

ISPU INSIGHTS

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RESEARCH MAKING AN IMPACT



I S P U

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Islamic Studies Program
At Harvard University



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LETTER FROM THE ISPU LEADERSHIP

Dear ISPU Supporters,

We are pleased to share with you the newly designed ISPU Insights. We hope that this new publication will provide you with a snapshot of what ISPU, its scholars, staff, and supporters have achieved and uncovered through our research.

As ISPU embarks on its second decade of making an impact, many new and talented members are joining our team. I'm very excited to welcome our new Executive Director Meira Neggaz and Director of Research Dalia Mogahed to the team. I believe these new leaders will bring passion for our mission, tremendous nonprofit and research expertise, and help advance institutional excellence that will expand upon ISPU's current successes. You can read more about Meira and Dalia in the new leadership article on page four. I'm also pleased to welcome Development and Research Dissemination Associate Iffa Kazi, who builds and nurtures relationships with our supporters, as well as Senior Communications Associate Patrick Cates, who manages our publications and digital communications. ISPU has also benefited from a talented group of research, development, and event interns during the first half of 2014.

Along with the exciting growth of our team, ISPU is also embarking on a national research project to develop recommendations and best practices that will help provide exemplary models of women, youth, and convert engagement in Muslim spaces. We've begun the project "Unmosqued: Reimagining Muslim Spaces" by going around the country listening to community conversations about the recently released documentary "Unmosqued." The film has led to people expressing not only concerns and frustrations, but also ideas about how to make positive changes.

This project will involve scholars, researchers, youth directors, counselors, change management consultants, imams, chaplains and other experts working in the field. Ultimately, our hope is that the study's recommendations can be used in communities that are grappling with issues of exclusion and struggling to create engaging and inclusive spaces.

I hope you continue supporting our research, scholars and team, and I look forward to your feedback on this new publication and ISPU's exciting future projects.

Sincerely,
Farhan Latif

Farhan Latif
Interim Executive Director
COO & Director of Policy Impact

ISPU WELCOMES **NEW LEADERS**



Meira Neggaz Executive Director

Meira Neggaz is the Executive Director at ISPU, where she is responsible for the institution's overall leadership, strategy, and growth. Meira works to build and strengthen ISPU's relationships with community leaders, policy makers, scholars, partner institutions and

stakeholders to broaden the reach of ISPU's research and to increase the impact of the organization's mission. Before joining ISPU, Meira was the Senior Program Officer for Marie Stopes International (MSI), a leading, UK-based organization working in 42 countries. There, she led and managed programs in multiple countries, developed partnerships with key stakeholders and partner institutions, and managed key grants and donor relationships. Formerly, Meira was the first Executive Director of WINGS in Guatemala, where she grew the organization from its infancy to become a national leader in the health sector. Additionally, she was the Guatemala Country Representative for Curamericas, establishing country presence and leading a USAID-funded child survival project. Meira holds a BA from Huron University in London and a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

Q: Why are you excited to join ISPU?

A: ISPU occupies a unique space both within the American Muslim community and within the think tank landscape typical of Washington, DC.

The combination of ISPU's rigorous and reliable research and its grassroots beginnings and support makes it both reflective of and responsive to the community, as well as respected by those beyond.

Q: What are some of the goals you hope to accomplish in your new role as Executive Director?

A: ISPU has an excellent foundation. I look forward to building on this by both strengthening our internal capacity and by implementing ISPU's research transformation, allowing ISPU to serve as a strong, respected and responsive resource to community organizations, leaders, policy makers and others.

Q: What does it mean to measure impact and why do you think it's important for a research organization?

A: Measuring impact, alongside outputs, is of utmost importance. Just producing research or implementing a project isn't enough - we want to know, and show, how that research actually strengthens communities, informs policy, and/or generates dialogue. Having reliable and relatable data on impact is just as important as doing the research.



20+ YEARS
NONPROFIT
EXPERIENCE



DEVELOPING
GOVERNMENT,
FOUNDATION & LOCAL
PARTNERSHIPS



WORKING IN 11
COUNTRIES



> \$10 MILLION BUDGET



Dalia Mogahed Director of Research

Dalia Mogahed is the Director of Research at ISPU. She is former Executive Director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies where she led the analysis of surveys of Muslim communities worldwide. With John L. Esposito, she coauthored the groundbreaking book "Who Speaks for

Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think." President Barack Obama appointed Mogahed to the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in 2009. Mogahed was invited to testify before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations about U.S. engagement with Muslim communities, and she provided significant contributions to the Homeland Security Advisory Council's Countering Violent Extremism Working Group recommendations. The World Economic Forum named Mogahed a Young Global Leader, and she is a member of the Forum's Agenda Council on the Arab World.

Q: What experiences do you think have best prepared you for this role?

A: As Director of the Center for Muslim Studies, I led research on Muslim Communities around the world including the U.S. and Europe. I made it

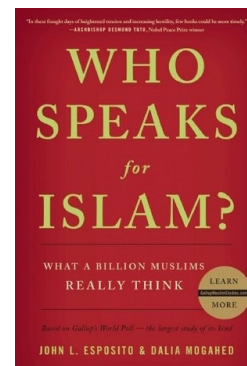
our mission to not only do the best and most relevant research on these communities, but to take that work to those who needed it to make better, more well informed decisions.

Q: What will be some of your specific focus areas in the next year?

A: I will be focusing on the "UnMosqued" study initially, as well as getting to know ISPU's supporters and collaborators.

Q: How does community-focused research on American Muslims benefit not just the demographic of American Muslims, but the nation at large?

A: Muslim American community-focused research benefits the nation at large by pioneering solutions to challenges faced by all. The Muslim American community actually looks like what the nation will be in 25-50 years: No majority race, diverse in its priorities, young. Rather than lagging behind the nation, in some ways, the community leads the nation in this regard and by uncovering innovative ways to address the Muslim American community's challenges, we can contribute to solutions for the greater good.



TRANSFORMING THE RESEARCH APPROACH

ISPU turns its focus to action-oriented and data-driven research



Hind Makki
Blogger at Patheos.com

ISPU is penning a new chapter in the organization.

After 12 years of providing expert research and analysis on critical concerns facing the United States, the organization has laid out a vision for producing research that can directly contribute to positive change in society by bridging the gap between academia and activists. By producing relevant and engaging studies, ISPU will enable data-driven decision-making processes at local and national levels.

This new research transformation builds a stronger and more focused identity for the organization and emphasizes the importance of community impact for current and future generations of leaders at ISPU. Part of ISPU's approach is to be constantly improving and demonstrating innovative leadership in the research and policy sectors. This carefully studied and developed research transformation initiative will help demonstrate to both partners and donors why ISPU projects deserve their support.

With this new model, ISPU will continue building meaningful relationships with the more than 77 scholars it has worked with over the last decade, while measuring actual outcomes of each project and paying special attention to positive social change and impact.

Using a set of distinctive pathways to implement this new standard, ISPU will produce insightful, community-focused research that engages local and national leaders and members of the American Muslim community throughout each step of the research process.

The areas of research and analysis that ISPU will focus on now are as follows:

Core areas of focus:

- The American Muslim Family, Youth Identity and Social Policy
- Muslim-led nonprofits and leadership: Challenges, opportunities and recommendations
- American Muslim demographics, trends and opportunities for inclusion

Secondary areas of focus:

- Education
- Social services and health
- Countering violent extremism
- Wealth and philanthropy
- Inter-faith and intra-faith engagement
- Legal issues





SNAPSHOT OF **CHANGE:** *The Marriage & Divorce Study illustrates the new changes in action.*

In addition to the traditional process of publishing its research and presenting findings at academic and policy conferences, ISPU has taken additional steps to demonstrate to the community how the findings and recommendations of the Marriage & Divorce Study can make a direct, positive difference. Specific recommendations have been highlighted for community members, mosque and community leadership and mental health practitioners to help engage each stakeholder group individually, but also to illustrate how they can work together to implement changes that help promote healthy marriages and prevent unnecessary divorces (Read more about the findings of the Marriage & Divorce Study on Page 9).

ISPU hosted a series of presentations about the study's findings, including presentations to public community gatherings; a community leaders' and imams' council; and mental health practitioners, social workers and counselors to propose practical, research-based solutions for dealing with divorce in communities.

Along with disseminating the study's findings to different communities and stakeholders, ISPU also collected their feedback, engaged in community dialogues and is tracking the implementation of recommendations for use in improving its research process. Because the research was both qualitative and quantitative, American Muslims and broader audiences can find academic and practical relevance in the findings and more easily apply the recommendations.



TRANSFORMING THE RESEARCH **APPROACH** (continued)

Testimonials from selected guests



“ISPU plays a pivotal role by bridging the intellectual work done at universities and meeting the needs of the community. Because ISPU is well connected to what’s happening on the ground and connects directly to the community, it has a grasp of what community needs are, and it is able to mobilize the intellectual resources needed to address those needs.”

Dr. Hamada Hamid, Yale University



“I’m in the business of telling stories, of gathering stories and sharing stories. But what we really need is data. We need real number crunching to tell us what are the spaces that are friendly to women, how are they friendly to women and how can we make recommendations to mosques and to Muslim communities around the country and around the world to make the situation better for women and girls — and this is what ISPU is doing.”

Hind Makki, Blogger at Patheos.com



“ISPU’s research is critical for imams and ministers in the community. At our mosque in Boston, it has actually helped us create policy at an institutional level.”

Suhaib Webb, Boston Imam



“As its former executive director, I’m so pleased to see the growth ISPU has had over the past several years. Now, as the program director of the Security and Rights Collaborative, a Proteus Fund initiative, it’s exciting to see how ISPU’s work is helping organizations working in this space make better data-driven decisions.”

Shireen Zaman, Program Director, Security & Rights Collaborative



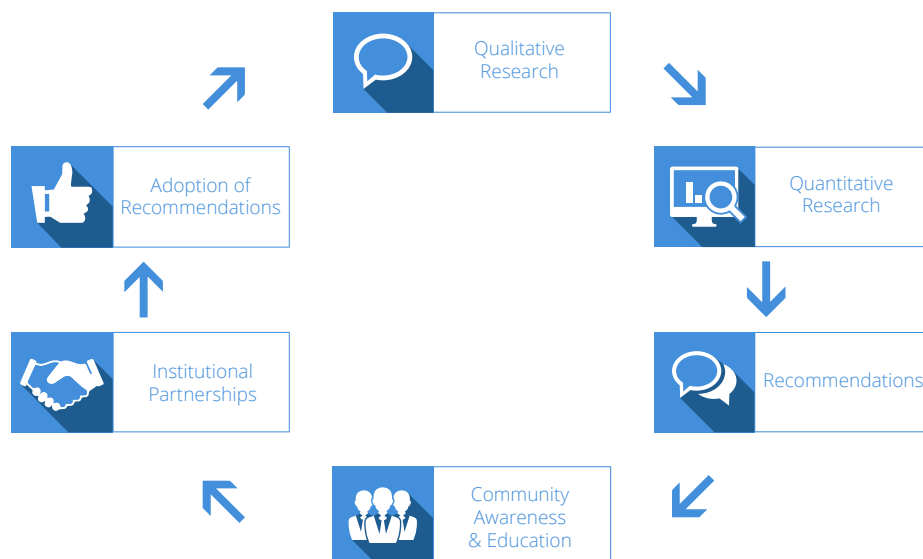
“ISPU provides concrete statistics and analysis for current issues facing the Muslim community. They provide a platform for Muslim communities to engage in pertinent conversations regarding their own community. In addition, ISPU provides necessary data for the community at large when they are seeking information about the Muslim community.”

Gigi Salka, Michigan Supporter

ISPU Transformation from Research to Recommendations



Metrics & Assessments



MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE IN AMERICAN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: OVERCOMING STIGMA AND SEEKING HELP



Most people can say they personally know at least one divorced couple. With divorce rates hovering around 50% in the United States, the social trend is visible and seemingly unavoidable.

But what does that mean for American Muslims who often have cultural and religious taboos tied to the topic and, consequently, a social stigma that creates barriers to dealing with troubled marriages?

“Promoting Healthy Marriages & Preventing Divorce in the American Muslim Community,” the most recent research report produced by ISPU, provides an exploratory study of American Muslim perceptions of methods and interventions that couples can use as part of fostering healthy marriages and addressing issues of divorce.

The study was conducted in Southeastern Michigan, home to one of the longest-standing and largest American Muslim populations in the country. A review and analysis of existing research was conducted, along with the production of original research through in-depth interviews with a diverse mix of married individuals, divorced individuals and key stakeholders, such as imams and counselors.

Stages of the marital process — including introduction to a spouse, the courtship process, negotiating the conditions for a formal Islamic marriage contract, the actual wedding ceremony, and living together as a couple — were all taken into account. The findings demonstrated

that there was a willingness for community participation in premarital programs and professional counseling to assist couples in preventing the possibility of divorce. Although social stigma and cultural barriers exist, many participants indicated that developing and implementing marital education programming would be beneficial for the American Muslim community. Here’s a look at what ISPU’s study found:

Concerns during courtship

- Although some participants suggested that the length of courtship was not an important issue for their decision-making process, a pervasive theme for both married and divorced participants was the belief that their spouses had misrepresented themselves during the courtship period.
- Men, more than women, suggested a fear of rejection when approaching potential spouses for marriage. This was reportedly due to past negative experiences, their friends’ rejection experiences, or self-esteem issues.

“We were able to make the decision, get married, make the announcement within four months. Plenty of people were willing to throw parties, slaughter a lamb for us, but no one ever said, ‘Hey, you want to sit down? Let’s talk about marriage.’”

Study Participant

- Many participants had engaged in premarital counseling activities (nearly all included an imam), but usually only at a later stage in the courtship, when specific issues or conflicts needed to be addressed. Study participants criticized their counseling experiences for being too vague, generic and conservative. For those who hadn't counseled before marriage, they found the word "counseling" to be stigmatizing or simply hadn't been referred to the idea in the whirlwind experience of planning a wedding.

"There is this divide between the mental health workers and imams. They don't know each other and there isn't that trust ... in reality, always from my personal experiences, I have to have a good relationship with imams because there are going to be some issues that you don't know about or if you do know about it, there may be alternatives that affect perspectives."

Counselor

Challenges of marriage

- A breakdown in communication within the marriage, often from a lack of time spent together or different communication styles, is a widespread issue that imams report from their counseling experiences.
- Financial stressors were cited in half of the married and divorced participants' top challenges. One-third of the participants reported spiritual challenges in their marriage as part of a breakdown.



Seeking help in rough spots

- Divorced and married participants reported reaching out to their family members when negotiating marital challenges; they generally reported disappointment in how their families responded. Issues included not having resources or tools to help, families being either too intrusive or too aloof from the situation, or creating a bias against the couple.
- One-third of the divorced participants in ISPU's study attributed their divorce to infidelity. Half of the imams interviewed found infidelity to be a major cause for divorce in their community, along with substance abuse and gambling.
- Imams in the study countered the pervasive notion in Muslim

communities that couples pursue divorce prematurely. They suggested that the couples they counsel often face serious issues like violence, substance abuse and cheating

"I found myself isolating myself from community members, avoiding social gatherings, just so questions wouldn't come up. It was after going through that process and realizing I was going and separating myself, that I pushed myself further to tell my story – to tell our story – so other people don't have to go through this."

Chicago-based attorney, Eyaad Odeh,
about struggling in his marriage

Resources for couples

- Most counselors reported using nationally recognized models of marriage counseling, but with culturally and spiritually relevant tools added into the design.
- Participants favored help from Muslim counselors and many declined to seek assistance from non-Muslims for fear of reinforcing Islamophobic stereotypes. Concerns about the counselors they did seek included the possibility that their confidentiality might be broken if the counselor was from the same cultural group or social circle, along with overcoming the idea that Muslims do not go to counseling.

ISPU Study Recommendations

- **Community members** should take responsibility in deciding to marry; take their time; equip themselves with tools like counseling and marriage education workshops and reach out for support from a trained professional; and use negative experiences as learning opportunities.
- **Imams and mosque leadership** should commit to making healthy marriages a top priority; establish a diverse offering of educational programs for the community for both married couples and singles; and emphasize the importance of premarital counseling and couple checkups from both religious leaders and other professionals.
- **Counseling professionals** should collaborate with imams and community leaders; be more accessible in terms of scheduling and cost; train marriage educators in the community; offer cultural competency training; and develop customized marriage education to better reach the American Muslim audience.



10 STATISTICS

ABOUT APPROACHING THE TOPIC OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE IN AMERICAN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES



- 1 In the U.S., it is estimated that about half of all first marriages will end in divorce.
- 2 Some 850,000 divorces impact more than one million American children annually.
- 3 The divorce rates commonly cited for American Muslims fall between 21-32%.
- 4 Recent studies show divorce rates are rising among Muslim populations globally: 37% in the UAE, 47% in Bahrain and 29% in Kuwait.
- 5 In 2010, Saudi Arabia averaged a divorce an hour.
- 6 According to a national survey from 2005, the most common reasons for divorce in the U.S. include:
 - Lack of commitment (73%)
 - Too much arguing (56%)
 - Infidelity (55%)
 - Marrying too young (46%)
 - Unrealistic expectations (45%)
 - Lack of equality in the relationship (44%) or Lack of premarital preparation (41%)
 - Domestic violence (29%)
- 7 Among American Muslim couples, the main reasons reported for divorce include:
 - Lack of parental involvement in children's lives
 - Disagreements
 - Lack of relationship knowledge or communication skills
 - Marrying at a young age
 - Short-term engagements
- 8 The top reasons reported in a survey of marriages with low satisfaction included having different interests, not spending time together, issues with in-laws, religious differences and varying attitudes toward sex.
- 9 Studies show that divorce negatively impacts families, results in children scoring lower academically and lowers the standard of living for more women than men.
- 10 A survey of 14,000 adults conducted over 10 years revealed that marital status was one of the most important predictors of a person's happiness.

For more information about the Marriage & Divorce Study or to download copies of the community brief and report, visit www.ispu.org/marriage.



Watch ISPU's Marriage & Divorce video at:
www.youtube.com/theispu

RESEARCH IMPACT - MARRIAGE & DIVORCE BY THE NUMBERS

17

Number of scholars, experts and practitioners involved with the study

1,430

Composite sample size from literature review data on marriage, divorce and interventions

33

Imams, counselors and married or divorce individuals interviewed during the research process

14,000

Individuals represented by the community leaders engaged in the study

11

Community events held in 2014

3

Specialized presentations given to groups of donors, mosque leaders and professionals

4

Academic conference presentations

4,442

YouTube hits for "Marriage & Divorce" study promo video

7

Regions interested in engaging with Marriage & Divorce research
(Atlanta, Bay Area, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis and Washington D.C.)

1,039

Attendees at various ISPU research dissemination events

2,000

Email impressions

177

Post-presentation surveys collected about feedback, recommendations and next steps

Conversation Starter:

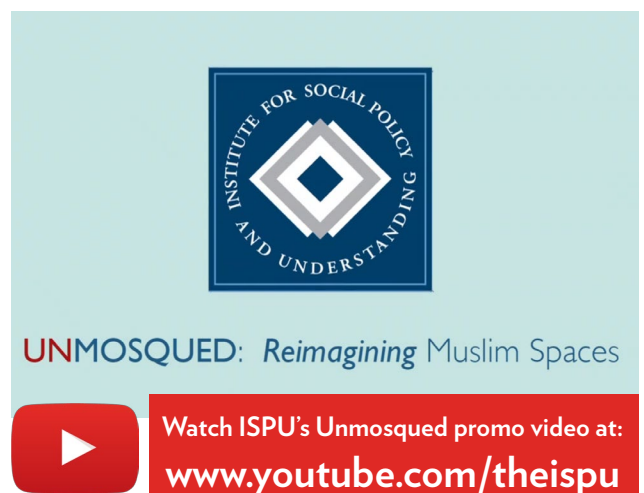
UnMosqued: *The Film*

“UnMosqued” is a documentary film released this year by independent filmmaker Ahmed Eid, which aims to highlight the growing need for reform in many of the mosques found in America. The purpose of the film is to engage groups of people who feel they’ve been disconnected from their local mosque and explore the reasons that have led to this sentiment.

The documentary draws upon data and findings from the US Mosque Study 2011, a series of reports co-authored by ISPU Fellow Dr. Ihsan Bagby.

Here are 8 important takeaways from the film:

- 1 Mosques with women on the board average 20% female attendance; Mosques that do not allow women on the board average 13%. By contrast, 65% of the attendees at Muslim Student Association conferences are women.
- 2 Mosques report females make up 18% of the attendance at Friday prayers; this number has not changed in the last decade.
- 3 75% of mosques are dominated by one ethnic group: either Southeast Asian, Arab or African American. Yet millennials are the most ethnically and racially diverse cohort of youth in America’s history.
- 4 85% of imams in America were born outside of America and 30% of American mosques give the khutbah in a language other than English.
- 5 According to “Counseling Muslims: Handbook of Mental Health Issues & Interventions,” 47-71% of American Muslim youth report alcohol use; 25-48% illegal drug use; and nearly 50% report engaging in premarital sexual intercourse.
- 6 40% of mosque leaders feel that weekend school for children is the top priority in the mosque; 2% of mosques in America consider young adult programming to be a priority; 17% host youth and teen activities; and 7% have youth support groups.
- 7 Mosques receive an average of 16 new converts each year; this means a 10-year-old mosque should have around 160 converts in the congregation and a mosque of 20 years should have more than 300 converts and their kids. Mosques do not report an attendance reflective of this.
- 8 23% of mosques have classes for new Muslims and 3% of mosques consider them a priority.



REIMAGINING MUSLIM SPACES



Have you ever looked around the mosque to get a sense of the demographics of the community? Are women playing an active role in the mosque? Are young people engaged with activities there? Are converts welcomed and embraced?

There's a growing narrative within the American Muslim community that paints a picture of alarming exclusion, especially for women, youth, and converts. Some mosque-goers feel increasingly disconnected from the mosque community and some have stopped going to the mosque altogether, because of it.

ISPU's upcoming research project, "UnMosqued: Reimagining Muslim Spaces," seeks to address how and why some people are being marginalized at the mosque, find exemplary models of American mosques that have high participation rates for women, youth and converts, and find new ways to break down barriers of frustration and alienation when it comes to American Muslims and their relationship with their local mosque.

Using data-driven research and actionable recommendations, ISPU's work will set out to move the concept of being "unmosqued" from a buzzword to a solvable social problem.

WHEN MOSQUES GET IT RIGHT

Why should America be concerned if mosques aren't functioning as welcoming institutions for Muslim communities? Because of what's at stake, according to studies exploring the topic.

ISPU scholars and collaborators have demonstrated that mosque participation is associated with healthy social norms for American Muslims, such as increased civic engagement, more active volunteerism, greater interfaith efforts and less risky youth behavior among well-connected youth (including fewer instances of underage drinking and illicit drug use).

Much like their religious counterparts, American Muslims look to mosques to be the cornerstone of the community that can address economic, social and health-related needs, and as such, they have the capability of mobilizing an educated, healthy and active mosque community.



“

I want to see our mosques be that welcome mat to convene and to nourish and to empower communities. This study is going to show us all the different elements of that for women, youth and converts. It's going to break it down into who's doing what, what's working, what's not working, and how we can all learn from each other."

Syed Mohiuddin - Board Member, United Way of Southeastern Michigan



“

Can't just rely on immigrants to fill the mosque, [communities] have to have new faces, new blood, new ideas."

Spearlt - ISPU Legal Fellow, Professor, Texas Southern University



“

The ISPU study is one of the first chances we start to scientifically look at the phenomenon of what's probably been going on for a long time. And that is people — their experiences, beliefs and their persons — being marginalized from the physical mosques and the communities."

Halim Naeem - Psychologist, Michigan

WHAT NEEDS TO BE RESEARCHED

To really understand what it means to be unmosqued, ISPU researchers plan to use interviews, focus groups, existing data and original research tools in answering key questions about mosques, such as:

What are the exemplary models of American mosques that include women, youth and converts in the organization and programming of mosque activities?

Which mosque models for inclusive organization, leadership and programming are sustainable?

Which factors and facilitators do community stakeholders see as contributing to the success of the mosque including women, youth and converts?

What are the barriers faced and how are these barriers overcome with respect to including women, youth and converts?

What are some of the positive and negative experiences of women, youth, and converts with mosque-related activities?

What recommendations can ISPU share with communities on how to incorporate marginalized groups into mosque leadership roles?

These questions, and others, will allow ISPU to determine the current state of mosque inclusion, what should be done differently to promote more inclusion, and what recommendations mosque leaders and community members can take back to their mosques to contribute to a future of more inclusive mosque spaces.

JOIN ISPU IN "REIMAGINING MUSLIM SPACES"

To support ISPU's project with your time, talents or gifts, contact Development and Research Dissemination Associate Iffa Kazi at ikazi@ispu.org for opportunities to get involved. Watch the "UnMosqued: Reimagining Muslim Spaces" promo video at www.YouTube.com/theispu to learn more.





ISPU TAKES LEAD ON HARVARD'S “(RE)PRESENTING AMERICAN MUSLIMS: BROADENING THE CONVERSATION” REPORT



This spring, ISPU was among the collaborators that brought together bright minds with diverse backgrounds for a dialogue-driven event at Harvard University.

ISPU co-convoked the workshop “(re)Presenting American Muslims: Broadening the Conversation” April 11-12, 2014 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The event was hosted by the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Islamic Studies Program at Harvard.

Farhan Latif, ISPU Interim Executive Director, presented as a panelist at the workshop and, along with ISPU Content Editor Zeba Iqbal, will publish a report later this summer that highlights recommendations derived from the sessions.

The two-day workshop explored the ways American Muslims define themselves — and are defined — in the 21st century. The event featured a diverse assortment of individuals who contributed to conversations about the challenges of the American Muslim community. Activists, artists, scholars and advocates from a wide cross section of the community drove the dialogue.

Each breakout session addressed a certain challenge of identity or representation, encouraging a broader view of the people and groups who makeup the collective “American Muslim” community. Topics included storytelling and the narratives that American Muslims create

about themselves for a wider audience; Muslims engaging in public service and the American political system; creating inclusive spaces for Muslims, as well as the notion of imagining and expanding networks and allies; and exploring Muslim led institutions.

Latif was one of four panelists to lead the discussion on Muslim-led institutions, sharing his experiences of nonprofit leadership in an organization that strives to continually be relevant and responsive to the community.

Drawing upon the depth of knowledge and experiences from the convening’s experts, ISPU is looking forward to the innovative and thought-provoking recommendations that will come from this new approach of sharing insightful discourse with the community when the report is released later this summer.

Workshop sessions included the following topics:

- American Muslim-led Institutions
- American Muslim Storytellers
- Muslims Making Inclusive Spaces
- Muslims Seeking Inclusion
- Muslims in Public Service

To find ISPU’s reports, visit www.ispu.org.



YOUTH IDENTITY CRISIS: URGENT ISSUE BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER

The 2014 annual spring dinner was a milestone for ISPU. With more than 240 community leaders and activists in attendance, the evening was the highest-attended spring event to date.

Participants gathered to support the institution as it examined the challenges of youth and identity. “Identity Crisis? American Muslim Youth in the Age of Fear” was held April 19 at the Muslim Unity Center in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan and Edina Lekovic, Director of Policy and Programming at the Muslim Public Affairs Council, was the evening’s keynote speaker.

“If we are trying to open doors of opportunity and inclusion for American Muslims in the halls of power, it is critical that we have young people that are able to walk through those doors and assume leadership positions and decision making roles,” Lekovic said during the event. “The average age of our [Muslim] community is at least 10 years younger than the average age of

any of the other major faith communities in the United States ... This means there’s a certain concentration in our community that requires our attention.”

She urged youth to take back their own narrative and for the community to help create spaces where they can take pride in their identity and religion.

Iffa Kazi, ISPU’s Development and Research Dissemination Associate, who organized the spring dinner, said addressing identity issues that young people deal with is a great example of the work that ISPU stands for.

“This dinner is a perfect opportunity for different communities to come together for meaningful dialogue on youth identity and how to build a stronger foundation of programming to enable the development of our youth,” she said. “It also allows ISPU to spend the evening deepening our relationship with our supporters and get insight on the topics we research.”

The takeaway for attendees, Kazi explained, was to create forums in which the youth can learn about programming and structures of a community, as well as create goals on how they’d like to help their communities grow.

“We have to tell the youth that they are advocates of change and that they have a place in the community,” she added. “Our goal is to better equip youth with skills, resources and experiences that will help them accomplish their long-term goals.”





According to Lekovic, one of the biggest challenges for American Muslim youth and how they deal with their identity and connection to religion comes after graduating college.

“There’s a gap that exists when you graduate from [the Muslim Student Association] and you want to go back and serve your community,” Lekovic noted. “Most mosques don’t have the capacity or culture to bring young professionals back in the fold and bring them into decision making and service.”

History and progress, she added, has only taken place because younger generations pushed for change.

ISPU’s Muslim Youth Study is anticipated to be released in the fall of 2014. The study looks at identity issues and associated risks — such as mental health concerns, substance abuse and sexual behaviors — and will provide recommendations for connecting Muslim youth with healthy and positive resources in communities.



RESEARCH MAKING AN IMPACT

College activist finds ISPU research timely and relevant.

As a millennial and mentor for youth around him, 20-year-old Faisal Chaudhry finds himself asking a lot of questions about identity.

“What does it mean to be a Muslim for us? Is it really a paradox to be an American Muslim? Can you be a practicing American Muslim in a public high school? The Muslim community hasn’t really addressed this properly,” the Wayne State University senior said. “When youth have negative experiences, they are no longer comfortable with their identity.”

Chaudhry, who works closely with high school students as a regional director for MIST Detroit, was one of the community leaders who attended ISPU’s spring dinner, “American Muslim Youth Identity in the Age of Fear.” He said ISPU’s work on youth identity is “refreshing” for taking the first steps in drawing attention to critical issues that young American Muslims are faced with.

Staying connected to the mosque, embracing a healthy identity and maintaining an active role in the community are all things he can relate to on a personal and social level.

“As a young person myself, it’s nice to attend events where I’ll hear people talking about youth,” he said. “To see such a well-respected organization actually talking about these issues is so important. It was the first time I’ve heard people talk about the things we don’t really want to have to talk about, but know we need bring up as a community.”

To complement the hands-on approach that Chaudhry takes to working with youth, he said he supports ISPU’s work because of the need for advocacy, research and fact-based recommendations to take back to the community.



Islamophobia 2050 Study: ISPU explores challenges and opportunities for the American Muslim community in the future

The year 2050 is when many experts project that America will become a nation without a specific ethnic or racial majority. As a result, this is generating conversations among thought leaders, political and community activists, policy makers, and researchers across various communities. American Muslims have an opportunity to make an important, positive contribution to these discussions.

Seeking to articulate and elevate an informed American Muslim voice through sound research, ISPU has launched its Islamophobia/2050 Project. The project is an initiative by ISPU to provide data-driven answers to complex policy and social challenges that are at many communities' and the nation's doorstep.

The project is composed of three main research publications:

Religious Freedom and Discrimination in America — Then and Now: Lessons Learned for American Muslims and their Allies. This community brief takes a historical long view of Muslims' position in America by putting it in the context of other faith communities' challenges and successes. In doing so, it also identifies broad "lessons learned" to secure a future for American Muslims.

Manufacturing Bigotry: A State by State Legislative Effort to Push Back against 2050 by Targeting Muslims and other Minorities. This study empirically examines and identifies bills proposed in all 50 U.S. state legislatures to uncover the existence of overlapping state-level campaigns that halt or roll back laws that protect historically marginalized or "suspect" groups, including American Muslims. Our detailed study highlights what Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Strength Through Diversity: Four Cases of Local and State-Level Coalition Success. American Muslims are increasingly active in the public square, but in order to be effective like other communities, Muslims need to join forces with others in coalitions that share common goals and interests. Going in-depth in three cases, this report identifies elements of "effective" and "successful" local and state-level coalition building.

ISNA comes to Detroit

This year, the Islamic Society of North America will host its annual conference in Detroit. Members from the ISPU team will be presenting about their work on marriage & divorce, islamophobia, and our latest cutting-edge research on American Muslims. The event will be held Aug. 29-Sept. 1, 2014 at Cobo Arena.

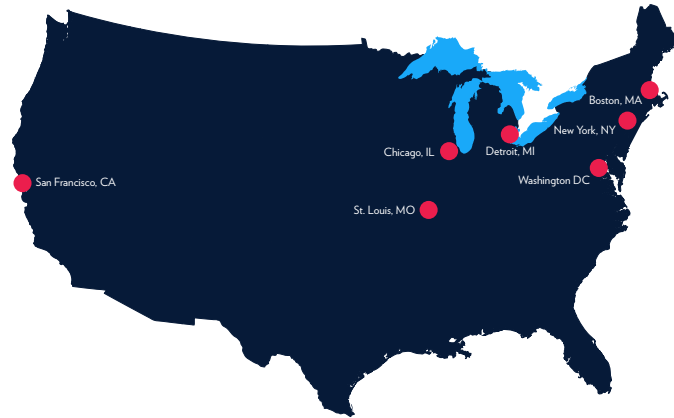
Around 50,000 Muslims are expected to attend and the theme this year will be "Generations Rise: Elevating Muslim American Culture". For more information, visit www.isna.net.

ISPU tackles youth challenges in upcoming report

Ranging from questions of identity to issues of healthy gender relations and prevention of substance abuse, American Muslims face significant challenges. Community institutions and leaders often want to help, but don't know how.

In partnership with Dr. Sameera Ahmed of the Family and Youth Institute, ISPU will be releasing a study that will provide grassroots leaders with a "big picture" overview of young American Muslims' struggles, as well as practical recommendations to keep their communities' next generation healthy, safe, and sustainable.

ISPU CONNECTIONS AND IMPRESSIONS 2014



BROOKINGS INSTITUTION'S US-ISLAMIC WORLD FORUM

In June, ISPU's Farhan Latif participated in the Brookings Institution's US-Islamic World Forum as part of a working group focused on contextualizing Islam in the US and European contexts. The forum, held in Doha, Qatar, provided ISPU with an opportunity to share its research on the American Muslim community with the international gathering of academics and policy makers. ISPU board member, Farid Senzai was also in attendance.

ST. LOUIS EVENT

ISPU organized a Marriage and Divorce research dissemination event in St. Louis April 12-13. ISPU supporter Dr. Anjum Shariff hosted the gathering at his house with more than 60 people attending the first evening and more than 40 ISPU supporters attending lunch with the research team on the second day. Many new partnerships were created, and area mosques, imams and community leaders expressed interest in engaging with future ISPU work in the region.

TAKE ON HATE CAMPAIGN

ISPU collaborated with the National Network for Arab American Communities by providing research and insights for the recently launched TAKE ON HATE Campaign. TAKE ON HATE, sponsored by the NNAAC, is a multiyear, grassroots campaign to challenge growing prejudice and persistent misconception of Arab and Muslim Americans, including refugees of Arab and Muslim descent. The inaugural campaign's launch spans four cities: Detroit, Chicago, New York City and San Francisco.

6TH ANNUAL MUSLIM MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

ISPU Senior Fellow Dr. Hamada Hamid received a certificate of appreciation for his work in the field by the conference organizers at the 6th Annual Muslim Mental Health Conference April 24-26 in Dearborn, Michigan. Amal Killawi, the primary investigator of ISPU's recently released Marriage and Divorce Study, presented the study's findings and recommendations.

WORLD CONGRESS OF MUSLIM PHILANTHROPY

ISPU's Farhan Latif attended the global donors forum in Washington, D.C. on April 13-16.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE STUDY OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

ISPU Fellow Saeed Khan and Policy and Research Engagement Fellow Alejandro J. Beutel participated in the Fifth Annual International Conference on the Study of Islamophobia, April 14-19, hosted by Dr. Hatem Bazian at the University of California, Berkeley. In addition to listening to some of the world's top scholars and advocates engaged in addressing and analyzing anti-Muslim bigotry, Khan and Beutel presented the preliminary findings of the forthcoming ISPU initiative called the Islamophobia 2050 Study.

UNMOSQUED FILM SCREENING & PANEL DISCUSSION - CALIFORNIA

This October, ISPU will be cosponsoring a screening and panel discussion of the UnMosqued documentary. The event will be held in Santa Clara, California on the evening of Friday, October 31, 2014. More information and registration details are available at www.ispu.org/unmosqued

ISNA MASJID FORUM

ISPU board members and staff presented on the topics of governance, operations, development and sustainability at the 2nd Annual Islamic Society of North America Masjid Forum, May 9-11. ISPU Interim Executive Director Farhan Latif was a presenter at the "Financial Development Strategies for Masjids" workshop, which explored building a sustainable financial model and creating new revenue streams. Other covered topics included the dynamics of high-functioning masjid boards and how masjids can be welcoming and increase women's involvement.



Spotlight on a Donor Bay Area, California

Amer Haider gets behind research to make a difference



Amer Haider is a working professional with a full slate of professional goals and personal passions. Father of two and cofounder and CEO of a new health care service – Doctella, the digital platform that aims to improve partnerships between patients and their doctors. The Bay Area resident makes sure that the causes he feels strongly about are part of his agenda.

The way he does that is by supporting research to impact lives. “I want to invest in organizations like ISPU that are able to take donor dollars and not only get the return on investment, but are also able to leverage that money for building tools that others can use,” said Haider, who gives annually to ISPU.

Through research, a dollar’s influence is amplified to get the most impact, he added. Beyond the work of ISPU, Haider is a philanthropist with a philosophy that social issues can be solved by supporting research.

He founded two of his own nonprofits in 2011, PehlaQadam.org – which in Urdu means “first steps” and creates awareness and helps children with untreated club foot – and GrowingStronger.org, which improves the lives of little people. “What I do is fund teams that are dedicated, passionate and are experts on the area of my focus,” he said. “It enables them to go off and do great work.”

ISPU would like to extend a special thank you to recent supporters and collaborators:



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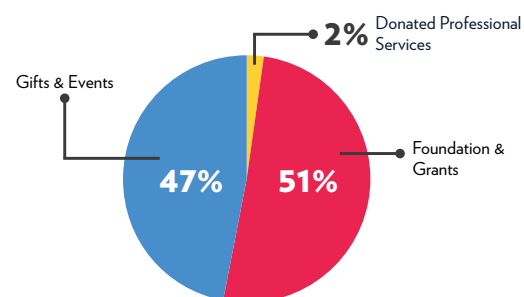
Building Democratic Philanthropy



Support ISPU

Your tax-deductible donation will help to bring new voices and ideas to the public discourse and shape the future of our community’s most pressing issues.

2013 Operating Revenues



MEET THE ISPU TEAM

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Farhan Latif – Chief Operating Officer & Director of Policy Impact
Dalia Mogahed – Director of Research
Hamada Hamid – Senior Research Fellow
Alejandro Beutel – Policy & Research Engagement Fellow
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Jawaad Ali – D.C. Research Intern
Aliya Khan – D.C. Research Extern
Syed Mannan – D.C. Research Intern
Afif Rahman – D.C. Research Extern



ISPU ANNUAL REPORT (2013)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Years Ended December 31, 2013 and 2012

ASSETS	2013	2012
Cash and cash equivalents	\$471,219	\$122,872
Contributions receivable, less allowance for uncollectible contributions of \$21,075	\$22,480	\$32,932
Grants receivable	-	-
Prepaid expenses	\$8,781	\$5,646
Total Current Assets	\$502,480	\$161,450
Equipment:		
Computer equipment	\$7,667	\$4,266
Furniture and fixtures	-	\$1,880
Less: Accumulated depreciation	\$(2,578)	\$(3,236)
Total Equipment	\$5,089	\$2,910
TOTAL ASSETS	\$507,569	\$164,360
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS		
Current Liabilities:		
Accounts payable	\$14,582	\$30,952
Accrued expenses	\$4,538	\$7,159
Loan payable - related parties	\$2,500	-
Total Current Liabilities	\$21,620	\$38,111
Net Assets:		
Unrestricted net assets	\$186,240	\$47,743
Temporarily restricted net assets	\$299,709	\$78,506
Total Net Assets	\$485,949	\$126,249
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$507,569	\$164,360

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Years Ended December 31, 2013 and 2012

	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	2013 TOTAL	2012 TOTAL
Public Support and Revenue:				
Contribution income	\$437,580		\$437,580	\$367,204
Grant income	\$10,000	\$471,025	\$481,025	\$135,235
Event income, net of expenses	\$3,750		\$3,750	\$(1,170)
In-kind contributions	\$18,585		\$18,585	\$19,687
	\$469,915	\$471,025	\$940,940	\$520,956
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	\$249,822	\$(249,822)		-
Total public support and revenue	\$719,737	\$221,203	\$940,940	\$520,956
Functional Expenses:				
Program expenses	\$371,353		\$371,353	\$498,319
Management and general expenses	\$102,344		\$102,344	\$123,951
Fundraising expenses	\$107,543		\$107,543	\$107,235
	\$581,240		\$581,240	\$729,505
Change in net assets	\$138,497	\$221,203	\$359,700	\$(208,549)
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$47,743	\$78,506	\$126,249	\$334,798
Net Assets at End of Year	\$186,240	\$299,709	\$485,949	\$126,249

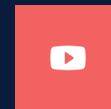
A copy of the Institution's audited financial statements is available by request.

ABOUT ISPU

ISPU is an independent, nonpartisan think tank and research organization committed to conducting objective, empirical research and offering expert policy analysis on some of the most pressing issues facing the United States. In addition, ISPU has assembled leading experts across multiple disciplines and built a solid reputation as a trusted source for information about American Muslims and Muslim communities around the world.

ISPU scholars provide insight into the major debates taking place across the country. They provide applied research and recommendations to community nonprofit leaders, policy makers and media, through reports, policy briefs, articles, op-eds and books. ISPU disseminates its publications through a variety of channels and holds regular congressional briefings, policy events and academic conferences.

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