

# THE AMERICAN MOSQUE: BEHIND THE CONTROVERSY

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the firestorm that erupted following the proposal of the Park 51 development—the so-called “Ground Zero Mosque”—in Manhattan in 2010, mosques have come to symbolize controversy and division for many Americans. Since that time, mosque developments nationwide have faced resistance from neighbors as well as municipal officials and have been the focus of intense media scrutiny. One might have the sense that mosque development is inherently controversial and that mosques—and perhaps even Muslims themselves—are incompatible with American ideals and American communities. Many myths have emerged regarding mosques in the United States, including that they are sources of radicalization among American Muslims, that they are led by extremist clergy, and that they host practices that border on the occult. None of this could be further from the truth. This paper dispels these and other misconceptions about mosques by providing facts about their organization and funding, about the faith communities who use them as well as how they use them, and about ways mosques are emerging as centers of interfaith activity and community building in neighborhoods.

Islam is a decentralized faith without a single source of authority. Hence, a diversity of interpretations of its tenets and practices exist among its adherents. The faith

includes two major branches—Sunni and Shi’a Islam—as well as a number of smaller ones. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the differences among these branches or to explain differences in their approaches to the faith. Instead, the core goal of this paper is to help the general public, policymakers, journalists, academics, community leaders, and members of other faith communities to understand the institution of the mosque and what it means to American Muslims, the paper focuses on the most common practices observed among American Muslims. Specifically, the information provided represents the teachings and practices of Sunni Islam, the branch of the faith with which the majority of American Muslims and most Muslims worldwide identify themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Mosques are commonly referred to by Muslims as “masjids” (*pronounced MAHS-jīds*) or “masajid” (*pronounced mahs-AH-jīd*). In Arabic, *masjid* means “place of prostration,” a reference to one of the positions that Muslims assume during ritual prayers. Islam does not require that daily prayers be made in a particular building, but only that they be made in a place that is clean and without distraction. When two or more Muslims are present, however, it is considered meritorious for them to pray together; mosques are the most common places of congregation. Just as churches, synagogues, and temples serve their congregations, mosques in the United States are gathering places for Muslim families,

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hosting not only prayers, but also social, charitable, and educational activities that both add vibrancy to faith communities and connect them to their surrounding neighborhoods and municipalities.

It is difficult to definitively determine how many mosques exist in the United States, but about 2,100 is a commonly referenced current estimate.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to perceptions that mosques are a new phenomenon, Muslims and their faith communities have been in the country since its founding. Some scholars assert that African Muslims were among the first non-Native peoples

on the North American continent, having crewed Spanish and Portuguese explorers' ships.<sup>3</sup> Archival evidence supports the arrival of Muslims on sea vessels of another sort—slave ships—as well as the clandestine practice of Islam among enslaved Africans<sup>4</sup> (today, 40% of native-born American Muslims describe themselves as black or African American).<sup>5</sup> Despite this long history of Muslims in America, purpose-built mosques have only been documented across the country for a little more than a century, and only in the last two decades have they been developed in any notable number. This reflects the fact that the number of Muslims in the US was quite small until the latter part of the twentieth century, when, following immigration law reforms in 1965,<sup>6</sup> arrivals from the Middle East, South Asia, and other predominantly Muslim areas of the world joined the already established population of African American and other native-born American Muslims. The reforms led to steady growth in the overall foreign-born population in America throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Between 1990 and 2000, the largest numerical increase in immigrants—legal and illegal—in the nation's history was documented (31.1 million, or 11.1 percent of the US population). By 2010, a further 28 percent increase brought the total of immigrants to nearly 40 million.<sup>7</sup> Muslims represent only a small percentage of the overall foreign-born population in the United States; an estimated 80,000-90,000 have arrived annually since 2000.<sup>8</sup>

Muslim immigrants have integrated into the American fabric through high rates of naturalization, economic prosperity, civic and community engagement, and the establishment of religious institutions in American cities and suburbs. Like other immigrants and indigenous groups, American Muslims work over time to accumulate resources and then turn to the project of building permanent institutions for their faith communities. The current increase in mosque development is largely being undertaken by American Muslim communities of immigrant origin, who, having established a firm financial footing over recent decades, now seek to provide religious

instruction, education facilities, and social opportunities in accordance with the tenets of their faith. The need for such community provisions is of growing importance as successive generations are born and their parents wish to raise them both as Muslims and as Americans. Emerging data suggest that around 550 new mosques were established between 2000 and 2011, representing a 45 percent increase in the estimated number of mosques in the United States.<sup>9</sup> The timing of this increase correlates to the financial and organizational readiness of post-1990 Muslim immigrants to establish local religious institutions.<sup>10</sup>

Most Americans have little or no experience with Muslims, and few know how mosques are actually used. This paper serves as a primer on the institution, and, where helpful to the overarching discussion, on Islam itself. To assist readers in relating this information to other faith experiences, wherever possible parallels are drawn between the theology and practice of Islam and those of the other Abrahamic faiths, Judaism and Christianity. What becomes clear in these parallels, as well as in the facts presented about mosques, is that American Muslim faith communities are very much like other American faith communities. They are collections of families worshipping

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together and educating their children, engaging in the economic and civic life of their municipalities and the nation, and serving their neighborhoods via charity and volunteerism.

The paper begins with a demographic profile of American Muslims and a discussion of their general participation in the broader American culture. It then describes the organization and governance of the faith, particularly at the local level, including the funding

of mosques in America. Then, the paper turns to the architecture of American mosques and demonstrates how their form follows their function. The relationship of the American mosque to its historic and global antecedents is described, followed by a tour of a typical Sunni Islamic center in the US. This last section includes brief descriptions of the rituals practiced in the mosque, as well as such accessory uses as community halls, libraries, educational facilities, and funerary accommodations. Gender segregation and the fallacy of radicalization in US mosques are also addressed.

## PART I: WHO ARE AMERICAN MUSLIMS?<sup>11</sup>

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The United States Census does not collect information pertaining to religious affiliation; therefore, it is difficult to determine basic demographic data on members of particular faiths. The estimated number of Muslims in America varies widely depending upon sources and statistical methods used; proposed numbers range from 1.5 million to 7 million.<sup>12</sup> Most estimates are considered “educated approximations, at best.”<sup>13</sup> The most comprehensive and reliable demographic data currently available was collected using widely accepted social scientific methods in two nationwide Pew Research Center surveys in 2007<sup>14</sup> and 2011.<sup>15</sup> Pew reports that in 2011 approximately 1.8 million Muslim adults and 2.75 million Muslims of all ages were living in the United States.<sup>16</sup> Sixty-three percent of Muslims living in the United States that year were born abroad; 71% arrived after 1990;<sup>17</sup> this reflects the well-documented increase in overall immigration to America after 1990. Of the 37% of Muslims born in America, 15% have at least one parent who was born abroad.<sup>18</sup>

Together, immigrant and native-born Muslims constitute a racially diverse faith community. The Pew data demonstrates that no single racial or ethnic group makes up more than a third of the total: 30% percent

describe themselves as white, 23% as black, 21% as Asian, 6% as Hispanic, and 19% as other or mixed race.<sup>19</sup> Foreign-born American Muslims come from nearly 80 different nations, with Pakistan being the largest country of origin (14% of first-generation immigrants; 9% of all American Muslims). In terms of regions of origin, the largest number of immigrant Muslims in America come from Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa (41% of foreign-born Muslims in the United States; 26% of all American Muslims), followed by those from South Asia—India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh (26% of foreign born Muslims in the United States; 16% of all American Muslims).

Sixty-five percent of American Muslims identify with Sunni Islam, one of the two main branches of the faith, and 11% identify with the other, Shi'a Islam; most of the remaining 24% have no specific affiliation. Twenty percent are converts to Islam.<sup>20</sup>

### *“Middle class and mostly mainstream”*

More than 70% of Muslims born abroad are now citizens, including 42% of those who arrived after 2000.<sup>21</sup> In many aspects, the American Muslim community is comparable to the nation's general population, leading Pew to characterize its members as “middle class and mostly mainstream.”<sup>22</sup> Twenty-six percent of American Muslims are college graduates, as compared to 28% of all adults in the United States. Forty percent report family incomes between \$30,000 and \$100,000, in contrast to 48% of the general public. About a third of American Muslims are homeowners, compared with 58% of the public (for both groups, homeownership has declined following the 2006-2009 collapse of the US housing market and the subsequent recession).<sup>23</sup> Pew found that American Muslims are well-integrated into mainstream society and in large part content with their lives in the US, and in their local communities. This is true even among those living in communities that have experienced acts of violence against a mosque or controversy over the building of an Islamic center. Fifty-six percent reported being content

with the country's direction, a striking contrast to the 32% of the general public.<sup>24</sup> Similar findings were reported by the Gallup Center in its August 2011 survey of American Muslims.<sup>25</sup>

### *Religiosity among American Muslims*

Reflecting the diversity of thought in Islam, the Pew Research Center documented that the large majority of American Muslims accept the faith's core tenets—belief in one God, belief that Muhammad is God's last prophet, anticipation of a Day of Judgment and an afterlife with God—but found that most also believe that there is more than one true way to interpret Islam's teachings. These findings lead Pew to characterize American Muslims as “religious but not dogmatic.”<sup>26</sup> Indeed, among American Muslims, as among any American faith community, there is a range of positions along a spectrum of religiosity. Some Muslims are very conservative in their religious convictions and life views, while others are quite liberal. For example, some American Muslim women wear the

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*hijab* (a headscarf that covers the hair for the purpose of modesty) whenever they are outside of their homes and/or in the company of non-related men; others only cover their heads when they are inside a mosque. American Muslims tend to make room for a range of views in their communities, and, like the broader American culture itself, generally accommodate and encourage their expression. Despite differences in interpretation, 69% see their faith as very important in their lives; about half attend religious services at least once a week.<sup>27</sup> Importantly, the Gallup Center found that those who do attend religious

services at least once a week have “higher levels of civic engagement and report less stress and anger than do other Muslims in the US who attend religious services less frequently.”<sup>28</sup> This finding counters concerns expressed in recent years about the radicalization of American Muslims via mosque attendance.<sup>29</sup> In fact, both Pew and Gallup found that very few American Muslims see any justification for violence, and that, in fact, the majority reject extremism and attacks on civilians.<sup>30</sup>

## PART II: THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAM IN GENERAL AND AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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### *Governance in and funding of American mosques*

The decentralization of Islam and its lack of a single source of leadership means that much freedom and choice exists for individual Muslims and local faith communities. A fundamental Islamic principle of community consensus holds that Muslims make the best decisions collectively and after debate.<sup>31</sup> In recent years, some critics have raised questions about Islam’s compatibility with democracy. In many ways, the consensus-based governance of most local Muslim faith communities is a model of democratic process. They are, therefore, quintessentially American organizations well-suited to the legal and fiscal armature on which other religious organizations and not-for-profits in the United States are shaped.

Local faith communities tend to be established when a small group of American Muslims settle in a municipality and seek fellow Muslims with whom to pray, educate their children, celebrate feasts and holidays, and mark such social passages as weddings, births and funerals. They might first pray together in each other’s homes and then, as their numbers grow, rent commercial or other space. Over time, as communities expand and accumulate financial and human resources, they may decide to establish a formal mosque and community

center in either a rehabilitated building or a purpose-built structure. Developing such institutions may take decades and be achieved in phases, since many American Muslim communities consider mortgages and their interest to be the equivalent of *riba* (usury or usurious interest), which is forbidden in Islam. Instead, funds are normally raised locally through personal donations and events such as dinners, auctions, and the like. Although other faiths may avail themselves of commonly used borrowing mechanisms to finance their institutions, most still have to raise significant sums through donations. Indeed, the challenges of fundraising and project phasing are all too familiar to American faith communities of any creed or denomination.

Subsequent to September 11, 2001 (and to some extent before the attacks as well), some critics raised concerns regarding the funding of mosques in the US, and particularly whether foreign governments provide financing for the construction or operating budgets of American mosques. While some American mosques did receive a portion of funding from foreign governments and/or individuals living abroad,<sup>32</sup> transnational exchange between local American Muslim faith communities and foreign funding sources was curtailed after September 11, 2001 (hereinafter “9/11”), and subsequent federal reforms in charitable funding regulation.<sup>33</sup> However, the choice for independent financing comes more directly from the American Muslim faith communities themselves, who recognize the importance of avoiding overseas influence, particularly in light of ongoing conflicts between Washington and some Muslim-majority nations. More importantly, they are driven to fund their own construction, maintenance, and programming by two particular values: the principle of community consensus and the American constitutional ideal of the separation of church and state. American Muslims, and particularly those who have emigrated from nations in which governments enforce financial and administrative ties with mosques, appreciate the autonomy their faith communities are afforded in their adopted country. That is, in some predominantly Muslim

regions of the world, mosques have evolved over time to have financial and administrative relationships with local and national governments. This relationship emerged in the early centuries of Islam, when Islamic empires based in the Middle East and North Africa consolidated the roles of civic and religious leadership. To varying degrees, this remains the pattern in some majority-Muslim nations. The experience of governmental interventions in religious affairs, therefore, reinforces some Muslim immigrants' appreciation for America's enshrined goal of church-state separation.<sup>34</sup>

Independence from the state, however, does not mean that American Muslim faith communities do not engage with the state. To facilitate fundraising and capitalize on the benefits of tax exemptions extended to most religious entities, those organizing mosques usually file for recognition as 501(c)(3) not-for-profits under the Internal Revenue Service code. This means that they must meet the governance requirements of that status, including oversight by a board of directors (usually selected from the mosque's membership)<sup>35</sup> and public accountability via the reporting of contributions, budgets, and expenditures. A mosque's governance, then, is not unlike that of a church, a synagogue, a temple—or even of the American Red Cross or a local humane society for that matter. Commonly, a board oversees executive functions, and subcommittees deal with specific issues and activities (e.g., child and adult education programs, social activities, community outreach, and facilities maintenance). The diversity of representation in an individual mosque's governing structure varies depending on the degree of conservatism among the congregation—for example, women and younger people may or may not be included on governing bodies and committees. Additionally, whether governing representatives are selected by the vote of the full congregation or appointed by standing members of the leadership varies among local communities.

### *The faith leader*

The concept of a faith leader in Islam, who is known as an

imam, differs among Sunni and Shi'a branches of the faith and the subtleties of the distinction are beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, this discussion focuses on the generally observed role of faith leaders among American Sunni Muslims. An imam, generally, is a scholar of the faith's holy scripture, the Qur'an, and Islamic law, known as Shari'a,<sup>36</sup> as well as of Islamic rituals and practices. The

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majority of Sunni imams are men<sup>37</sup> entrusted with leading prayers and delivering a sermon, known as a *khutbah* (pronounced *hoot-ba*; discussed below), during weekly congregational prayers. In the United States, an imam also often acts as a pastoral leader as in other faiths, undertaking congregation stewardship, counseling and advising for members, and broader community outreach such as interfaith activities. Local faith communities fund an imam's salary<sup>38</sup> and often provide housing for him and his family in or near the mosque complex. When the resources are not available to secure the full-time services of an imam, a faith community might call upon a senior member to lead congregational prayers. Either he or an invited scholar might also deliver the sermon.

American Muslim communities of immigrant origin had for many years valued the experience of imams who had been trained at prestigious institutions in predominantly Muslim countries. That emphasis is changing. As more mosques are established in America, the need for the services of imams is growing, but the supply of trained imams cannot meet the demand. Although immigrant imams have been able to meet a portion of the pastoral need in newly established mosques,<sup>39</sup> at the same time American Muslims also are reconsidering their

communities' needs. The changing demographics of American Muslims mean that local faith communities consist of greater numbers of Muslims born in America, as well as their young families. Communities increasingly seek native-born and native-trained imams who can relate to the American cultural milieu and the needs of young American Muslims, particularly adolescents. To meet this burgeoning need, programs for accrediting imams are being developed at California's Claremont School of Theology and Connecticut's Hartford Seminary and will surely be considered at other institutions as well.<sup>40</sup>

### *Mosque membership*

Christians and Jews tend to think of themselves as members of a particular church or synagogue who "belong" to its congregation. Muslims do not traditionally think of themselves in this way; there are historical roots for this sentiment. In predominantly Muslim parts of the world, mosques are common, conveniently located, and open to all Muslims, and the faithful attend the mosque which is closest to them at any particular prayer time. That is, an individual may attend several mosques without considering himself or herself a "member" of any of them. In the United States, where mosques are few and far between, Muslims tend to affiliate more strongly with a single local mosque and think of it as their "family" mosque, like a family's parish. These bonds are especially strong when families have helped fund the facilities. Still, the heritage of universal belonging to Islam regardless of particular location is strong among American Muslims, and despite their ties to a particular faith community, they might not think of themselves as its "members" or "congregants", and might not use those terms to describe themselves. Similarly, American Muslims normally do not use the term "congregation" to describe their faith community. However, the term "members" is used in this paper and in scholarship generally to describe those American Muslims who habitually attend a particular local mosque.

## PART III: THE FORM OF THE AMERICAN MOSQUE

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Mosques in America range from the grand and monumental, such as the Islamic Cultural Center of New York and the Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, Michigan to humble storefront mosques such as Masjid Ar-Rashid in Beacon, New York and the Darul Uloom Institute in Pembroke Pines, Florida. The variety is due in part to the financial capabilities of individual faith communities, but also to a design debate that exists among American Muslims. Some question the degree to which design and material beauty should be emphasized, and at what cost to social service and outreach.<sup>41</sup> The issue takes on particular meaning in Islam, which recognizes all clean and quiet spaces as acceptable for prayer. If prayers made in an office are acceptable, then some wonder why a faith community should devote part of its limited funds to the form and ornamentation of a purpose-built structure, and potentially neglect more urgently needed charitable service.<sup>42</sup> However, at the same time that some American Muslims de-emphasize the significance of architecture, many others take it very seriously, noting that they are answerable to God for whatever they have created, including the built environment. For them, the aesthetics of the spaces and the quality of social interactions within them shape their spiritual lives. These Muslims, not just those in America, view themselves as stewards of a sacred trust in which spirituality and material life must always be balanced. This understanding of aesthetic beauty as a vehicle for fulfilling a duty to God and community is evidenced in the built environment of many Muslim societies historically and contemporarily across the globe.<sup>43</sup>

Whether mosques are purpose-built or existing spaces rehabilitated for a new use, whether they draw on traditional forms from Islamic history or are architecturally innovative, they typically have several design elements in common: an exterior element that signals its identity (e.g.,

a crescent, minaret, dome, or other Islamically oriented symbols or texts); areas for ritual cleansing before prayer; and a prayer space oriented to the holy city of Mecca. In general, human and animal forms are not used in the decorative program of religious structures. Instead, decorative detailing in mosques includes complex and

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aesthetically pleasing geometric and foliage patterns (arabesques), as well as calligraphy of Qur’anic verses or other religious expressions. Regardless of the facility’s simplicity or grandeur, these basic elements generally persist in mosque design, because all mosque forms are to some extent based on the first space used for congregational prayer by the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>44</sup> In this first mosque and through the Prophet’s practice, the example for the design of mosques and for the conduct of the Islamic prayer ritual was formed. A common design root means that nearly every mosque contains similar elements: an open prayer space without seating and a wall orienting the faithful toward Mecca. As a result, each visitor will have a similar experience of the building, regardless of its form or the elaborateness of its décor. Such consistency in design and use reinforces the universality of Islam and the ideal of equality among all Muslims.

## PART IV: THE CENTRALITY OF PRAYER AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE MOSQUE’S FORM

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Most Sunni Muslims pray five times a day: at dawn, at noon, at mid-afternoon, at sunset, and in the evening.<sup>45</sup> Prayer times follow the sun and thus shift slightly during the year; in the northern hemisphere, the sunset prayer

takes place in the late afternoon during the winter and in the late evening during the summer. These prayers do not have to be made in a mosque, but only in a clean place that is free from distraction. When two or more Muslims are present, it is considered meritorious for them to pray together, with one acting as the imam or leader. Most Muslims in America make their daily prayers at home, work, or school. This is because prayer halls are often located too far away from their homes and places of business to travel there multiple times during the day. Most days and times, then, they commonly excuse themselves from their activity and pray in a quiet, separate space. For most Sunnis, men are required to attend the congregational Friday prayer, similar to the Sabbath day of worship for Jews and Christians (although Friday is not a day of rest for Muslims as Saturday is for Jews and Sunday is for Christians). The congregational prayer is referred to as *jum’ah*, which is also the Arabic word for Friday. Women and children may attend Friday congregational prayers at the mosque, as well as other daily prayers, but they are not required to do so.

To familiarize the reader with the American mosque and its central focus on prayer, the following sections serve as a “guided tour,” walking the visitor through the preparations for and the making of prayers.

### *The call to prayer: The minaret and the adhan*

As the time for prayer approaches, the faithful are called to prayer by a series of phrases sung in Arabic, called the *adhan* (pronounced ahd-haan). Although there are variations in the exact wording of the *adhan* among Sunni and Shi’a Muslims,<sup>46</sup> a common translation of the Sunni version is given below.<sup>47</sup>

1. God is most great (repeated four times; this is the familiar “*Allahu-akbar*”)
2. I testify that there is no god but God (repeated twice)
3. I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God (repeated twice)
4. Hurry to prayer (repeated twice)
5. Hurry to success [sometimes translated as



“salvation”] (repeated twice)

6. Prayer is better than sleep (only before the first morning prayer; repeated twice)
7. God is most great (repeated twice)
8. There is no god but God.

Traditionally, in many parts of the Muslim world, the call to prayer was made from a tower connected to or near the mosque, called a minaret. The minaret might be thought of as a bell tower—just as Christian churches commonly ring bells to call parishioners to services, the call to prayer invites Muslims to the mosque. Although the *adhan* is made audibly in a small number of American cities and suburbs with large Muslim populations,<sup>48</sup> in most places this is not the case. It does not make sense for a Muslim faith community to make the call to a neighborhood made up mostly of non-Muslims that does not need to know that prayer time has arrived, and that in fact might not appreciate having to listen to the cantilated call. Instead, where American Muslims are in the minority, the call to prayer is usually made either within the walls of the mosque or on personal devices such as cell phones or watches.

Although minarets and domes in the United States do not serve their historic function and Islam does not mandate that they be part of mosque design, they are often included in plans for new mosques. This is because they serve as a visual cue to Muslims and non-Muslims alike that a particular building functions as a mosque. They also help those wanting to pray to locate the structure from a distance, just as church spires and the domes of Orthodox Russian and other churches do. Domes and minarets additionally can be sources of pride for Muslim communities that have worked hard to compile sufficient resources to construct a purpose-built mosque.

### *Entering a mosque for prayer: leaving the everyday*

A Muslim’s very entrance into a mosque for prayer separates him or her from the work-day hustle and bustle

and helps him or her transition into sacred time and space. Sometimes mosques have one or two entrances; women and men may enter via separate doors, or they may separate once inside. Most American Muslim faith communities practice some degree of gender segregation to preserve worshippers’ modesty and avoid distractions during prayer. Additionally, men dress modestly while in the mosque (most will not wear shorts, for example), and women typically cover their hair even if they do not wear the *hijab*, or Islamic head scarf, as a matter of routine outside the mosque.

Before preparing for prayer, the worshipper removes his or her shoes. This act both signals a departure from one’s normal routine, shows respect for sacred space, and keeps the floor of the prayer hall clean for the prayer ritual, in which worshippers prostrate upon it. Men and women proceed to separate ablution areas, which contain sinks and sometimes benches and wall faucets used to perform a ritual cleansing called *wudu* (*pronounced woo-dhoo*).

### *Wudu*

Performing *wudu* helps a worshipper achieve ritual purity before performing prayer. During the process of performing ablutions, one washes the face; the arms, beginning with the hands up to the elbows; the feet up to the ankles; and wipes the top of the head. Short prayers are uttered during this process; for example: “Oh God, let me enjoy the sweet smell of Paradise” while wiping one’s nose and “Oh God, make my feet firm on the Path, on the Day when the feet easily slip away from the Path”<sup>49</sup> while washing one’s feet. The right side of the body is washed first, as this was the Prophet Muhammad’s practice. One then proceeds to the prayer hall. In a purpose-built mosque, the prayer hall could be a large, open plan space in a distinct area of the building or complex. In a small storefront mosque, it might be a part of a single room distinguished from the rest by a change in floor covering or other decorative elements.

### *Orientation to Mecca: the qibla wall and the mihrab*

Muslims pray while facing the direction of the faith's most holy city, Mecca. To ensure that worshippers are properly oriented for the prayer ritual, the direction is indicated by a particular wall in prayer areas, called the *qibla* wall ("direction" in Arabic). In new mosque construction on spacious lots, the entire mosque structure might be oriented in this direction, resulting in a building that sits off-axis with the surrounding street grid. In rehabilitated spaces or on tight building lots, orientation to Mecca might be addressed in an interior design so that the building envelope is undisturbed and/or the street grid is not interrupted. Even simple means can be used to indicate the proper prayer direction, such as lines of tape on the floor along which worshippers can align themselves. Along the *qibla* wall is usually a niche called a *mihrab*, which identifies a particular wall as the *qibla*.<sup>50</sup> This niche is often the prayer hall's most elaborately appointed element. Sometimes, as in purpose-built mosques, the niche is appointed with decorative tiles; in structural reuses, it may be a simple recessed form shaped of plywood or drywall. Some mosques additionally have a *minbar*, which is similar to a pulpit in a Christian church; the imam may stand atop the *minbar* to deliver the sermon. *Minbars*, however, are not required in Islam.

### *Gender segregation in the prayer hall*

Many American Muslims hold that the purpose of gender segregation inside the mosque is to maintain the modesty of worshippers while praying and prevent any distraction that might arise from a mixed gender congregation. In particular, the prostrated prayer position—during which the posterior portion of the body is raised when the forehead touches the floor—is considered by some to compromise modesty for both genders. As a result, men normally pray together in one portion of the prayer hall, and women and children pray together, either alongside or behind the men. In some mosques, they pray in separate balconies or rooms. If a single room is shared by the

genders, it is frequently (but not always) separated by movable room dividers or curtains. When a separate room or balcony is utilized for women, speakers might deliver the imam's or other prayer leader's voice to them. Sometimes a closed-circuit television system allows women to watch the imam deliver the sermon during congregational prayers on Fridays. Decisions about whether and how to segregate the genders are made within individual faith communities. Depending on the nature of particular communities, that decision-making process may or may not include women.

The ongoing debate regarding gender segregation in the mosque is yet another example of the diversity of thought among American Muslims. Although many American Muslim women are comfortable with gender segregation and agree that it maintains their modesty and privacy, others do not believe that it should be practiced. They argue that the Qur'an does not dictate gender segregation; the separation of the sexes, they say, instead has evolved out of a patriarchal interpretation of *shari'a*, as well as from cultural customs belonging to Muslims of particular ethnic backgrounds. Opponents also cite their feelings of being relegated to spaces that do not facilitate their full participation in the prayer ritual and mosque activities. As a result, they advocate not only for the removal of gender segregation during prayers, but also for the broader concept of equal voice for women in mosque governance.<sup>51</sup>

### *The prayer ritual*

A synchronized prayer ritual among a congregation of Muslims is considered meritorious in Islam; it is the goal toward which faith communities strive when they gather at appointed times for prayer. The synchronized completion of the prayer ritual, however, is not required and not always possible for American Muslims who must leave their work, school or other responsibilities to pray with others. Therefore, when Muslims pray together at a mosque their recitations can be staggered, with some part of the assembled starting first and others beginning

when they arrive, then finishing later. That is, if one arrives late, he or she can and should complete the prayer ritual from the beginning on his or her own, regardless of the point in the ritual that the rest of the assembled has

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*This reflects the fact that although congregational prayer is very much a group experience, it is also a highly personal, private form of worship and supplication during which individuals turn inward to concentrate and reflect upon their relationship with God.*

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reached. This practice has limited parallels in Judaism. Jewish services have a defined beginning and end, a prescribed order of events, and some elements that must be performed in unison; other parts of the service, however, including certain prayers, can be performed silently and at one's own pace. Both of these models stand in contrast to Christian services, which in most main stream denominations start at a particular time and proceed through a series of synchronized rituals toward a single conclusion.

After the call to prayer is broadcast and the ablutions have been made, the prayer leader (either the imam or another male from the congregation<sup>52</sup>) stands in front of the other attendees, facing the *qibla* wall. The others line up behind him, shoulder to shoulder in rows, and follow his lead. As Muslims memorize the Arabic phrases and motions of the prayer ritual; a prayer leader only provides a model by which the congregation can synchronize its movements. This single, shared ritual, universally conducted in the faith's shared language of Arabic, allows Muslims from anywhere on the globe to gather and pray together. Images from the *hajj* (the annual pilgrimage made to the holy city of Mecca<sup>53</sup>), perfectly illustrate the universality of the prayer ritual in Islam. Millions of

Muslims belonging to disparate cultures, races and ethnicities, who speak different languages, all gather as a single congregation and make prayer together with an impressive degree of synchronization. The ritual itself consists of a cycle of repeated motions and phrases arranged in a particular and consistent order.<sup>54</sup> Even when conducted by large groups of Muslims, prayer making tends to be a quiet, peaceful experience, with perhaps only the voice of the imam or other leader being audible. This reflects the fact that although congregational prayer is very much a group experience, it is also a highly personal, private form of worship and supplication during which individuals turn inward to concentrate and reflect upon their relationship with God. During *jum'ah*, or congregational prayers on Fridays, a sermon, or *khutbah*, follows the prayer ritual. A sermon is also delivered on the two main Muslim holy days: *Eid al-Fitr*, which recognizes the end of Ramadan, the lunar month of fasting and *Eid al-Adha*, which commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael out of obedience to and belief in God. *Eid al-Adha* also coincides with the end of the pilgrimage season.

### *The sermon*

The sermon is normally delivered by the imam, or if a faith community does not have one, by a senior member or an invited guest scholar. As with many other aspects of Islam, no specific requirements are prescribed for the sermon's content. Its topic, character, and formality vary from mosque to mosque depending upon the makeup of its congregation and the speaker's training or experience. Historically and in some Muslim-majority nations where the ties between mosque and state were or are more direct, the sermon communicated the state's official stance and encouraged a faith community's acceptance of it. For example, a *fatwa*, or legal opinion, might be proclaimed during a sermon to justify a particular decision or action of the caliph or other state leader. By contrast, in some historic periods and locations, and most recently during the Arab Spring, the sermon has been a vehicle for

messages of resistance and reform. In Islam's American diaspora, however, its message commonly steers away from political topics and toward the fundamentals of the faith.<sup>55</sup> A speaker might focus on a particular passage of the *Qur'an*, or a *hadith* (report), or *sunnah* (practice) of the Prophet Muhammad, as teaching tools for leading a moral life. Sermons commonly communicate and reinforce the teachings and tenets of the faith, guiding believers on the path to a good life and the reward of heaven. Additionally, in the multi-ethnic and multi-racial mosques of America, Islam's universality and Muslim unity are particularly important. Scholar Mazen Hashem, notes that the "universal brotherhood/sisterhood [of Islam] and transcending groupness is a staple message,"<sup>56</sup> even if the attending faith community consists largely of a single ethnic background or few different backgrounds.

One might expect that after 9/11, a lack of political references in sermons might be attributable to the speaker's desire not to be misunderstood or misinterpreted by audiences and by law enforcement agencies that might be monitoring mosques.<sup>57</sup> However, Hashem argues that the absence of political commentary represents neither fear of expression nor the tacit approval of violence. Instead, he believes that the emphasis sermon deliverers generally place on the reinforcement of Islamic values and standards of behavior is intended to counter societal turmoil and provide a moral path for American Muslims to follow.<sup>58</sup> His findings further refute the notion that American mosques are hotbeds of radicalism lead by extremist imams preaching messages of hate.

The end of the prayer ritual and the conclusion of the sermon are far from the end of American Muslims' engagement with their faith communities. The next section explores some of the myriad ways in which their religious institutions are used and made accessible to the general public.

## PART V: ANCILLARY USES AND COMMUNITY BUILDING IN AMERICAN MOSQUES

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In predominantly Muslim societies, the provision of education, social services, and efforts toward community building are usually the responsibility of institutions other than houses of worship. Where Islam is the largest faith, and in some cases the nation's official faith, civic institutions by default tend to have an Islamic basis and function within the Islam's traditions and requirements. In the United States and other Muslim-minority areas, however, families must take a more active role to provide their children with religious education, social opportunities, and community building activities grounded in the principles of Islam. Of necessity, most American mosques serve as loci for such diverse undertakings; as a result are often referred to as Islamic centers, not simply as mosques. In addition to prayer halls, they tend to include flexible multi-purpose rooms, commercial kitchens for catering special events and dinners, meeting rooms, libraries, classrooms for supplemental religious instruction, funerary facilities for the ritual preparation of bodies, and, in some larger congregations, a primary and/or secondary parochial school.

Rather than being a recent or diasporic innovation, multi-purpose mosque programming has a strong heritage in Islam. During the time of Prophet Muhammad, who lived in the seventh century CE, judicial, political, educational, and community affairs were conducted from his home in Medina, Saudi Arabia.<sup>59</sup> During the early Islamic empire, *jami* mosques (larger facilities intended to draw a district's entire population for Friday congregational prayers) included large-scale multi-use complexes that accommodated educational facilities, judicial proceedings, and commercial functions. Mosques offered charity to the poor and hosted travelers in connected overnight accommodations.<sup>60</sup> Between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE, political, legal, mercantile,

and community functions were progressively removed from mosques by governing rulers.<sup>61</sup> This pattern of segregating sacred and civic uses continues today, with the result that contemporary mosques in the Middle East and other parts of the Muslim world commonly serve only a fraction of the purposes that the Prophet intended.<sup>62</sup>

The multi-purpose nature of the American mosque is also typical of most American religious institutions. Churches, synagogues, and temples have long been one-stop sources for education, social activities, and charity for both congregants and the surrounding neighborhood. Charity, in fact, is another of the five Sunni pillars<sup>63</sup> of Islam, embraced as a foundational value and incumbent upon every adult Sunni Muslim. Edward Curtis calls broad community involvement on the part of religious institutions “a hallmark of the American experience.”<sup>64</sup> By hosting voter registration events, health clinics, interfaith activities, blood drives, and even the thoroughly American institutions of the girl and boy scouts, Muslims demonstrate the degree to which they are woven into the fabric of American neighborhoods and the American nation.<sup>65</sup>

### *Education facilities*

Islamic education is of chief importance to American Muslims. Because the Qur’an is considered to be the word of God and therefore immutable, Muslims believe that it is best studied and understood in its language of revelation, Arabic. The ritual of prayer is also conducted in Arabic, and Arabic words and expressions are widely used by Muslims in their religious and social interactions. Therefore, children and adult converts to Islam must learn at least to read and speak some Arabic, or at least memorize transliterations and recite them, just as Jewish children and adult converts to Judaism must learn some Hebrew to practice their faith. Islamic centers in America, therefore, frequently include classroom space for weekly religious education classes comparable to Sunday school for Protestants, CCD for Catholics,<sup>66</sup> and Hebrew school for Jews. In larger American Muslim population centers,

faith communities of sufficient size and resources might form affiliated, accredited parochial elementary and even high schools. Nineteen percent of American mosques included in a recently released survey reported having an affiliated full-time school.<sup>67</sup> In suburban areas, such as those around Chicago or Detroit, Islamic parochial schools are commonly located on the grounds of an Islamic center to maximize the use of its various facilities. In urban settings like Brooklyn and Queens, sufficient land may not be available for full-service Islamic centers and schools on single parcels, so Islamic schools might be free-standing institutions.

### *Libraries*

To complement the supplemental adult and childhood education programs that Islamic centers provide, the institutions will commonly have small libraries. Their collections usually are intended as reference resources that supplement primary study of the Qur’an. They include works of theology, spirituality, Islamic jurisprudence, and practical guides to living a moral life. Additionally, as they are open to the general public, the collections offer introductory information on Islam for those who might be considering conversion. As in any faith community’s literature collections, a wide range of views along a spectrum of positions is represented. For example, Catholic parish collections might contain materials calling for what some would consider extreme protests of abortion rights. In some conservative Christian congregations, one might find literature recommending female subservience. However, it is generally accepted that such materials are not a test of the entire faith communities’ positions on particular issues, nor are extreme positions forwarded in particular materials automatically assumed to indicate an extreme position among all adherents to the faith. Rather, as a nation we understand that the range of views in a library’s collection—faith-based or not—represents the freedom of expression that we are afforded by our Constitution. While tolerating a diversity of views, however, we work collectively to forge and promote alternative ways

of thinking that marginalize and weaken radical positions. This process is very much the case within American Muslim communities, as well.

Without doubt, some extreme literature is found in the library collections of Islamic centers;<sup>68</sup> most American Muslims deem it objectionable, just as other Americans do. It is important to understand that books are often donated to Islamic centers, and because they are volunteer-based organizations, the donations may not be appropriately vetted. But materials that promote extreme religious and/or political views actually represent only a very small percentage of Islamic center collections and should not be misconstrued as representing the views or will of a particular faith community or of American Muslims in general.<sup>69</sup> Further, the vast majority of American Muslims reject extremism and incitements to violence and in fact confront those who forward such extreme doctrines and push them out of faith communities. This vigilance on the part of mainstream American Muslims has meant that in the rare cases when outlier individuals attempt to sow the seeds of radicalism in local mosques, those parties are pushed out of the prayer hall and onto the Internet, where law enforcement officials can monitor his or her activities.<sup>70</sup>

### *Multi-purpose/community spaces*

New Islamic centers frequently include some form of multi-purpose room that might be used for a variety of internal and external functions. The space, which is commonly large and open, may have movable dividers to accommodate functions of varying sizes: communal meals to celebrate the main holy days (*Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*), weddings, conferences, and lectures. To facilitate such uses, multi-purpose rooms are often accompanied by commercial kitchens for food preparation.

### *Funerary facilities*

In Islam, as in Judaism, bodies are not embalmed. Instead, they are ritually washed and typically buried within twenty-four hours of death. Although state laws for handling

corpses vary, in many locales American Muslim faith communities are being licensed to handle the necessary preparations within Islamic center complexes. New mosque constructions commonly include the relevant washing facilities. The faith dictates that Muslims should be buried simply in a clean white cloth (referencing the attire worn during the pilgrimage rituals), directly in the ground with the head facing Mecca. This positioning references the *Ka'aba* (see footnote 53) and the direction in which all Muslims pray. Faith communities across the nation are beginning to acquire land for cemeteries, in accordance with their tradition. Most Christian and other non-Jewish Americans embalm their dead and bury them in coffins, which are then placed inside concrete vaults. This practice is frequently enshrined in health codes, which also vary from state to state. Interestingly, at the same time that American Muslim communities are seeking municipal approvals to carry out their direct-burial practice, the desire for “green burials,” in which bodies are placed directly in the ground or within composting vessels, is also gaining popularity. In seeking the relevant land use and health authority approvals to conduct their faith-based funerary practice, American Muslims are able to draw parallels and forge alliances with green-burial advocates.

### *Imam's residence*

If a faith community can afford to pay a full-time imam, sometimes the compensation for his services includes suitable housing for both him and his family. In new construction, an apartment or other modest quarters might be accommodated within the Islamic center complex itself. In other cases, an off-site residence might be provided by the faith community.

## CONCLUSION

Recent mosque development controversies have made it abundantly clear that most Americans know little to nothing about Islam, American Muslims, and the

institution of the mosque. This paper represents a step toward demystifying all three. Still, much can be done to further enhance understanding of mosques and American Muslims, expand cross-cultural exchange, increase interfaith awareness, and forward local community building. The following policy recommendations focus on particular stakeholders who have an interest in these endeavors.

### *The general public*

- American Muslim faith communities and their interfaith allies have increased their proactive outreach and public education activities, as well as stepped up their responses to local controversies and national and international geopolitical events. Non-Muslims, civic organizations, and neighborhood associations need to become more proactive in their own efforts toward understanding and education. They might reach out to local/regional mosque communities to learn about Muslims and Islam, to arrange individual and group visits to the mosque, and to organize outreach events that they themselves host. Such efforts might be as simple as reaching out to a Muslim family in the neighborhood and inviting them for coffee and a chat. The best understanding comes through individual relationships.

### *Policymakers*

- As recent reports of surveillance of Muslims in New York City, Detroit, and elsewhere have demonstrated, bias is not uncommon in the training materials provided to law enforcement agencies. This practice only perpetuate stereotypical assumptions that American mosques are likely sources of radical thinking and terrorist plots. To reduce the influence of this notion, law enforcement and government agencies must consult various sources of information on American Muslims and their institutions, including national Muslim advocacy organizations, local faith

communities, and scholars of Islam in the United States. These materials must be formulated in a true sense of partnership with American Muslims and on the assumption that American Muslims are law-abiding and cooperative.

- One of the most problematic interfaces that American Muslims are currently having with local governments is in the review of mosque development proposals. More and better training must be provided to planning staffs, land use review board members, and elected officials on the function and use of mosques. Such training might be formulated by national planning and municipal associations in consultation with content experts and Muslim advocacy organizations. Critically, local land use review board members also must be trained more thoroughly in their responsibilities to faith communities and neighborhoods under the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (RLUIPA). The act places religious and secular institutions on equal footing in local land use reviews and requires that review boards consider all religious land use proposals in a fair and unbiased manner. In constitutional terms, RLUIPA prohibits a local government from imposing or implementing a land use regulation, defined specifically in the act as zoning and landmarking, in any way that imposes a substantial burden on the free exercise of religion, unless the government can demonstrate that it has a compelling interest to justify the regulation and that it has used the least restrictive means to achieve the interest.

### *Journalists*

- Local media sources have been covering American Muslim faith communities more regularly over the past decade, through stories on Islam's holy days, profiles of local congregations and the like. However, reviews of coverage around controversial events such as conflictual mosque developments

often reveal that journalists still have critical misunderstandings about Islam and Muslims. To remedy this problem, national press organizations might work with American Muslim advocacy groups to develop educational packets for reporters. Such packets might contain basic information on Islam's tenets and practice, as well as demographic and other data related to American Muslims and mosques.

### Academics

- The recent Pew Research Center and Gallup Center national surveys have begun to quantify connections among mosque attendance, political participation, and overall civic satisfaction among American Muslims. More qualitative and locally-based research initiatives should be undertaken to demonstrate the mosque participation/civic integration nexus in local communities and document the positive impacts and contributions of mosque communities in the local civic sphere.

### Leaders in other faith communities

- Interfaith activities have increased to an impressive degree over the last decade, but they are often focused on educational events such as shared meals and holiday celebrations and are frequently directed exclusively toward members of the participating faith communities. Faith leaders should now consider moving beyond education to action, forming broad-based faith coalitions that focus on a broader audience and have a measurable, positive impact on their local communities. By co-hosting social service activities as well as other charitable and civic outreach efforts, alongside local mosque congregations, established faith communities would help demonstrate that American Muslims share their values and are equally valuable and integral to civic life. At the same time, a diverse network of hosts for such activities might reassure potential participants

who feel uncomfortable around Muslims or might hesitate to accept help from Muslims or a mosque.

- Interfaith alliances have been very effective in supporting local American Muslim communities as they make development proposals. Such coalitions have proved to be effective advocates with neighbors, opponents, and land use review boards. Much can be learned from the resulting success stories. To capture and disseminate this knowledge and experience, and to avoid duplication of efforts, regional and/or national interfaith coalitions could be formed to advise religious institutions of all denominations on land use issues, zoning laws, and relevant city ordinances. Indeed, all faiths confront similar conflictual issues when proposing new or expanded developments. Logically, the tools needed to successfully overcome common opposition strategies could and should be shared among them.

### ENDNOTES

1 For more in depth information about the history, theology, and practice of Islam and variations among branches of the faith, an excellent resource is Frederick Matthewson Denny's *An Introduction to Islam, Second Edition*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994.

2 Ihsan Bagby. *The American Mosque 2011: Report I from the US Mosque Study Project 2011, Basic Characteristics of the American Mosque and Attitudes of Mosque Leaders*. Washington, DC: The Council on American Islamic Relations, January 2012, pages 5. Published online at <http://www.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/The-American-Mosque-2011-web.pdf>.

3 This assertion is plausible—the Iberian Peninsula was under Arab rule for nearly 800 years prior to Columbus's expeditions to the New World. Further, it does stand to reason that Iberian Muslims would have made their way to the New World after the expulsion of Muslims and Jews in the Inquisition



of 1492. Jane I. Smith. *Islam in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. Pages 50-51.

4 Many of the African nations from which humans were kidnapped for trade were dominantly Muslim, and their faith was imported to plantations with them. Re-examinations of slavery-related archives have revealed that Islam was practiced in secret, despite forced conversions to Christianity. Accounts of Arabic-speaking and -writing laborers have been found, and Qur'ans used by slaves have been discovered in historical collections in Virginia and Georgia. See: Sylviane A. Diouf. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. New York: New York University Press, 1998; and Allan Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook*. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1984.

5 Pew Research Center. "Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism" (A Nationwide Survey of American Muslims). Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2011. Published online and accessed 2/20/2012 via <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2087/muslim-americans-islamic-extremism-911-attacks-mosques>. [sic], page 16.

6 Hart-Cellar Act, INS, Act of 1965, Pub.L.89-236.

7 Audrey M. Singer, "Immigrants in 2010 Metropolitan America: A Decade of Change." Keynote presentation to the National Immigrant Integration Conference in Seattle, Washington. Transcript dated 10/24/2011, page 1. Accessed via the website of the Brookings Institution 1/11/2012, [http://www.brookings.edu/speeches/2011/1024\\_immigration\\_singer.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/speeches/2011/1024_immigration_singer.aspx).

8 See The Pew Research Forum's 2011 report "The Future of the Global Muslim Population," pages 147-150 and particularly the chart entitled "Annual Muslim Immigration to the United States" on page 148. Published online at <http://features.pewforum.org/FutureGlobalMuslimPopulation-WebPDF.pdf>.

9 The number of 547 new mosques between 2000 and 2011 is a conservative estimate that I derived based on data reported in a January 2012 report on the basic characteristics of American mosques, published by Ihsan Bagby. The report is an update of a similar study Bagby published in 2001. However, several strong caveats must be considered for the January 2012 report. It provides the overall count of mosques in America of 2,106 and reports that this number represents a 74% increase in the

number of mosques since 2000. Seventy-four percent was determined by calculating the percent change between the 2011 total (2,106) and Bagby's 2000 total for US mosques (1,209). However, because of methodological issues relating to data collection, it appears that the 2011 total count consists of three categories of mosques: (a) those extant in 2000 which were included in the 2000 count; (b) those extant in 2000 but not included in the 2000 count; and (c) mosques that were founded between 2000 and 2011. The second-category, mosques extant in 2000 but not included in the 2000 count, are included in the 74% calculation, thereby inflating the percent increase for the decade. My calculation of 547 new mosques, therefore, is derived using the only reliable data point the report provides for mosque development during that particular decade: that 26% of all the mosques studied [in the survey] were established from 2000 to 2011 (see report page 5). That number represents a 45% change over the number of mosques identified in Bagby's 2000 survey. See Bagby, January 2012, *op. cit.*, page 5, and Ihsan Bagby, et al., *The Mosque in America: An National Portrait, A Report from the National Mosque Study Project*. Washington, DC: The Council on American Islamic Relations, 2001. Published online at [http://www.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/The\\_Mosque\\_in\\_America\\_A\\_National\\_Portrait.pdf](http://www.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/The_Mosque_in_America_A_National_Portrait.pdf).

10 The mosques developed in America during the last decade have not exclusively been built by recent immigrants; older immigrant-origin faith communities and African American faith communities have also developed Islamic centers. However, post-1990 immigrants represent the largest portion of the US Muslim population and therefore are the demographic most responsible for this increase.

11 A version of this section appeared in the author's dissertation. See Kathleen E. Foley, *Mosque Development in America's Suburbs: Lessons for Conflict Management and Public Policy from Three Case Studies*. PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 2012. Pages 14-18.

12 See, among others:

Ihsan Bagby, January 2012, *op. cit.* page 4.

Ihsan Bagby, 2001, *op. cit.*, Page 3.

Ilyas Ba-Yunis and M. Moin Siddiqui. *A Report on Muslim Population in the United States*. New York: Center for

American Muslim Research and Information, 1998, page 20-24.

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Adair T. Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States: A Comparative Study*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, page 3.

Tom W. Smith. "The Polls—Review: The Muslims Population of the United States: The Methodology of Estimates," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 66: 404-417.

Carol I. Stone, "Estimate of Muslims Living in America," Chapter 2 of *The Muslims of America*, Yvonne, Yazbeck Haddad, ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, pages 25-36.

13 Pew Research Center. "American Muslims: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream." Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2007, page 9 Published online and accessed 6/10/2010 via <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/483/muslim-americans>.

14 *Ibid*.

15 Pew, 2011, *op. cit.*

16 *Ibid*, page 20.

17 *Ibid*, pages 13-14.

18 *Ibid*, page 15.

19 *Ibid*, page 16.

20 *Ibid*, page 23.

21 *Ibid*, page 14. Pew reports that 99% of Muslim immigrants who arrived in the US before 1980 have become naturalized, as have 95% of those who arrived between 1980 and 1990 and 80% of those who arrived between 1990 and 1999.

22 This language is used in the title of Pew's 2007 survey report and is echoed again in its 2011 survey report on page 6.

23 Pew 2011, *op. cit.*, pages 17-18.

24 *Ibid*, pages 37-38.

25 The Abu Dhabi Gallup Center. *Muslim Americans: Faith, Freedom, and the Future: Examining U.S. Muslims' Political, Social, and Spiritual Engagement Ten Years After September 11*. Abu Dhabi: The Abu Dhabi Gallup Center, August 2011. Published online at <http://www.abudhabigallupcenter.com/148772/REPORT-Muslim-Americans-Faith-Freedom-Future.aspx>. Accessed 9/6/2011.

26 Pew 2011, *op. cit.*, page 28.

27 Pew 2011, *op. cit.*, pages 23-28.

28 Gallup, *op. cit.*, page 6.

29 In 2011, concerns over radicalization among American Muslim were intensified by congressional hearings led by Homeland Security Committee chair Peter T. King, (R) NY. See: Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Laurie Goodstein, "Domestic Terrorism Hearing Opens with Contrasting Views on Dangers," *The New York Times*, 3/10/2011. Accessed via <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/11/us/politics/11king.html>.

30 Gallup, *op. cit.*, page 6 and Pew 2011, *op. cit.*, page 1.

31 One *hadith* reports Prophet Muhammad as saying "My people will never agree together on an error." Ibn Majah, from his collection of *Hadith*, section entitled "*Fitan*."

32 An oft-cited example is the King Fahd Mosque in Culver City, CA, which reportedly received an \$8 million donation for construction from the Saudi royal family.

33 For more information on the topic of funding for American mosques and charitable giving among American Muslims, please see the following reports:

Sahar Aziz. *Countering Religion or Terrorism: Selective Enforcement of Material Support Laws Against Muslim Charities*. Washington, DC: Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, 2011. Published online at [http://ispu.org/pdfs/ISPU\\_Policy%20Brief47AzizWEB.pdf](http://ispu.org/pdfs/ISPU_Policy%20Brief47AzizWEB.pdf); Zahra N. Jamal, *Charitable Giving Among Muslim Americans: Ten Years After 9/11*. Washington, DC: Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, 2011. Published online at [http://ispu.org/pdfs/ISPU\\_Policy%20Brief\\_Jamal\\_WEB.pdf](http://ispu.org/pdfs/ISPU_Policy%20Brief_Jamal_WEB.pdf).

34 This sentiment was expressed to me on a number of occasions during field interviews for my doctoral research on mosque development in American suburbs.

35 Governing bodies in faith communities are not unique in American Islam. The governing body, or *Majlis ash-Shura*, has historically been an important element in Islamic governance. For more on the current role of governing boards in American mosques, see:

Ihsan Bagby. *The American Mosque 2011: Report 2 from the US Mosque Survey 2011, Activities Administration and Vitality of the American Mosque*. Washington, DC: The Council on American Islamic Relation, May 2012, pages 16-17. Published online at <http://www.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/The-American->

Mosque-Report-2.pdf

36 The *Shari'a* is often mistakenly thought of as a single body of laws universally accepted by all Muslims. It is not, nor is it meant to replace civil jurisprudence in secular and/or non-Muslim nations. Furthermore, the details and requirements of *Shari'a* have been, and among some groups, continue to be debated through the process of scholarly interpretation, and neither Muslim scholars nor practitioners fully agree on what it prescribes. Additionally, the requirements of *Shari'a* are refined by Muslims, individually and collectively, to meet the cultural context in which they are living, including in the United States. For more on this topic, see Julie MacFarlane's *Shari'a Law: Coming to a Courthouse Near You?: What Shari'a Really Means to American Muslims*. Washington, DC: Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, 2012. Published online at <http://ispu.org/GetReports/35/2459/Publications.aspx>.

37 Historically, some Muslim communities allowed women to lead prayers and even to serve as imams. Even today there are communities and circumstances in which this is true, though there is controversy over the practice generally. See Amina Wadud's chapter entitled "Public Ritual Leadership and Gender Inclusiveness" in her work *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2006. Pages 158-186.

38 The Bagby study on mosque activities and administration reports that about half of the mosques surveyed pay an imam for full-time service. Bagby, May 2012, *op. cit.* page 12.

39 Bagby, May 2012, *op. cit.*, page 14.

40 See Elizabeth Dias. "Training Pastors, Rabbis, and Imams Together," Time Magazine online edition, 8/22/2010. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2013841,00.html>

41 See, among others: Jerrilyn D. Dodds. *New York Masjid: The Mosques of New York City*. New York: Powerhouse Books, 2002, page 29.

42 This conflict is particularly well expressed in this quote recorded by Dodds (*ibid*):

The most beautiful mosques are recognized by the way they care for their communities. A mosque ought to be a community center; it ought to be the place where people are helped to find jobs, or care, or homes, sometimes when I look at the grandest mosque buildings, I wonder

if an elaborate building does not mean that someone, somewhere is being neglected.

43 In my research, I have noted that it is commonly the case that faith communities with few funds, perhaps functioning out of barely-rehabilitated structures, press the point that it matters not where they pray. Those with larger budgets and designed buildings, however, more readily trumpet the appearance of their prayer halls. See Foley, *op. cit.*, pages 29-32.

44 See Robert Hillenbrand's discussion of the design precedent afforded by the Prophet Muhammad's house in Medina, pages 39-42 of his *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

45 The Arabic names for the Sunni prayer times are *fajr* (dawn), *duhr* (noon), *'asr* (mid-afternoon), *maghrib* (sunset), and *'isha* (evening). Many Shi'a Muslims recite five prayers, but at three times during the day.

46 The Shi'a call to prayer usually includes two additional phrases: "I testify that Ali is the *wali* (vicegerent) of God" and "The time for the best of deeds has come." The former makes reference to Shi'a beliefs regarding the succession of leadership in Islam following the death of the Prophet Muhammad. For an introduction to Shi'a Islam and its founding, see Abdulaziz Sachedina's chapter "Shi'ites, Shi'ism," in *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith*. Roger Allen and Shawkat M Toorawa, eds. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011. Pages 68-76.

47 Translated by Frederick Matthewson Denny, *op. cit.*, page 120.

48 Examples are Hamtramck, Michigan and along Atlantic Avenue in downtown Brooklyn, New York.

49 "Path" refers to the righteous path to eternal life, and "Day" refers to the Day of Judgment.

50 Some interpretations of the mihrab's purpose suggest that it represents the place at the head of the congregation where the Prophet Muhammad stood to lead prayers in his house at Medina.

51 Particularly strong arguments for equality in Islam are found in the following works:

Asma Barlas. "*Believing Women*" in *Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*. Austin: University of

Texas Press, 2002.

Amina Wadud. *Quran and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

52 In Sunni Islam, it is commonly accepted that women may lead prayers for groups of women, but not for mixed-gender congregations.

53 The *hajj* is one of the five foundational acts of worship in Sunni Islam, also known as the “Five Pillars;” each Muslim is required to make the *hajj* once in his or her lifetime if he or she is physically and financially able (the other pillars include making a profession of faith—testifying that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger; prayer; almsgiving; and fasting during the lunar month of Ramadan). The *hajj* rituals date to a pre-Islamic pilgrimage tradition that commemorates events during the life of the Prophet Abraham. Muhammad completed this ancient pilgrimage in his lifetime, setting precedent for the inclusion of the ritual in Islamic practice. The week-long series of *hajj* rituals includes the circumambulation of the *Ka'aba* in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the holiest site in Islam and the location toward which all Muslims pray. Muslims believe the *Ka'aba* was originally built by Abraham. Allen and Toorawa, *op. cit.*, pages 10-11.

54 For a complete description of the physical actions of the Sunni prayer ritual and the words said as they are made, see Denny, *op. cit.*, page 121-124.

55 An excellent qualitative analysis of *khutbah* content was conducted by Mazen Hashem 2009. See *The Muslim Friday Khutba: Veiled and Unveiled Themes*. Washington, DC: The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, 2009. Published online at <http://ispu.org/GetReports/35/1884/Publications.aspx>.

56 *Ibid.*, page 16.

57 The surveillance of mosques in the United States by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies is well-documented, particularly in American Muslim communities in Detroit and the New York City area.

58 Hashem, *op. cit.*, pages 19-22.

59 Mohamad Taujuddin Haji Mohamad Rasdi. *The Mosque as a Community Development Center: Programme and Architectural Design Guidelines for Contemporary Muslim*

*Societies*. Johor Darul Ta'zim, Malaysia: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 1998. Chapters three and four. The author provides an excellent analysis of the Prophet's use of his mosque as recorded in the Qur'an and the sunnah—the sayings and teachings of Muhammad.

60 Hillenbrand, *op. cit.*, pages 59-63.

61 Rasdi, *op. cit.*, page 229.

62 Rasdi asserts that fundamentalism in the Middle East is beginning to reverse this pattern, replacing some community functions to satisfy the demands of pressure groups. However, “in the midst of this building frenzy, clients and builders of mosques [pay] little attention to developing proper programmes for mosque activities while attempting to strike a compromise between the mosque as a historical symbol and the modern secular lifestyle”(page 229). Rasdi's work is a response to this trend. He attempts to provide a systematic analysis of historical use and modern needs and to propose a theoretical framework for the design of a modern mosque. His vision is intended for his native Malaysia, but many of his proposals are entirely appropriate for the American context.

63 Shi'a Muslims practice the same pillars as Sunni Muslims, but they also have additional pillars that they follow.

64 Edward E. Curtis IV. “5 Myths About Mosques in America,” Commentary in Outlook Section of *The Washington Post*, page B03. Published 8/29/2010. Accessed online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/26/AR2010082605510.html>.

65 Bagby, May 2012, *op. cit.*, pages 8-9

66 The religious teaching program that educates Roman Catholic children on the basic doctrines of their faith is commonly known by its abbreviation, CCD, which stands for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

67 Bagby, May 2012, *op. cit.*, page 9.

68 In recent years, assertions have been made that Islamic center libraries contain materials that attempt to indoctrinate hatred and anti-American sentiments among American Muslims. Some critics have attempted to connect these materials with Wahhabism, a fundamentalist, extremist form of Islam that is promoted by the government of Saudi Arabia. See *Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Invade American Mosques*. A

report published in 2005 Freedom House and the Center of Religious Freedom. <http://crf.hudson.org/files/publications/SaudiPropoganda.pdf>.

69 A response to the Freedom House document was made based on comparative research conducted by the Council for American Islamic Relations: *American Mosque Response to Freedom House Report: "Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Fill American Mosques."* [http://www.cair.com/PDF/mosque\\_response.pdf](http://www.cair.com/PDF/mosque_response.pdf).

70 Curtis, *ibid*.

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