sectarian and blood relationship. In these quarters of the world, "the notion of 'arranged' marriages is still the Islamic way," to quote Judith K. Muhammad, who further explains that "marriages may be arranged by family, through a service, through friends, through a *Wali* (guardian)."¹⁹

[10] Finding a mate in this traditional setting is not a complex matter, because the traditional social institutions often pre-suppose expectations and opportunities for those who are interested in finding spouses. These existing social institutions allow participants to choose from a larger pool of possible spouses than would be possible without them. One example of this is how for Muslim women living in a mostly Muslim society alleviates or makes *de facto* irrelevant the religious constraint that dictates that a Muslim woman can only marry a Muslim male. These

institutions also provide participants with more resources for finding a spouse, such as a social network consisting of extended family members.²⁰

Methods of Match-Making within the American Muslim Community

[11] Prior to the rise of the Internet, adopting traditional methods of finding a spouse was a challenge for many Muslims in the United States. Traditional sources of matrimonial facilitation were either absent, in the case of American converts/reverts, or inaccessible in the case of immigrants. For this reason, American Muslims found spouses through diverse methods, often developing new social networks. There were three common methods of finding a spouse within the Muslim community.

[12] One method is direct contact: a Muslim will marry a Muslim, or perhaps an individual from “the people of book”—a Jew or Christian with whom he or she interacts in their social or professional spheres, perhaps someone they know from work, or from their Muslim community who they propose marriage to directly. This is still the most common method within the indigenous American Muslim community, particularly the African American Muslim community.²¹

[13] Another method is the use of Muslim institutions as intermediaries in finding spouses. These institutions include community mosques, Islamic centres, Islamic schools, and professional institutions such as ISNA and ICNA, as well as local imams. Leaders or imams keep a list of those who are interested in finding a spouse, noting their special attributes and characteristics that they desire from a spouse; imams also use the social network of the mosque for ads in newspapers and magazines catering to a particular religious or ethnic group; they consult with both parties, make suggestions and preside over communal ceremonies. Muslim institutions such as ISNA, NOI, ICNA and Muslim Alliance of North America (MANA) also

create opportunities for matching interested candidates during their annual conventions, where tables are set for a quick and supervised encounter between those who are looking for spouses.

[14] Another possibility is the network of kith and kin back in one's cultural or ethnic home country. Using intermediaries within this type of network suggests a desire for spousal specificity within one's ethnic group. The intermediary, then, is the "middleman" between the individual looking for a spouse and a potential body of prospective spouses. For those who are willing, or able, to utilize a traditional system of marriage through a network of family and friends, the intermediary is the network of kith and kin, usually the parents and their contacts, and the pool most likely consists of one's own ethnic group. Depending on the particular network, this pool could include individuals from one's native country and/or from the ethnic community in America.

[15] The desire for spousal specificity in regards to ethnic or communal association may depend on different notions of tradition. For many Muslim immigrants in America, finding a spouse from their own local region is not about religious orthodoxy as much as it is about religious homogeneity. Muslims with a less orthodox and more traditionalist or ethnically tinted interpretation of Islam may be going back home to look for spouses who share in their unique brand of religious heterodoxy, rather than searching for a normative religious orthodoxy within the American Muslim community that might be alien to them.

[16] In all these methods, the imam is the most evident and most effective marital intermediary. For individuals who consider religious affiliation or piety a predominant value and for those who lack any other kind of social network, the best middleman is the imam. Based on our informal survey and observation, women make use of the institution of the imam more often than men do. This is due to women's marital restrictions, such as not being allowed to marry non-Muslims,

and also physical restrictions that limit women's ability to use public space to interact with the opposite sex.

Muslim Match-making Goes Online

[17] Although what inspired the creation of Muslim Internet matrimonial sites includes the technological adaptation of prior mechanisms of marital intermediation (ads, mixers, etc.) as well as market opportunities opened up by the success of other Internet matrimonial sites, there is a broader factor that impacts the entire spectrum of American society.

[18] In recent years, online romance, marriage and dating have become increasingly popular in the American mainstream, particularly in love stories. Many factors have contributed to this transformation. In addition to shaping our behaviour, such as the way in which we shop, conduct business, and access information, the Internet has also shaped our emotional interactions. The traditional modes of establishing a relationship are giving way to new modes of social interaction. Among the leading factors that have transformed our lives is the entertainment industry—movies and television. Perhaps the most iconic movies dealing with the subject are *You Got Mail* and *Sleepless in Seattle*. The common ground between these two films is that they both challenge the traditional methods of courting and selecting a spouse. The concept of free space, whether in cyber space, on television, or through phone lines, is related to the post-modern discourse on freedom and women's rights. Prior to that, the assumption was that anyone who would turn to a computer for love had to be a desperate loner who was unable to establish a normal relationship. Furthermore, recent demographic studies have suggested that women outnumber men in America by 51 to 49 percent, which in turn has caused many women to look for other non-traditional means of meeting potential spouses.

[19] In addition to this trend that has impacted the American society in general, there are some other factors that have uniquely impacted the Muslim community. Community institutions such as mosques, Islamic Centres and Weekend Islamic School are often strictly segregated between genders, thus making it impossible for free interaction and socialization between genders. This is evident in the following letter sent by Muslim a girl to Mark John, a self-described expert on online dating:²²

Dear Mark John,

I am a beautiful Muslim girl who has been having difficulty finding men to date in my area. I know that it is hard for most people, but my situation seems to make it very difficult. I cannot date persons who are non-Muslim, as nice as they may be and even though I do meet Muslim men, I have not yet met anyone that I would like to pursue a relationship with. Are there dating sites that cater specifically to Muslims?

Thank you,

Lonely Muslim

Furthermore, the ethnic-based orientation of most Muslim communities has diminished the possibility of finding one's love or a friendly acquaintance outside one's particular group.²³

Categories of Muslim Online Match-Making

[20] Our survey and observation of Muslim online match-making and dating has found three major categories among American Muslims. We will present each, with a critical reading of their criteria. The first category is regionally or communally-based sites and mailing lists that cater to like-minded groups and local communities. In most cases, this system depends on individual blogs, mailing lists and Internet correspondence. There are many local Muslim communities in

which members send emails to an email moderator, who confidentially matches the sender with another mate-seeker from an existing pool.²⁴

[21] For example, the Muslim Alliance of North America (MANA) is an umbrella Muslim organization that is committed to Muslim issues and concerns that impact indigenous Muslims, particularly African Americans. In 2005, MANA adopted a project of healthy marriage, called the Marriage Initiative. The purpose of Marriage Initiative was to “to help *masjids* and Muslim communities build and maintain healthy marriages.”²⁵ Although MANA is still formulating its approach to a healthy marriage, its community members are one of the most dynamic groups in exploring the email system to match members with interested candidates.

[22] In many communities, marriage seekers often send emails across states to a mailing list or an affiliated community mosque where the imam matches that request with requests for similar needs. For instance, the note below was sent out to interested candidates from a British-based match-making mailing list that also caters to American Muslims:²⁶

Dear Respondent,

In regards to the match making we will be sending out emails in the next week or so, please bear with us.

We are also considering organising a marriage event in the near future as the most effective way for brothers on the list to meet sisters face to face ... Please would you let us know if you would be interested in attending such an event.

Regards,

Admin

[23] Following this email, interested candidates will meet in an informal gathering where they will get the opportunity to meet, interact and exchange contact information. Imams and community organizers play an essential role in such match-making efforts.

[24] The second category is *pro bono* sites that provide match-making services for the public good. These sites provide their services in exchange for either small fees, or as a free public service within their socio-cultural mission. Since most of these pro bono sites are administered by advocacy groups and umbrella organizations, their relatively low membership fee is for site maintenance and management. Examples of these sites are ISNA, ICNA, Islam-online.

[25] One common feature of this category is its focus on demographic information as the main indicator of compatibility. Membership is generally closed, and censorship is frequently used to reduce the level of “undesirable language” in conversations. These sites do not reflect the type of sites that cater to the “typical” American user.

[26] To offer an in depth study of this category, we will use ISNA’s Matrimonials, which are the largest programs of this type, to analyze the usage and membership that characterizes this type of site. The Islamic Society of North America is the largest umbrella organization in the United States. ISNA has two matrimonial programs: *Islamic Horizons’* Matrimonial Ads and the online ISNA Matrimonials. *Islamic Horizons* is a by-monthly publication that, according to ISNA, is “reaching out to over 250,000 readers.” Due to the fact that ISNA’s dominant membership is South Asian Muslims from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, where immigrant Muslims are characterized by “dominant supra-local elite that had much in common across the regions, including primarily, religious ideology and practice,”²⁷ traditional modes of supervised courtship characterize these sites. These sites have become another avenue for parents to maintain

continuity with their homeland's traditions by reaching out back home to look for "ideal" marriage candidates for their American-born sons or daughters.

[27] In our survey of 100 randomly selected profiles from ISNA's Matrimonial, we found that all but five profiles were posted by parents; almost all embody what Qureshi terms the "dominant supra-local elite"²⁸ that envision the concept of compatibility as encompassing the three dimensions of religious sect, ethnic group and professional qualifications. Although ISNA represents an umbrella organization for all North American Muslims, no profile was posted by anyone outside the triangle of Pakistan, India or Bangladesh.

[28] Furthermore, ISNA is the only organization that requires "VERBAL AND WRITTEN confirmation" from its users. The directions add that "You MUST call ISNA and give the same information over the phone also." This strictness discourages young users who are interested in finding emotional adventures and sincere Muslim lovers in cyberspace. In addition to that, the main reasons for the boom of online match-making are its flexibility and the non-committal nature of the hosting website or the corresponding partner on the other end.

[29] ISNA's Matrimonial online is not different from *Islamic Horizons'* Matrimonial ads in form and content. But its demography is larger and more diverse, consisting primarily of Muslims. As stated on its front page, it is "designed to cater to the needs of Muslims in North America that are searching for marriage partners." In addition to that, traditional parental interference has remained evident in this online matrimonial as well. ISNA states that the website is "a secure Islamic platform for single Muslims and/or their parents to create a profile and interact with other members in this database."²⁹ In a note of appreciation, a user writes that:

I had posted my daughter's profile on the ISNA Matrimonials website. We got a number of responses and finalized her marriage with Khawar [last name omitted for confidentiality]. We are very satisfied and happy with the website. We thank ISNA for this great service.³⁰

[30] An example of a typical match-making ad on ISNA's Matrimonials is this Sept/October advertisement in *Islamic Horizons*:

Sunni Muslim Indian invites correspondence for their daughter U.S. born, 25 year old medical doctor, good looking. Who is looking for a practicing Muslim 25-29 year old doctor, of Indian origin. Contact ...

[31] The third category is specialized commercial sites. These are sites that provide matchmaking services for commercial purposes. These sites vary in terms of target demographics, location, and the language they use. The common denominator between these sites is that their primary target demographic is Muslim and single. They aim at Muslims of all sectarian groups; they also open the door to non-Muslim women who do not mind dating or marrying Muslim men. Also there is nothing in the site that prevents non-Muslim males from participating. Our observation has found this type of site to have the largest membership and to attract most Muslim users.

[32] There are many websites that advertise matrimonial services for American Muslims. Since the American Muslim community is the wealthiest and one of the most diverse and sophisticated communities, the nine leading Muslim matrimonial sites in English in the world cater directly to this mosaic community.³¹ This paper will focus on the site International Muslim Matrimonial because it is among the largest, and furthermore, it embodies most fully the creativity and demographic diversity that characterize Internet users. We will analyze the characteristics,

membership and usage of the site in order to answer major questions related to Muslim online dating.

International Muslim Matrimonial Site

[33] This is one of most popular sites among North American Muslims. It is rated as number one in terms of popularity and creativity.³² Users' criteria is limited to attributes such as appearance, age and other general characteristics, rather than being geared to religious specifics, as is the case with the two previous categories. As its main webpage advertises: "Welcome to Muslima.com, the best Muslim dating and personals site for Muslim singles seeking partners for dating and marriage."³³

[34] Although this site is characterized by its Muslim orientation, its love cards, greetings, smiles and other dating criteria are tailored to mainstream American dating sites. However, it allows users to apply their own ideas on romance. For example, rather than choosing a "romantic walk in Paris" as a choice for an ideal romance, site features allow the user to express a "visit to the holy city of Mecca." Based on our survey of these sites, we will attempt to analyze what Muslim males or females are looking in a mate, and what constitutes an ideal man or woman in cyberspace.

[35] Although there are many suggested motives for marrying someone in the Islamic normative tradition, money, physical attraction, lineage or faith, with preference given to the latter, our survey of this site reveals that the reasons that Muslims want to marry are diverse, and cannot easily be captured in these lenses. They are rather similar to those of mainstream Americans, ranging from family pressure, sexual frustration, desire for a domestic life (i.e., a spouse, children), loneliness, financial security, and a feeling of religious obligation. But within this diversity, there exist similarities between the sexes.

[36] Data from this site do not reveal any major differences between American Muslim women and mainstream American women. In almost 70 percent of our randomly selected files, women mention “love” as pre-requisite for their ideal man. While women from other Muslim countries, mostly from Morocco, are like the Russian women in Sonja Luehrmann’s study, who tend to keep age specification open and often offer unconditional love, American Muslim women are like other American women; they look for men who are within four to 10 years of their age range.

[37] The language of love, caring, loneliness, etc., the main feature of online match-making and dating sites in North America and Europe, is the most echoed language among Muslim users of this site. For instance, a Muslim woman who is looking for love in International Matrimonial notes that:

I really like this dating site as an Islam site i pray to find a good caring man here [b]cause have been lonly [lonely] since am just praying to almighty *allah* to give me the best man in the dating site *maha salam* [good by].

[38] In the context of Muslim male users, it is harder to differentiate those who are using the site for religious purposes and those who are using it to connect to their homeland culture and tradition. Male users, who are evidently less in numbers, tend to be ambiguous in articulating their desired attributes beyond generalities and religious specifics.

[39] However, it is evident that many Muslim men, who are looking for spouses online and abroad, are actually looking for mates who are more “traditional” in their views on the division of responsibilities and duties within a marriage. Luehrmann has posited that one of the main reasons that Western males use Russian Internet matrimonial sites is to find a mate who conforms more readily to their idea of a “traditional” family-oriented woman.³⁴ This is perhaps a

testament to the power of globalization, that even abstract goods like love and traditionalism are just a mouse-click and a credit card number away. The choice of a foreign woman to marry a westerner appears to be a break from her own tradition through marrying someone online; it is also a break from an economic uncertainty by accepting a financial provider who promises to take her away from the relatively depressed economic conditions of Russia. This case of Russian women is no different from the case of Moroccan women, who represent the largest pool of husband seekers in Muslim match-making sites that cater to North American Muslims. This is also true in the context of Pakistan and India, where many American Muslim males look for their traditional wife.

[40] The International Muslim Matrimonial site embodies the uniqueness of Internet dating and match-making due to its ability to give users a variety of options, as it broadens the scope of personal choices for each individual looking for his or her ideal partner. The other two dating categories mentioned before do not allow for individual users to express this uniqueness and criteria that typical Internet users are looking for. Our study has found that in general, Internet users are interested in eight characteristics:

- Personal Interests
- Hobbies
- Political views: conservative, liberal, etc.
- Things you feel passionate about
- Activities you like to participate in
- Favourite music, movies, books, entertainers and food
- What you typically do on vacation or on the weekend
- Your family values

[41] This list embodies the aspirations and inspirations that, while equally applicable to all religious traditions, reflect the type of individuality that characterizes most every user. For example, in questions related to visual appearance and the level of religiosity in the context of wearing *hijab* (religious dress/ covering for female), female participants are given the options of choosing: (1) always; (2) often; (3) occasionally; (4) rarely; (5) never; (6) prefer not to answer.³⁵ It is obvious that in real life most Muslim women are not given this variety of options and choices to express their individuality when choosing their mates. This is not only a case of Muslim women in traditional societies, but also among those living in the West. A recent British Muslim task force on marriage cited that "coerced and forced marriages are a reality for many young Muslims directly or indirectly."³⁶ Citing the fact that 70 percent of marriages entailed some level of coercion, the report concludes, "Young Muslims in Britain are under siege from their elders and parents because of the generational and cultural gap."

[42] These are the features of the cyberspace communities that simultaneously use the Internet to liberate themselves from traditional values as well as to accommodate their personal convictions. By incorporating these characteristics into its *Muslimness*, this category of Internet dating sites is able to attract more users. This is due to its ability to combine both Islamic marriage culture and modern aspirations of individual freedom and personal choices. It gives users, especially women, who make up the overwhelming percentage of participants, the ability and opportunity to express their personal issues, concerns, ambitions and feelings. Expressing this range of choices is not often available or allowed in the traditional intermediary system, or in those *pro bono* Islamic sites that harbour traditional Muslim dating values.

Conclusions

[43] It is safe in this study to postulate that there are many motives and goals behind the boom in online match-making and dating among American Muslims. In all, the movement follows the mainstream trend of the cyberspace communities that simultaneously use the Internet both to liberate themselves from traditional values, as well to explore new horizons for self-expression and freedom of choice. Therefore, online match-making sites for many American Muslims are a means of challenging their social traditions and affirming personal desires of self-expression and individualism. Muslim sites are not necessarily attempting to mimic the general trends; they are mostly selective of what fits their religious beliefs before catering to a user's persona.

[44] It is obvious in our findings that the category of online match-making and dating sites associated with umbrella Muslim organizations uses online matrimonials to counter what are perceived as existing social ills. The category of pro-bono sites of conservative Muslim organizations are simply using the new technologies to maintain traditional methods of marriage. The two categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Thus, for the category of most *pro bono* sites, online match-making networks serve as platforms through which to preserve a group's identity. However, both categories are problematic to many American Muslim users, who are a part of America's socio-cultural fabric. These users have often exhausted the opportunities available through their social network of schools, work, family members and religious institutions.

[45] *Pro bono* and community-based match-making sites suggest doctrinal heterodoxy, or reflect a desire for a "Muslim" spouse by a definition other than what many Muslims believe in and aspire to in a multicultural society. It is obvious in the case of the International Muslim

Matrimonial that the success of this match-making site is in its ability to cater to those who are searching for love and a spouse according to their personal religious perspectives, not necessarily those shared by their communal institutions—imams, traditional family values or religious institutions.

Notes

¹ Muhammad Ibn Ali Ash-shawkani “Nail Al-Awtaar Pakistan: Lahur, Ansaar As-Sunnah,” *Qur’an 2* (1967): 30-21.

² *Ibid.*, 24-32.

³ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 106-107.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 112; see also *Sahih Bukhari*, Vol. 7 (Cairo: Dar Al-Fikr, 1966), 3 ff.

⁶ In *Bukhari*, cited above and also see commentary on Qur’an 4:4.

⁷ See Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America* (Chicago: Temple 18, 1965)

⁸ Earnest Allen, “Religious Heterodoxy and Nationalist Tradition: the Continuing Evolution of the Nation of Islam,” *The Black Scholar* 26,34 (1996): 2-34.

⁹ Omi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999).

¹⁰ See Mbaye Lo, *Muslim in America: Race, Politics and Community Building* (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2004).

¹¹ Most American Muslim writers tend to use the term revert rather than convert assuming that Islam is the original religion. Therefore, adopting it is an act of reverting to the truth, and certainly not converting to a new religion.

¹² Steven Barboza, *American Jihad: Islam after Malcolm X* (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

¹³ See Lo, *Muslim in America*; Special Report, United States Institute of Peace, “The Diversity of Muslims in the United States: Views as Americans,” February 2006. <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr159.html>, dead link.

¹⁴ Pew Research Center, “Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream.” May 22, 2007. <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/483/muslim-americans>

¹⁵ See Sherman Jackson “Imâm W. D. Mohammed and The Third Resurrection,” <http://mana-net.org/pages.php?ID=activism&NUM=261> , accessed October 5, 2009.

¹⁶ Sulayman Nyang, “Convergence and Divergence in an Emergent Community: A Study of Challenges Facing U.S. Muslims,” Yvonne Z. Haddad, ed., *The Muslims of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 238.

¹⁷ Frah Ternikar, “Tribalism in Muslim America,” *Islam in America: Images and Challenges*, ed. Pylis Lan Lin (Indianapolis: University of Indianapolis, 1998).

¹⁸ By traditional society, we mean a society that bases its customary patterns of thought and behaviours on some inherited or historically established Islamic practices.

¹⁹ Judith K. Muhammad, "Finding A Spouse—In Light Of The Qur'an And Sunnah." Islam-online,

<http://islam.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.islam%2Donline.net/iol%2Denglish/dowalia/society%2D24%2Dapril%2D2000/society2.asp>, accessed October 5, 2009.

²⁰ A good case in this is Saudi Arabia as beautifully portrayed in Rajaa Alsaneai's novel, *Girls of Riyadh* (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 2007).

²¹ See Sonyrea Tate, *Little X: Growing Up in the Nation of Islam*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997)

²² Posted on http://www.cupidsreviews.com/dating-blog/personals/muslim_personal/, accessed October 5, 2009.

²³ Aslam Abdullah, "Marriage and Divorce among Muslim Americans," *The Muslim Observer* (May 8, 2008) at <http://muslimmedianetwork.com/mmn/?p=2087>, accessed October 5, 2009.

²⁴ Cases have been observed in Cleveland, OH, Greensboro, NC and Charlotte, NC.

²⁵ See the project at <http://www.mananet.org/pages.php?ID=projects&ID2=&NUM=32>, dead link.

²⁶ The group is called muslimmarriageforyou. The full address was deleted for reason of confidentiality.

²⁷ Regula B. Qureshi and Saleem Qureshi, "Pakistani Canadians: the Making of a Muslim Community." *The Muslim Community in North America*, Earl H. Waugh et al., eds (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1982), 132.

²⁸ Qureshi and Qureshi, "Pakistani Canadians," 132.

²⁹ See welcome page at <https://www.isnamatrimonials.net/Matrimonial/>, accessed October 5, 2009.

³⁰ Posted at <https://www.isnamatrimonials.net/Matrimonial/>, accessed October 5, 2009.

³¹ The sites are International Muslim Matrimonials, Madina Matrimonial Services, Muslim Marriage Link, Muslim Matrimonial, Muslim Matrimonial Link, Qiran.com, Muslimmatch.com, Worldwide Islamic Marriage Bureau and Zawaj.com.

³² This type of site often belongs to one parent company that creates and manages a variety of dating sites, covering a range of mainstream, religious and ethnic groups.

³³ See page at http://www.muslima.com/muslim_dating.cfm, accessed October 5, 2009.

³⁴ S. Luehrmann S, "Mediated Marriage: Internet matchmaking in Provincial Russia," *Europe-Asian Studies* 56 (2004): 857-75.

³⁵ See the website quiran.com.

³⁶ <http://www.matribunal.com>, accessed October 5, 2009.