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Abstract Only – Work in Progress

“Identity Construction of Euro-American Converts to Islam”

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As Islam spread to America through immigration, a number of Americans of European descent also accepted Islam. Euro-American Muslims are a bridge between mainstream American society and the Muslim community. Yet, many Euro-American converts have struggled to negotiate between being American and being Muslim. This paper seeks to examine the social and cultural identity construction of Euro-American converts to Islam. Through indepth discussions with Euro-American converts, this paper explores how they have negotiated and defined their new chosen identity. Understanding that their identity negotiation has been a long journey of exploration, the paper will highlight the barriers and challenges they have experienced along the way. It will also explore how Euro-American Muslims have manifested their new identities, and whether they felt they have had to reject one identity for the other. In other words, is it possible for them to be fully part of both traditional American society and the Muslim community? Or, do they feel alienated from mainstream American society as well as from the immigrant Muslim community? Finally, the paper will examine how the identity construction of Euro-American converts can affect the larger identity of American Muslims. The process in which Euro-American converts have negotiated their social and cultural identity can give us insight into the future of the American-Muslim identity construction, as well as provide us with a better understanding of the difficulties that converts face.