

Muslim Clergy in America

Ministry as Profession in the Islamic Community

A Quantitative Study and Analysis (The M.E.C.C.A. Project)

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Introduction

The *M.E.C.C.A. Project (Muslim Education Council on Clergy in America)*, has been established and maintained by the Graduate Theological Foundation and constitutes an initiative designed to have a national impact based upon the implications of this data-based research of Muslim clergy in America. The Project is an extension of the book, *Muslim Clergy in America: Ministry as Profession in the Islamic Community*, written by the Project Director, Dr. John H. Morgan, the Karl Mannheim Professor of the History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences the Graduate Theological Foundation in Indiana, Fellow of Foundation House/Oxford, and an advisory board member of the Centre for the Study of Religion in Public Life at Kellogg College, University of Oxford.

Though a privacy agreement with the subject group precludes the sharing of information regarding its membership and its leadership, the MECCA Project research advisors were drawn from the Islamic faculty of the Graduate Theological Foundation. The faculty of the Foundation includes Dr. John H. Morgan, Research Director and Senior Analyst; Dr. Esmail Koushanpour, Advisor to the President on Islamic Affairs; Dr. Omar Shahin, Director of Islamic Studies and the Iban Taymiyya Professor of Islamic Law; Dr. Senad Agic, Shaykh Muhammad Nazim Adil al-Haqqani Professor of Islamic Studies; Dr. Khutb Uddin, Abu Hamid Mohammed al-Ghazzali Professor of Islamic Studies; Dr. Marzia Dawlatzai, the Aisha Abu Bint Bakr Professor of Women's Studies; Dr. Ismail Elshikh, Visiting Professor of Islamic Studies; Dr. Syed Tauhid, Visiting Professor of Labor-Management Relations and International Law; Dr. Muhammad Hatim, Visiting Professor of African American Muslim Studies; Dr. Mohammed Abdul Shaheed Khan, Visiting Professor of Information Management and Technology; and Dr. Ibrahim Abdul-Malik, Visiting Professor of American Muslim History and Culture. This study constitutes the first in what is anticipated to be an ongoing series of quantitative studies of Muslim clergy in America. Other scholars beyond the Foundation's faculty will, on occasion, be invited to participate in this exciting work.

This analytical study constitutes part two in the second edition of the *Muslim Clergy in America* book. Both quantitative numbers and the ethnic identity of the subjects have been omitted from the analysis in deference to privacy of the subjects' national identity and in

compliance with an agreement with that subject group's leadership. (*Where data was collected specifically identifying the national origin of this ethnic group of Muslims, the survey analysis has substituted the generic term, "homeland," to avoid identifying the region and language of national origin.*) The two things which must be said regarding these matters are, first, the response from this group to the research instrument was an astounding 50%, and, second, the ethnic group studied consisted homeland ethnic immigrants. The group's leadership assured the research team from the outset that they would provide a "substantial" participation in the survey. They were true to their word and the response was most heartening.

Methodology

The research instrument was developed over a period of several weeks in consultation with members of the Muslim faculty of the Graduate Theological Foundation. The final formulation of the instrument survey was scrutinized and approved by the leadership of the study group. The following data has been sorted into five key categories, namely, personal biography, family life, education, faith community, and authority and jurisdiction. The scope of each category is described and the rationale for inclusion of specific questions explained and, where perceived necessary, defended. The entire survey consisted of 180 specific questions with 85% of them designed to be answered Yes/No. Narrative responses were kept to a minimum.

The analysis of the data and the summary of the findings will be at three levels. Within each of the five categories of data – personal biography, education, family life, faith community, and authority/jurisdiction – there will be an opening paragraph of explanation as to the intended scope of the category. In arbitrary increments of five questions at a time, a brief analytical summary will be made of the data contained in those five questions. Then, after the entire category has been summarily analyzed in these increments of five questions each, an overall analytical statement will be made about the category being considered. Finally, after these two analytical steps have been completed, that is, five questions analyzed at a time then each category being analyzed, there will be an overall analytical summary of the findings with a suggestion as to the need for further studies and in what specific areas.

Rationale

There are two main purposes for this study: first, we intend to provide empirical data gathered through a carefully constructed research instrument, the survey, which has been systematically scrutinized by a panel of internationally distinguished Muslim scholars as well as senior representatives of the subject group being studied; and second, by carefully gathering and analyzing the data gleaned from the survey, we hope to present a clearer picture of who these American Muslim clergy are, what they do, how they function, the character and nature of both their family life and the life of their faith community, and the ways and means of self-governance within their community, functioning in the secular and open context of American social structures. It is our hope that this will be the first in a series of similar studies designed to inform and assist the American Muslim community and their clergy in making their presence in American society more visible and meaningful for their faith community and society at large.

CHAPTER ONE

PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY: Who Are We?

(ethnicity/nationality/language/time in U.S.)

The interest here is in the very personal and individual life of the Imam including such things as his ethnic and national identity, national language and other linguistic competencies, where he has lived before and since coming to the US, and for how long, and his personal aspirations for himself professionally and his long range plans for his family. Imams are not just Muslim clergy, they are individuals and family members with aspirations, dreams, and hopes for both themselves and their wives and children. What has been attempted in this chapter is to identify these various elements of his life and how he interprets them for himself and his family when looking to the future. Imams are not born, they are made, some from childhood and others from adulthood. But even in the making, they have been called upon to make personal and family decisions which inevitably affect the remainder of their individual and family life. Here, we have attempted to identify just some of those factors.

There are 24 questions in this section on “personal biography.” As explained in the introduction, we will do three things with this information: first, we will go step by step in summarizing and analyzing these questions in increments of five questions at a time; and second, we will then give an overview of the entire analysis in a summary paragraph. Finally, we will attempt to identify patterns or trends indicating consistencies and irregularities in the findings. We will draw from these final observations information which might be relevant toward future studies of this kind. Also, the intent is to identify and isolate specific insights which might prove helpful to the leadership of this group of Imams in making decisions about such things as education, jurisdiction, the exercise of authority, etc.

1. What is your nationality?
100% homeland
2. What is your first spoken language?
100% homeland
3. What other languages do you speak?
100% English 45% Arabic
4. How long have you lived in the U.S.?
9 years average (range is 2 to 27 years)
5. Do you drive a car in the U.S.?
100% Yes

The purity of this study of a particular ethnic group of Muslim Imams has been assured by the participant study group being all from the same country and speaking the same first language, with everyone speaking English as their second language as well. It is important to notice, given the relevance of Arabic in the liturgical functions of the Imam, that nearly half of

these Imams also affirm their speaking capacity in the Arabic language. The level of linguistic, phonetic, and grammatical competency was not, of course, tested, for what is important here is not whether or not the Imam is really proficient in English or Arabic but that “he perceives himself to be.” It would be difficult, if not impossible, to get at the “truth” of linguistic competency, but it is possible to get at what the participant “perceives to be true” about his linguistic competency.

This general posture toward the truth will characterize this entire study. We don’t presume to have “captured the truth” about these points of interest; what we claim is to have “captured the *perceived* truth” of these things. If 100% of the participants “claim” to have English competency, and nearly half competency in the Arabic language, then so be it. It is their experience that is relevant to our study, for we are striving to grasp the world as perceived by the immigrant Imam in America. Their claims of language ability are, thus, important to our overall understanding of how they see the world into which they have immigrated.

All of the respondents drive a car in America, and though the range of years for living in American is two years to 27 years, the average number of years the responding Imam has lived in America is nine. What will prove most interesting is a longitudinal study of these same Imams over a five to 10 year span of time to see to what extent their attitudes and opinions might change. For now we can say with confidence that nine years living in America and functioning as an Imam constitutes a substantial commitment, as well as a wide range of experiences from which these respondents draw when answering our questions. The value and credibility of our survey is greatly assured, we believe, owing to the number of years these Imams have lived and worked in the United States and Canada.

6. Do you watch television?

80% Yes 20% No

7. If yes, list your three favorite television programs.

20% BBC 40% CNN 10% Al Jazerra

8. Are your parents still living?

85% at least one parent 15% no living parent

9. Do they live with you?

30% Yes 70% No

10. What local community organizations do you participate in?

40% homeland and Islamic Organizations 10% secular 50% None

Though all 24 questions in this section are “related and relevant” to the personal biography of the Imam, the incremental breakdowns into five-question components are not necessarily linked, as in this case where we ask about television, parents, and community organizations. We have chosen to break the analysis into increments of five merely for ease of discussion and simplicity of presentation. Questions regarding television watching are not simply out of curiosity, but rather indicate choices made by the Imam in the use of his time, what he thinks is important, and the place of the media in his personal life. That eight out of 10 immigrant Imams who have moved to North America watch television indicates a decision they

have made with respect to the use of their time, whether for leisure and relaxation or information and a window on the world.

It is interesting to notice that half of the survey group chose news as their primary television-watching agenda but only two of 10 watch the BBC from England while four in 10 watch the American news network called CNN. Surprisingly low, only one in 10 says they watch Al Jazeera. Though news services all claim impartiality in the reporting of world events, it simply isn't so. That these Imams have made a conscious decision to hear the news filtered through the American news community rather than either the British or the Arabic news sources might indicate a ready willingness to "adopt" the perspective in their chosen new homeland. Other interpretations, less sanguine and generous, might be proposed such as an interest in seeing "how America" sees the world as opposed to, or in opposition of, these Imams' perception and experience of the world themselves. This might prove most interesting when stories involve issues relevant to and affecting Muslim lands and peoples.

Besides television watching, we asked about the Imam's parents; only 15% said that both their parents were deceased. This number indicates several possible characteristics of the survey group, including the general health of their country of origin's population and the age of the Imam responding to this survey. Of those 85% who have at least one parent living, only three in 10 said that that the parent lives with the Imam and his family. We will have more questions regarding parents and family life in following discussions.

Finally, we asked about involvement of the Imams in local community organizations and half said they were not involved at all in either homeland/Islamic organizations or local secular organizations. Of those five in 10 who are involved in some fashion, four in 10 restricted their involvement to homeland/Islamic organizations with just one in ten involved in local secular organizations. It might prove telling later in our analysis to remember the apparent disinterest in local community organizations, indicating a certain perception of the Imam's own sense of duty and responsibility as the religious leader within the local Islamic community which he serves. We mustn't make too much of this one bit of statistics, but we will want to revisit these numbers as our insight deepens and expands.

11. Are you a member of the local clergy association?

55% Yes 45% No

12. If yes, do you feel you have been well received by that association?

95% Yes 5% No

13. If no, briefly explain.

No Reply

14. Was any member of your family an Imam before you?

45% Yes 55% No

15. Do you wish any of your sons to become Imams?

60% Yes 40% No

Two related questions here provide deeper insights into the survey subjects' involvement in the community "as a Muslim religious leader" and his own personal experience in becoming an Imam in the first place. Over half (55%) of the respondents indicate that they

are, indeed, members of a local clergy organization, and only five in 100 report the experience of feeling less than welcome in these organizations. The 5% who said they felt less than welcomed gave no explanation as to either their experience or the reasons why they thought the clergy association was less than welcoming. Also interesting is the fact that nearly half (45%) of the respondents came from families in which there were other Imams, and six in 10 have hopes that one of their sons will become an Imam as well. This is far from the present-day experience within the Christian community where the number of clergy desiring one of their children to become a clergy person is in the single digits. When we see later the low salaries of the American immigrant Imams, one must ponder the reasons why this number of 60% is so high. More on this point later.

16. How old are you?

38 years average age (range 24 to 61 years)

17. What was your age when you married?

25 years average (range 19 to 31 years)

18. Do your parents still live in their homeland?

50% Yes 50% No

19. How many years have you been an Imam?

16 years average (range 2 to 30 years)

20. Do you intend to always be a professional Imam?

85% Yes 15% No

The average respondent is 38 years old, having lived in America for nine years, with an age range of from 24 years old to 61 years old. What would prove most interesting, if it were possible, would be to administer this survey to recently arrived homeland Imams and compare their responses to those of our current respondents. Responses informed by nine years serving in this country as a Muslim clergyman would certainly differ from those of a Muslim clergyman just arriving to this country. Such a study may yet be possible with sufficient funding and organizational collaboration with other Muslim groups. For now, let us keep in mind that our responding Imams average 38 years of age with nine years living in North America. The responding Imams averaged 25 years old at the time of their marriage with one being only 19 while another was 31 years old. This average age for marriage compares favorably with American professionals and suggests a certain level of age maturity at the time of marriage. We then asked another question about the Imams' parents and half of them indicated that their parents still live in their homeland. Though we didn't ask, we assume that those who do not live in their homeland have come to live in America to be near their son and their grandchildren. Strong family ties and commitments are themes running throughout this survey and more on this point will be said later.

The average time the respondents have been Imams was 16 years which, given their average age of 38 and their average age of 25 at the time of marriage, constitutes a significant amount of their adult life. This means, on average, that the responding Imams became Imams when they were 22 years old, a young age by American standards to become a religious leader. However, in spite of their youthfulness when becoming an Imam, 85% (nearly nine in

10) intend to remain in the ranks of the Muslim clergy. Only 15% are now ready and able to say that they do not intend to remain an Imam now that they are living in America. Professional opportunities, of course, are always available to homeland immigrants who bring with them, or secure upon arrival in this country, a professional education. That an increasingly large number of Imams are pursuing the Doctor of Philosophy degree, at least at my institution, is an indication of their professional and intellectual ambitions. Others are pursuing various other professional or academic degrees: a Master of Business Administration or an advanced degree in education, all which will serve them well and suggest a built-in flexibility to their professional future. This is true both for those who might leave the Muslim ministry as well as providing an elevation of the professional profile of those who remain Imams.

21. If no, what do you want to do as a career in the U.S.?

100% Teacher/Professor

22. Do you intend to return to your homeland permanently one day?

60% Yes 40% No

23. Why did you come to the U.S.?

45% Imam 30% Finances 25% Medical/Health Reasons

24. Have you lived/worked in another country besides your own homeland?

30% Yes 70% No

Though most of the immigrant Imams wish to remain in Islamic ministry, of those 15% who indicated an intention of not remaining an Imam, every one of them said that their desired profession when leaving the ranks of Muslim clergy was the field of education serving as teachers and particularly as university professors of Islamic studies. Teaching, of course, is the traditional role of the Imam so, in some ways, becoming a university professor is merely an extension of the vocation of the Imam. This has been true of the Jewish and Christian, particularly Catholic, clergy for centuries. So it seems it is equally true in the Muslim tradition.

Whether to return to one's homeland or stay in one's adopted land has always been a troubling dilemma for an immigrant population, especially for professionals who have not left their homeland due to oppression or poverty but have chosen to come to America for a better life. That six out of 10 Imams say they "intend" to return to their homeland is somewhat problematic, given their young age of 38, the number of years in America, and the inevitable stress brought upon their American-born children when told they are to leave America, the child's homeland, to return to their father's homeland. This is a troubling and difficult decision for immigrant families regardless of their national origin and the circumstances under which they have come to America.

A very interesting question had to do with why the Imam chose to come to this country in the first place. Four in 10 said plainly that they came to America to function as an Imam, whereas another three in 10 indicated a desire to improve themselves financially. Interestingly, 25% of the respondents said they came initially to America because of health reasons, obviously seeking medical attention for existing health issues. Less than half of these immigrant Imams came specifically to function as Muslim clergy. The balance took up the profession as a pragmatic solution to their initial reasons for coming.

CHAPTER TWO

FAMILY LIFE: Living in America

(wife/children/home/demographic-social environment)

The intent in this section is to identify as much relevant data as possible regarding the family life of the Imam, including his own family history, his wife's family and her life, the children's ages, gender, education, life experiences, and the demographics and social character of their living situation. If we are to understand the life of the immigrant Imam in America, there is no better way than to take a close look at his family life. Being an Imam is not just about religious performance but the domestic context within which that performance occurs. In light of Part One of this book, we are fully cognizant of the profound pressures and expectations which characterize professional ministry in America. Professional ministry has been judged by studies within the medical and psychological communities as the most stress-driven profession in America today. The immigrant Imam, no matter the depth and breadth of his pre-American training, cannot imagine what the profession will demand of him until he comes and finds out for himself.

In America, as we discovered in Part One of this study, knowing the Qu'ran and the teachings of the Prophet and the traditions of one's own ethnic community is not nearly enough to sustain the newly arrived immigrant Imam in America. The expectations which come with the professional territory are profound. The Muslim community inevitably and understandably will adopt the attitudes, feelings, and expectations their Christian and Jewish neighbors place upon their clergy. And, these same expectations will, in turn, be placed upon the Imams of the Muslim community. It is not enough to know the sacred texts and to lead the Friday prayers no more than it is enough for the Christian pastor to know Scripture and to lead the Sunday worship or the rabbi to know the Torah and lead the Saturday service. Professional clergy in America, whether Muslim, Christian, or Jewish, must be pastoral counselors, community relations organizers, social service workers, political activists, and social event hosts, and the list goes on.

What we will do in this chapter is to take a close and personal look inside the Imam's new home in America, to learn something of his wife and his life, his children, their home life, and the general demographic and social environment within which the Imam is practicing his clergy skills. In the following, we will divide the questions into lots of five and discuss them as a group with a concluding summary at the end of the chapter. Later, we will draw attention to informative and telling correlations which might offer helpful insights into the nature of ministry life for Muslim clergy in America, always with an eye for the particularly relevant discovery which might further assist the Muslim community in gaining their rightful place in American society.

1. What is your wife's nationality?
100% homeland
2. What is her native language?
100% homeland

3. What other languages does she speak?
75% English 15% Spanish 10% Arabic

4. How old is your wife?
36 years average age

5. Is she a U.S. citizen?
45% Yes 55% No

As with the Imam, the wife's nationality and her first language is homeland with only three in four claiming English as a viable second language. Fifteen out of a hundred wives, however, also claim Spanish as a third language and this we did not see among the Imams themselves. This is significant owing to the fact that Islam as a faith is growing rapidly within the Hispanic community in America and the need for Islam to respond to this new linguistic demand is self-evident. That one in ten also claims Arabic as a viable language does not come close to the 45% among the Imams but does indicate a useful capability for instructing one's own children in the saying of prayers in Arabic. The immigrant Imams' wives are 36 years old on average, making them just two years younger than their husbands with 45% of them being U.S. citizens. Citizenship usually suggests, but does not require, that the respondent anticipates permanent residency in the U.S. and, where there are children, these children will be U.S. citizens and substantially and inevitably "Americanized." The decision to become a citizen itself is suggestive of an expectation of long-term residency in the U.S.

6. How long have you been married?
16 years average

7. How many children do you and she have together?
2 children average

8. Does your wife have a permit to drive a car in the U.S.?
75% Yes 25% No

9. What level of education does she have? High School College Professional
60% High School only 40% College

10. Is she involved in any community organizations or activities?
60% Yes 40% No

Again, as with the Imams, the wives have, on average, been married 16 years and have two children which is in keeping with the statistical norm for professional Americans generally. Three out of four Imams' wives have a permit to drive an automobile which gives her substantial mobility as both a mother and a member of a social network of activities and responsibilities. Where no capacity to drive or legal right to drive exists, the wife is substantially cut off from much of what is normally expected of clergy wives to know, do, and be. The isolation implied in the absence of a capacity to drive a vehicle could possibly cause severe problems with respect to loneliness, feelings of isolation from society and the faith community, and a fostering of a sense of inferiority when dealing with the sisterhood of the masjid

specifically and the wider secular community generally.

That all Imams' wives have a high school diploma speaks well of their educational background and four out of ten wives hold a university degree whereas six out of ten Imams do (more on this later). Education is, of course, the key that opens American society to the professional spouse and the more education the Imams' wives have, the greater their mobility within the social structure of society generally and the faith community particularly. Imams must have an advanced education and where the wives do likewise, there are much greater opportunities of becoming involved in the wider society thereby calling attention to the faith community of Muslims. Since six out of ten Imams' wives are actively involved in the social affairs of the wider community, this is an indication that the wives are themselves taking initiative to open doors and widen the social presence of Muslims in the general population of the community. There is cause to worry when we learn, however, that four out of ten Imams' wives are not socially involved for this lack of engagement constitutes a substantial loss of potentially positive influence within the wider society. Where the wives are socially engaged, Imams will be better known and the faith community more highly visible. Where no such engagement is present, the Imam and the faith community both suffer.

11. Does she have employment outside the home?

55% Yes 45% No

12. If yes, what does she do?

50% financial 50% health field (of those who work outside)

13. How old are your children and what is their gender?

70% have children and average age is 13 years old 60% boys 40% girls

14. Do your children attend public school?

60% Yes 40% No

15. Are all of your children living at home?

60% Yes 40% No

16. If not, do they all live in the U.S.?

60% Yes 40% No

We learn in this section that the Imams' wives are more often than not employed outside the home with 55% responding in the affirmative. Outside employment, of course, affects many aspects of Muslim family life including an increased income for the family, the necessity for the wife and mother to drive and be mobile within the community, and, of course, the necessity that family life must adjust to the regular absence of the wife and mother when she is at work. Of those 55% who work outside the home, half are engaged in work related to banking, finance, and accounting and the other half in the broad field of health related professions such as nursing.

Outside employment is made somewhat easier owing to the fact that of the 70% who have children, their average age is 13 years old and just over half at 60% are boys. Older boys at home make it somewhat easier for the mother and wife to work outside the home due both to the reliance upon 13 year olds being somewhat more mature at decision-making than

younger children who may need either outside or in-home babysitting. This point might indicate that there is somewhat less concern about the safety of boys whereas older girls constitute a particular concern about protection from the outside world.

Six of ten children in the Imams' families attend public school and six of ten children live at home. Older children among the 40% whose children do not live at home are most like at university or have already begun their own family life away from the parents. Attending public school rather than a traditional Muslim school is usually a point of concern, anxiety, and worry on the part of most Muslim families and particularly among the Imam families as they ponder the conflicting desire to both protect their children from the secularizing effect of public exposure (discussed in detail in Part One) while also desiring their children to become Americanized so as to assure their success in this society. However, 40% of the family subjects have children living outside the U.S., presumably attending university in their homeland. The tension between traditional Muslim values and American secular values is a reality not easily ignored. More later on this point.

17. When did your wife last visit the home of her parents?

70% visited within the past three years

18. Does she have non-Muslim women friends?

70% Yes 30% No

19. Does she watch television?

100% Yes

20. If yes, what are her three favorite television programs?

Oprah, Jeopardy, Soaps (in order of preferences)

The pressing desire to maintain contact with the homeland is characteristic of most immigrant groups coming to America and it is certainly true of homeland Imams. Seven in ten Imams' wives have visited their parents back in their homeland within the last three years. Not only does this speak well for maintaining close family ties but also is reflective of the traditional culture from which the families have come. Furthermore, there is an obvious expense of travel involved in maintaining this regular contact and it constitutes a major family decision to spend the family income in this manner rather than in some other family expense such as holidays and automobiles.

It is heartening to see that Imams' wives have non-Muslim women friends this type of friendship opens doors for greater and deeper understanding of American society and family life in American culture. When clergy wives of any tradition, Muslim, Christian, or Jewish, fail or refuse to reach out to the wider secular community in which they live, the immigrant family suffers from lack of "operational knowledge," common information which makes family life easier and more enjoyable. Non-Muslim women friends may constitute a major source of good information about how other families than Muslims live in America. The relationship also provides the Imams' wives an opportunity to see what they might wish to introduce into their own families as well as the identification of those things which they most definitely do not wish to have present in their own homes. These relationships provide valuable information and provide a screening mechanism or filtering process for the Muslim mother and wife desiring to make the family happy and successful without losing their commitment to their faith and their

homeland.

Watching television also provides valuable information and without the extra demands which accompany personal relationships. Television programming watched in the immigrant families' homes may be screened and censored as determined by the father and mother for family viewing. That a majority of Imams' wives watch Oprah, Jeopardy, and the daytime soaps presents an interesting array of programming sources which may be potentially important and usually interesting information. Oprah usually focuses upon human interest issues which provide the viewer with an insight into what American society thinks about human behavior, social issues, family matters, and personal stresses and opportunities. The program is a great reservoir of potentially helpful information.

Likewise, the program Jeopardy provides an exposure to the English language and cultural information which might not easily be gotten elsewhere and which potentially will elevate the functional knowledge of the viewer. The day time soaps, of course, focus upon personal and family relationship issues and while the subject matter often raises boarder line ethical and moral issues, they do provide the viewer with a full range of typical American cultural and social responses and attitudes. They really do constitute a good source for understanding better the wide range of values operative within secular society in which the Imams' families are living in America.

21. How long has she lived in the U.S.?

13 years average

22. Have your children lived outside the U.S.?

60% Yes 40% No

23. If yes, where and how old

100% homeland 6 years old average

24. If your wife has a college degree, from what university and in what field of study?

85% homeland 15%US 30% Medical field 70% financial

25. What is her annual income?

\$25,000.00 average of the 40% of wives who work outside the home

Thirteen years is quite a long time to have lived in the U.S. and, therefore, there is high confidence that Imams' wives are well adjusted and fully cognizant of the dynamics operating within the American social fabric as regards family values, priorities, and opportunities. Six of ten families have had children living outside the U.S., particularly in Europe, and they averaged 6 years old when coming to the U.S., in time, we presume, for the beginning of their formal public schooling. Of the four in ten Imam wives who hold university degrees, 85% of them are from homeland institutions and the remainder from American universities. Three in ten have specialized in the medical and health field and seven in ten in some branch of banking and finance. And, most helpful to the families' lifestyles, four in ten Imams' wives work outside the home and their average annual income is \$25,000.00. Later, we will see how this is a tremendous compliment to the somewhat meager salary of the Imams themselves making it possible for these immigrant families to live a fairly comfortable middleclass lifestyle in America.

26. Does your wife dress in western style clothing?
40% Yes 60% No
27. Does she wear the hijab?
85% Yes 15% No
28. Do your children's names reflect their ethnicity?
85% Yes 15% No
29. How many of your children were born in the US?
80% Yes (at least one child US born) 20% No
30. Are you a US citizen?
50% Yes 50% No

Though we have seen that 55% of the Imam wives work outside the home, only 40% say they wear western style clothing while 85% indicate that they wear the hijab. The fact that these women have lived in the U.S. on average for 13 years, there is obviously a resistance on the part of a good number of them to "westernize" their own personal appearance, even in the workplace. The traditional wearing of the hijab is an indication of a determination to maintain that traditional practice when other considerations have given way to western manners and styles of living. Sociologists and anthropologists have consistently reminded us that food, clothing, and social customs are the last things of the homeland to be given up and a strong attachment to these things often persist and endure through three generations of immigrant families. Often, in fact, the fourth generation "reaches back" to the food, clothing, and customs in an attempt to re-establish a sense of continuity with their parents' and grandparents' homeland and culture even when the children have been more or less totally Americanized.

Furthermore, though eight in ten Imams and their wives have children, at least one has been born in the U.S., and 85% have given their children homeland names rather than American names, again indicating a strong determination to maintain some symbolic connection with their homeland. Though four in ten Imams' wives are U.S. citizens, half of the Imams themselves have become citizens which may indicate a mere practicality rather than an intent to "Americanize."

31. Is your wife a US resident?
85% Yes 15% No
32. Are your children US citizens?
80% Yes 20% No
33. Will you educate your children in the US?
85% Yes 15% No
34. If yes, in public school?
85% 15% No

35. If not, where?

INCONCLUSIVE

Though 40% of the Imams' wives are U.S. citizens, 85% hold U.S. residency status, indicating a strong commitment to the strength and stability of family life within the Muslim community. Few Muslim Imams come to this country without their families but those who do rather quickly send for their families to join them in America. Four in ten wives and six in ten Imams are U.S. citizens, having gone through the lengthy and sometimes trying process required of citizenship for immigrants. Eight in ten children of Imams' families are U.S. citizens. Given their young age at the time of their arrival here, about 6 years old on average, and given the number of years they have been in the U.S. attending, by and large, public school, about 7 years on average, it is easy to understand why children would have become U.S. citizens more readily than their parents.

Furthermore, Imams say at a rate of 85% that they will educate their children in the U.S. and in public schools. In fact, the 15% who were uncommitted to educating their children in public schools offered no alternative for their children's education, leaving us to assume that the level of ambivalence will eventually subside and conformity to the practice of other Imam families will hold sway.

36. Have you ever been divorced?

30% Yes 70% No

37. Has your wife ever been divorced?

10% Yes 90% No

38. Do you have a son studying abroad?

25% Yes 75% No

39. If yes, where and what is he studying?

INCONCLUSIVE

40. Do you have a daughter studying abroad?

20% Yes 80% No

41. If yes, where and what is she studying?

homeland university and studying elementary education

Far below the national average for the Christian clergy divorce rate of 60%, Imams have been divorced at an average rate of three in ten and their wives only one in ten. This speaks both to the traditional emphasis upon stable family life and the religious and cultural disinclination to end domestic life in divorce where avoidable. Though Islam does permit divorce, initiated by either husband or wife, both religious tradition and culture emphases preclude its ready use as a settlement for dissatisfaction within the marriage relationship. Though 25% of the Imam families have a son studying abroad, that is, outside the U.S., there was no further information forthcoming about that statistic so little can be drawn from it. Only one in five Imam families have a daughter studying outside the U.S. and the respondents did

indicate that they were studying in a homeland university primarily in the field of elementary education for purposes of becoming a school teacher.

We have had a great deal to say in Part One of this study about the current American practice of Muslim families sending their sons to West Africa to study to become Imams back in the U.S. and we will not review that discussion again here other than to say that there is a detectable trend “away” from the practice and a growing desire within the American Muslim community to have their young sons desiring to become Imams to have an opportunity to take that training here rather than in a foreign land or even in their native homeland. This trend will grow such that within another generation or at most two American Imams will be trained in America by American Muslim scholars.

CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATION: Training There and Here

(training as Imam/professional-organization-association memberships)

This section will specifically address all relevant issues regarding educational training before, during, and since becoming an Imam, his professional memberships and participation in various professional and civic organizations and associations, and personal aspirations regarding pursuit of further advanced education and learning opportunities, as well as professional licensure in ministry. It is here that we will learn some of the most personal information about the immigrant Imams being studied in this survey. Here we inquire into the personal life experience of the Imam which has led to his choosing this profession, the training he sought and received for the practice of this profession, and the way in which he exercises his profession and his general understanding of the nature and meaning of that profession within American society.

Given the fact, as discussed in detail in Part One of this book, that the expectations, demands, and pressures of being a professional clergyman in America are quite different from these immigrant Imams' homeland, it will be very significant to inquire into their training and perception of the Muslim religious leader's place and role in American society. Since 100% of the responding Imams are immigrants to America, the information they provided us in this study will be very telling as to their homeland's understanding of the role and duties of an Imam as over against the wider and deeper professional demands placed upon them as they enter American society. In America, a radically secular society with, however, a very "church-going" citizenry, the expectations of professional clergy do not differ significantly from the high level of expectations placed upon the other traditional professions of medicine, law, and education. How the immigrant Imam absorbs and implements this professionalism in the exercise of his own ministry will be a determiner of his overall success as a Muslim clergyman in America. Let us look closely.

1. At what age did you first decide you wanted to be an Imam?
15 years old average (range 10 to 27 years old)
2. How many years did you attend school to be trained as an Imam?
5 years (range is 2 to 16 years)
3. Where did you attend school to become an Imam?
100% homeland 5% Cairo also
4. Were your parents supportive of your desire to be an Imam?
100% Yes

As we see here, not all Imams choose to become Imams in childhood. Though the average age for making such a decision among Imams is at age 15 years, some decided as early as 10 where others did not decide for certain until the age of 27 years. There is a great

deal of room here for more and deeper studies into the decision-making process and the same can be said of the Christian and Jewish clergy as well. When, why, how, and under what circumstances a young man decides to become a religious leader of his faith tradition is a fascinating topic about which there has been a great deal of speculation and very little empirical study. Let us hope that at least within the Muslim community in America, we might learn more about this topic by supporting substantive empirical research. We all agree that the more we know about the topic the better we can address the issues and problems which arise within it. To know little is to invite bad decisions. Hard data will provide information worthy of a community in search of a better understanding of its religious leaders.

5. Do you consider your Arabic recitation skills well developed?

75% Yes 25% No

6. Where did you learn your Arabic recitation skills?

100% High School

7. Do you consider your personal Islamic library sufficient for your studies?

35% Yes 65% No

8. How important do you think your Friday sermon is in your public duty?

80% VERY 20% SOMEWHAT 0% MINIMAL

9. Do you have any close non-Muslim friends in your community?

50% Yes 50% No

10. Do you have any close non-Muslim clergy friends in your community?

50% Yes 50% No

Since 100% of the Imam respondents indicate that they learned their Arabic recitation in the schools which they attended in their homeland and three out of four consider those skills well developed, we might conclude that the educational training these immigrant Imams received in their Islamic high schools back home were quite good. Whereas Protestant clergy are not required to have recitation skills in biblical Greek, Catholic priests must have high Latin and rabbis must have biblical Hebrew for the saying of prayers and leading of worship. Imams share the same pressures though seldom is mention made of the similarities between priests, rabbis, and Imams in this context. One of the concerns within the American Muslim community has to do with "recitation skills" in the Arabic language and the possibility of such skills being both taught and learned in America. No other point of concern has the attention of Imams as does this one and, if no other consideration is brought into play, it must be pointed out that one of the reasons why young American-born Muslim boys are sent away to West Africa or the Middle East to study to become Imams is for the development of these language skills. There is a consensus that good Islamic scholars live and teach in America so scholarship and learning are not the major concerns. It is the recitation capabilities in the saying of prayers and leading of worship in the Arabic language which occupies the attention of Muslim clergy in America.

Another point of concern, both within American Islam and throughout the Islamic world,

is the need for and absence of published scholarship in Islamic studies available in the English language. That only 35% of the responding Imams feel that their own library is adequate for their studies must be a point of concern within the scholarly community. How can good sermons be prepared in the absence of good library resources readily available, affordable, and in the language of use. With eight of ten Imams saying their Friday sermons are “very” important, this issue of scholarly resources must be addressed.

Quality texts, both classical and contemporary, are not readily available across the full Islamic spectrum the way Christian and Jewish scholarship is available. The Babylonian Talmud’s 22 volumes are inexpensive and in English. The 38 volumes of the Church Fathers are very inexpensive and available in English as well. The availability of Islamic commentaries and the classical teachings of Muslim scholars is lacking, both in terms of costs and in English. Even when an Imam says his recitation skills in Arabic are good, this does not mean that he can easily and readily study Islamic scholars in the Arabic language. Also, in addition to studying Islamic texts in English texts must be affordable, and, to-date, they are far from available and certainly not inexpensive. This problem the Islamic community and particularly Muslim scholars in the English-speaking world must address.

What is heartening to learn is that immigrant Imams in this national study indicate that they both have non-Muslim friends and non-Muslim clergy friends. This speaks well for the Imams’ confidence in their ability to relate, to communicate, and to collaborate as professional colleagues within the wider clergy community. These friendships provide a means of further acquaintance with American social expectations of professional clergy and constitute a major resource for broadening and deepening the Imam’s perception of divergent faith communities and their worldview and value systems. Imams must not discount the real value of such relationships and should cultivate them at every opportunity. To be “in the know,” one must associate with those who are in the know, and clergy friends will constitute a major ingredient in the information matrix needed by the Imams to function effectively as ministry professionals in the community.

11. Do you have a university degree?

60% Yes 40% No

12. If yes, what type of university did you attend?

75% Islamic College 25% Secular University

13. Are you interested in pursuing a doctorate in Islamic studies?

95% Yes 5% No

14. Do you think it is possible OR desirable to study in America to become an Imam in the U.S.?

100% (possible?) 100% (desirable?)

15. If not, explain VOID AS NO RESPONSE

Whereas four of ten Imams’ wives have a university education, six in ten Imams do. Three out of four Imams took their degrees from Islamic institutions, predominantly in their homeland, and according to the respondents, nearly all of them desire to pursue doctoral studies in Islam. Furthermore, all of them agree that it is both “possible” and “desirable” to

pursue such studies in the United States. Imams and their communities cannot and must not underestimate the value that higher educational training and credentialing has upon the wider secular society as well as other religious traditions. If Imams are to be perceived by society at large and by clergy from other traditions as fully professional in their work, it is imperative that the Imams have advanced university training. Imams and their faith communities need to understand that Christian clergy, with few exceptions, are required by their denominational hierarchy to hold both a four-year bachelor's degree as well as a three-year graduate degree in theology and ministry training. More and more, Christian denominations are pressuring their clergy to not stop their education until they have completed a professional doctorate in ministry, usually the Doctor of Ministry degree. The same is true of the American rabbinate where both a four-year bachelor's degree and a four-year graduate degree is required before one can be ordained a rabbi. For the American Islamic community to set the required educational bar equally high for its Imams will prove most valuable in establishing the Muslim community as a viable faith-community under fully trained professional leadership. Anything less will not do.

16. Are there internationally distinguished Islamic scholars living in the U.S.?

85% Yes 15% No

17. If yes, please name them.

40% Hamzi Yusuf 25% Nasr 15% Gulen 20% No One

18. Is your English good enough for you to feel comfortable speaking in public?

50% Yes 50% No

19. Do you think you would benefit from more training in pastoral counseling?

95% Yes 5% No

20. Does your masjid pay for you to advance your education as an Imam?

100% No

The issue of whether or not Imams recognize American Islamic scholars is a key question to pose for, unless Imams agree that American Muslim scholars exist, there is little hope that an American Islamic training institution for Imams will be developing any time soon! The credibility of the entire Muslim community is called to the forefront when the issue of sound Islamic scholarship is raised. Without residential scholars of international reputation, Islam in America will always be thought of as transient and unstable. If America cannot and has not produced Islamic scholars worthy of an international reputation for insightfulness and brilliance, then Islamic America will not gain its rightful place at the International Table of Islamic Scholars. Our survey found that better than eight out of ten (85%) immigrant Imams believe that there are Islamic scholars living and working, writing and teaching in America. Furthermore, we asked that these scholars be named and though many were given, the following three constituted 80% of the total given with only two in ten indicating that they did not believe there were any outstanding Muslim scholars living and teaching in America. We have taken the liberty of giving a very brief biographical sketch of the three most frequently named American-resident Muslim scholars. They are Hamza Yusuf, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Mehmet Fethulla Gulen. Whether or not everyone agrees, it is interesting to note that

85% of the responding Imams list these men.

Hamza Yusuf was born in Washington State and raised in Northern California. In 1977, he became Muslim and subsequently traveled to the Muslim world and studied Islam for ten years. He then returned to the United States and received degrees in Religious Studies and Health Care. He has traveled the world as a renowned Islamic lecturer. He founded the Zaytuna Institute, which has established an international reputation for presenting a classical picture of Islam in the West and which is dedicated to the revival of traditional study methods and the sciences of Islam. Sheikh Hamza currently resides in Northern California with his wife and five children. (Wikipedia.org)

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is University Professor of Islamic Studies at The George Washington University. He has also taught at Temple University and Tehran University and was the first president of the Iranian Academy of Philosophy. He is the author of over 20 books including *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, *Sufi Essays and Knowledge and the Sacred* (The Gifford Lectures for 1981) as well as *Muhammad—Man of Allah* and *Traditional Wisdom in the Modern World*. He studied physics and the history of science and philosophy at M.I.T. and received his doctorate from Harvard University. (Wikipedia.org)

Mehmet Fethullah Gülen (b. either 1938, 1941, or 1942, possibly on 27 April) is a Turkish preacher, author, and educator living in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania. He is the leader of the "Gülen movement," an international network of schools and businesses run by his students. Gülen's theology can be described as a modernized, moderate version of Sunni/Hanafi Islam, similar to that of Said Nursi (from whose movement he broke away during the 1970's). Gülen condemns terrorism, supports interfaith dialogue, and emphasizes the role of science. (Wikipedia.org)

21. Do you belong to any professional association for clergy in America?

30% Yes 70% No

22. If yes, what is the name of it?

100% IAXNA (Islamic Association of North America)

(Note: X is used in place of the homeland of the responding Imams.)

23. Have you had any formal training in counseling skills?

25% Yes 75% No

24. Would you be interested in counseling and compassionate care training if available from an Islamic perspective and provider?

95% Yes 5% No

25. Have you had any counseling training from a non-Muslim perspective and provider?

15% Yes 85% No

If what has been explored in Part One of this study, and what has been reiterated in Part Two, regarding the professionalization of Islamic clergy in America, then there is reason to be concerned here regarding the low percentage of professional memberships enjoyed by our

immigrant clergy. Only three in ten indicate that they belong to a professional association of clergy in America. We would have thought that more than that number would have belonged. There are a wide variety of professional organizations available for the clergy, but for only 30% to be involved in a clergy association is cause for concern. How else or in what manner are immigrant Imams to learn what is expected of them as ministry professionals? And, of those 30% who do belong, every one of them belong to their own ethnic association. Since there are professional associations of clergy in every city, large or small, in America, the opportunity to become substantially engaged in clergy-based activities in the community are readily available. Certainly, membership in one's own ethnic group's professional association is understandable and, indeed, even desirable, but not to belong to any other professional group means that Imams coming to this country are cutting themselves off from the easiest and often most cordial of groupings to become involved with as relates to ministry functions in American society and in their own community.

The next three questions prove very informative both in terms of the training Imams have who come to this country to serve faith communities and, not inconsequentially, their willingness to take on further training in pastoral care and counseling, a field which is pervasive within professional ministry education in this country. Pastoral care and counseling, more than any other professional function besides leading the faith community in public worship, is what most conspicuously characterizes professional ministry in American society today. Understandably, immigrant Imams coming from a traditional society where pastoral care and counseling are neither perceived nor taught as a primary function of the Imam will not be bringing with them such training. However, if Imams are going to be respected within the wider social context of American society and, indeed, even be able to meet the growing demands and expectations for pastoral nurture within their own faith communities in this country, they are going to have to seek and secure significant training in the field of counseling.

There is no way to escape this demand and no way to avoid the pressure. Muslim clergy in America are going to be forced by both the secular society and their own faith communities to gain skills in pastoral nurture, what in some Islamic circles is now being called "compassionate care." That only 25% have had any training at all in the field of counseling and nearly 60% of those from non-Muslim professionals will not do and must not last. Muslim clergy need Muslim professionals offering training in the field of counseling and the fact that 95% of the responding Imams say they would like to have such training constitutes a profound mandate for something to be done. This issue cannot be avoided and the address and resolution of the problem cannot be delayed. If ever Islamic funding for a specific training program was needed and identifiable, it is the field of counseling for Imams serving American communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

FAITH COMMUNITY: Living Together as Muslims in America

(size/finances/ethnicity/nationality/conversion/city-town)

This is a comprehensive category exploring a full range of information related to the faith community, i.e., the masjid, to which the Imam is attached and serves, including such quantifiable facts as numerical size of the faith community, the finances of the masjid, its governance and judicatory body attached to the masjid responsible for fiscal accountability, statistical breakdown of the ethnic and national identity of its membership, the conversions within the community, and something of the city/town/village in which the faith community is situated.

Of course, the Muslim clergy cannot be studied outside the arena of the Muslim community for it is the community itself which validates his existence as a religious leader. Therefore, the more we can learn about the faith community itself -- its size, finances, ethnicity, nationality, geo-politics, etc. -- the better able we will be at identifying the ingredients which go to make up successful Muslim clergy and successful Muslim religious communities. Numbers count. Money is not inconsequential to the life of a religious community. Ethnicity dictates food, clothing, social customs, and expectations. These are factors that are essential and fundamental in determining the life of the community, how it sees itself and what it perceives to be its duty to the community and its responsibility to itself as a social matrix of Islamic nurture. The more we know, the better we can identify the strengths and weakness, the problem areas and the community aspects needing attention.

NOTE: We use the word "masjid" for the faith community but we understand that "Islamic Cultural Center" may be the term most often used to describe their communities today.

1. How many enrolled members are there in your masjid?
380 average membership
2. How many families are represented in your membership?
300 average number of families
3. What is the average attendance at Friday prayers at your masjid?
75 average attendance
4. What is the predominant ethnicity or nationality in your masjid?
85% homeland 15% Arab/Pakistani
5. Do you have any American-born members?
50% Yes 50% No

Whereas the range of enrolled members spanned from 120 to 600, the typical masjid in this survey averaged 380 adult members and 300 families. This is not a small faith community and these numbers suggest life and vitality and, not unimportant in expanding the community's

outreach, finances. What is a point of concern is the fact that the responding Imams say that their Friday prayer service is attended on average by 75 people. A 25% attendance rate is not considered problematic within the Christian and Jewish communities. It should be kept in mind here by the non-Muslim reader of this study that the Friday prayers are not comparable to the Catholic Mass which is obligatory to faithful Catholics. To miss attendance at the Sunday Mass is a sin whereas in Islam, it is not a sin though the individual has missed an opportunity to be admonished to good living by the Imam's sermon. To miss a sermon in Islam is not wrong, it is merely unfortunate. The same may be said of Judaism for the Saturday prayer service functions to encourage and admonish the Jewish community to continue to live a good and moral life. To miss attendance is not a sin, it is simply a missed opportunity to be encouraged to better living. Whereas in Christian circles, a 25% attendance rate of the membership to the Sunday service would be a point of grave concern, but in Judaism and Islam, it is not so grave. However, the energetic Imam desiring to nurture a deepening of the Muslim faith within his community must continue to be watchful for opportunities to make Friday prayer attendance interesting, provocative, nurturing, and meaningful.

Of those who do attend Friday prayers, better than eight in ten are members of the Imam's ethnic group. This is a characteristic of American Islam and this was true for Christians as well during the first hundred years or so of coming to America as Irish or Polish or Italian Catholics, German Lutherans, English Episcopalians, etc. Eventually and gradually, as the community becomes increasingly acculturated and Americanized, the emphasis upon ethnic identity begins to abate. This process of Americanization and secularization is greatly accelerated by the economic rise of the immigrant community. The danger facing any immigrant religious group is how to maintain a sense of commitment to the faith as the ethnic points of identity begin to recede. We have discussed this in detail in Part One of this study. For now, it is interesting to note that half of the Imams say they have American-born members of their masjid and that American-born percentage will continue to climb as we move into the next generation. When the percentage of American-born Muslims outnumbers the immigrants from the homeland, then there will be substantial pressure applied to the Muslim community to produce Imams who are American, trained in America by Americans for Americans. This is inevitable. It happened to Christian communities and to Jewish communities and it will certainly occur within American Islam.

6. Do you have any American-born converts to Islam in your masjid?

45% Yes 55% No

7. What is the annual budget of your masjid?

\$145,000 average (range of \$32,000.00 to \$500,000.00)

8. Does your community own its own building free and clear of debt?

55% Yes 45% No

9. If not, what is the outstanding debt on the building?

\$107,000 average indebtedness (range of \$10,000.00 to \$250,000.00)

10. What percentage of your community are professionals such as doctors, engineers, etc.?

10%

It is heartening to see that the Muslim communities in the U.S. at a rate of 45% have American-born converts to Islam. The nature of “conversion” or more correctly “reversion” is a complex phenomenon in which a wide range of variables are often at work in any given circumstance, whether that be life story, family exposure, personal faith experience, or wider social acquaintance. That the phenomenon exists to such an extent that 45% of the Imams have converts in their faith communities is not, therefore, an inconsequential factor when anticipating a gradual and inevitable “shift” from an immigrant ethnic ethos to an indigenous American ethos within the masjid.

The average budget of the local masjid is \$145,000.00 which indicates a sufficiently strong faith community as to be able to provide a modest living for the Imam while maintaining the basic functions of the community’s social and religious life. Further indicative of the self-sufficiency of the masjid is the fact that over half (55%) of the masjids are free of debt on their building with the remaining 45% owing, on average, \$107,000.00 with a wide range of between \$10,000 and \$500,000. The difference between the annual budget and the average indebtedness is not a cause of concern and it is clear that each masjid is confident about its own ability to secure a free title to the property, maintain the Imam, and continue to offer community services to its members.

Several recently conducted national data-base studies of the American Muslim community have produced a plethora of information regarding education, family life, and finances and we need not reiterate them here. References to the major ones can be found in the resource bibliography of this book. However, in light of these recently conducted studies, it is somewhat surprising to note that only 10% of the average masjid membership as reported by our immigrant Imams are professional. This may account for the modest size of the budget (\$145,000.00) when contrasted with the average membership (380 members).

When compared with the Christian Churches (including the full range from Roman Catholics to Pentecostal Evangelicals), the level of giving in the masjid is not nearly on a par with the Christian community’s rate of giving. Within the Christian Churches, according to the annual report of the National Council of Churches, the individual member of each faith community averages \$742.00 in annual giving. When placed against the 380 average masjid membership, if Muslims gave at the same rate as Christians, the annual budget would be about \$280,000 rather than the \$145,000.00 reported in the survey. The Muslim individual giving at \$375.00 annually is half the Christian individual’s giving. One “theological” point to keep in mind here has to do with the “incentive” to give. Is there a difference between Christian giving to the parish and Muslim giving to the masjid? For Christians, giving to the parish is giving to God for his work in the world. For Muslims, giving to maintain the masjid is more pragmatically related to maintaining the place of prayers and giving to the poor and only indirectly thought of as actually giving to God. A discussion on this point between a Christian theologian and a Muslim scholar would be very enlightening. However, when we get to the discussion of the Imam’s compensation package, other issues may arise which cause concern. More on this point later.

11. What percentage are first-generation immigrants?
75%

12. Do you have a day school program?
45% Yes 55% No

13. Do you have an after school program?

70% Yes

30% No

14. Have you ever used your masjid's building as a public meeting place?

80% Yes

20% No

Three out of four members of the typical masjid in this study were first-generation immigrants. Within a generation, of course, this will change and the issues to be addressed in the shifting of membership from predominantly immigrant status to American-born members will usher in a whole range of new and different issues and agendas. The really astute Imam will begin now to both anticipate and plan for this radical shift which will inevitably occur. Not only will the agenda for the masjid be changing, but there will be a broadening of expectations from the community of services provided by both the masjid itself and the Imam specifically. Here, such things as religious education and pastoral care will take on new and greater proportions than from the first-generation immigrant membership. To plan and prepare for these rising expectations will be crucial for the Imam who intends to keep pace with his changing community.

Whereas just less than half (45%) of the masjids have a day school program, seven in ten have an after school program with eight in ten of the masjids being used, on occasion, for public meetings involving not just members of the faith community but the general public as well. With average masjid budgets running less than \$150,000.00 annually, there is little expectation that most Islamic communities will ever be able to manage a full-time day school and, since most Imams say they intend to educate their children in the public schools, there is little internal pressure to create such masjid owned and operated Muslim schools. Rather, it appears that most Imams are directing their attention to "after school" programs for both socialization and religious education and, when these two are combined, there is reason to believe they will be both effective and popular.

The Catholic immigrant communities were fortunate in that their numbers were so great that the establishment of fully operational schools, from kindergarten thru high school, became the national norm and the result has been the proliferation of Catholic colleges which were created to serve the children graduating from Catholic schools seeking advanced education in a Catholic environment. The Muslim community must be realistic in terms of what their numbers will allow and what the budget can accommodate. Full time Muslim schools from kindergarten thru high school will be the rare exception to the standard "after school" programs. Where attention seems to be wisely placed within the Muslim community is the creation of social and educational venues adjacent to large public universities through the U.S. On this point, much more needs to be said after much more information has been gathered.

One final comment is worth making as regards the eight in ten masjids which accommodate public use of their facilities. More than any other one thing, this gesture to the general public of a ready willingness to offer the use of their meeting space for social events on behalf of the wider community will serve well the Muslim community's positive image in the outside world. Hosting city-wide clergy association meetings, public service events, outreach initiatives for the poor and the homeless, public service educational programs, etc., all provide an opportunity for the masjid to become an accepted venue for the benefit of the general public.

15. Do you work full-time for the masjid of which you are the Imam?
85% Yes 15% No
16. If yes, what is your annual salary?
\$33,000.00 average
17. Does the masjid pay your social security?
45% Yes 55% No
18. Does the masjid provide you with a family health insurance plan?
30% Yes 70% No
19. Does the masjid provide you with a retirement plan beyond social security?
20% Yes 80% No
20. If you have secular employment, does the masjid pay you anything?
10% Yes 90% No
21. If yes, how much annually?
INCONCLUSIVE

That better than eight in ten (85%) of the Imams studied in this survey are full-time employees of the masjid is a positive sign of community commitment to having a professional religious leader. Communities which opt for part-time service are toying with a slippery slope of diminishment in size and effectiveness as a faith community. As is well known within all professions, the “part-time” professional usually finds himself working “full-time” and being paid “part-time.” It is better that the community cut other expenses, even that of owning their own building, than opt for a part-time Imam when and where it is at all possible to secure one for full-time service. There is reason, of course, for concern with respect to the meagerness of the average salary paid by first-generation masjids to its newly arrived immigrant Imams. The amount of \$33,000.00 for an annual gross salary is below acceptable standards of professionalism and combined with the fact that over half (55%) of the masjids do not even pay the Imams’ Social Security is disturbing. Complicating that reality is the fact that seven in ten make no arrangements for a family health insurance plan for the Imam. If a faith community is to thrive, its Imam must be sufficiently taken care of as to remove financial worries and stress. To have a young family with a wife who more often than not does not work and to provide the Imam with less than a professionally-acceptable level of income constitutes a cauldron of stress, anxiety, insecurity, and indecisiveness. Financial security for the Imam should be the first priority of a masjid! After that, the quality of service and commitment to duty need never be an issue with the Imam as he sets about to build and nurture the Muslim community he has been privileged to serve. One final note should be made of the fact that only one in ten masjids pay the Imam who has a full-time secular job when he serves the community as its religious leader. The best way for a struggling masjid to learn what it means to have the privilege and obligation of paying a full-time Imam is to pay the non-stipendiary part-time Imam something for his time and effort. The lesson is well worth the effort for the masjid that takes care of its part-time Imam will be even more committed to taking care of its full-time Imam.

22. Are prayers spoken in English in your masjid?

45% Yes

55% No

23. Would the masjid be receptive to some public prayers being spoken in English?

95% Yes

5% No

24. Do you preach in English?

55% Yes

45% No

25. If not, in what language do you preach?

70% homeland

30% Arabic

26. What is the average age of the male members of your masjid?

38 years of age average

Though only 45% of the Imams indicate that prayers are said in English in the masjid, nearly all (95%) of them indicate that their communities would be receptive to such a practice. Since only half of the immigrant Imams studied in this survey say they feel comfortable enough with English to speak in public in the English language, here may lie part of the problem, if there is a problem. No one who understands Islam would ever suggest not having Arabic as the central language for the Friday prayer service. Never. The Qu'ran must be read in Arabic and the central prayers must be said in Arabic. There is no question about that being suggested or implied here. What is being suggested is that since nearly all masjids would, according to their Imams, be receptive to the use of English in the saying of prayers and even in the delivery of the sermon on Friday, the English language should be introduced and used where and when possible and practicable. This will prove extremely valuable in attracting non-Muslims to the Friday prayers.

Furthermore, since most of the masjids in this study are made up predominantly of an immigrant population, the masjids and the Imams can anticipate that within the next generation pressure to use more English in public prayer services will only increase. Just over half (55%) of the Imams in this study preach in English, so, the trend is on the move and will not easily be curtailed. This same issue came up within the ethnic Catholic populations during their early days of massive and rapid immigration to this country and it arose within the synagogues of American Judaism as well. Both Catholics and Jews accommodated and their faith has not only survived, but in every instance it has thrived with the introduction of English as a major ingredient in public worship. That seven in ten of the immigrant Imams preach in their native language is understandable. What happens when most of the American Imams are born and educated in America? Naturally, they will pray and preach in English but will keep the recitation quality of the Arabic high owing to the excellence of their training in America by Muslim scholars. Everyone wins; no one loses.

A real point of encouragement is the youthfulness of the masjid male membership at an average age of 38 years old. With a higher than national average college-educated Islamic population in America, there is every reason to believe that young professional men will continue to find that their spiritual needs are being effectively met in their faith communities served by professionally trained Imams. Whereas many Christian communities are finding their average age skyrocketing, the typical masjid is maintaining a youthful constituency of professional men and families.

27. Is there a women's program in your masjid?

65% Yes

35% No

28. Are there outreach programs for the wider community sponsored by your masjid?

35% Yes

65% No

29. If yes, what are they?

Open House and Clergy Association Meeting most frequent

30. Does your masjid/Islamic Cultural Center have a website?

95% Yes

5% No

31. Do you have a personal email address?

100% Yes

Where religion is concerned, women are concerned. Where religion is involved, women are involved. This is true whether one is speaking of Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. Though historically women have not been authorized to lead public prayers or take the leadership role in the life of the faith community, women have never been quieted when it comes to the exercise of their faith or the teaching of their children about their religion. Communities, of whatever tradition, which attempt to stifle women, will eventually suffer being stifled themselves. Catholics know it, Jews know it, and so do Muslims. That 65% of the masjids, according to the Imams surveyed in this study, maintain a women's program bespeaks an awareness of this reality and a readiness to incorporate women into the full life of the faith community's activities and mission. But more needs to be done and the really effective Imam will put forth great effort in the mobilization of the sisterhood of the community for religious education, social events, training and schooling of children, the welcoming of newcomers and visitors, etc. By doing so, the masjid is stabilized and the Imam finds he has a full complement of support for the exercise of his leadership.

Sadly, less than four in ten (35%) of the Imams surveyed here said that their masjid engaged in "outreach programs" to the wider community. If ever the Muslim communities are to be recognized and accepted as viable and positive compliments to the wider society in which they live and operate, outreach programs to the wider community are a must. Of those Imams who indicated their outreach programs, most were either general Open House events during Ramadan or periodic hosting of the local clergy association meetings. Both of these are good but the surface has only been scratched in terms of the wide range of realistic opportunities for outreach. Imagination is called for and the women's groups as well as the youth groups can be of real help.

What is really very encouraging here is to learn that virtually all of the masjids covered in this survey maintain a website! These days, any institution, organization, association, or public interest group without a website is dismissed out of hand by the majority of people, particularly professionals and the young. If the masjid is going to be credible to its local service community, it must have and maintain an effective website. It goes without saying, of course, that the Imam who does not have an email address is out of touch! Everyone within the community and those in the general public and wider society who need to be in communication with the Imam or with whom the Imam wishes to be in communication must

use email. Cell phones are fine for some functions, but email provides a quick and personal (without the demand of a live conversation) means of staying in touch, sharing of information, and maintaining social contacts.

32. Is your masjid in a large city? (65%) Small town? (35%) Rural? (0%)

33. Is your masjid primarily ethnic?
65% Yes 35% No

34. If yes, what is the prominent ethnicity of your members?
Of those answering Yes, the Imam's own ethnic/nationality group

35. Is there another masjid in your community?
80% Yes 20% No

36. If yes, do you have regular and positive relations with the other masjid
90% Yes 10% No

37. Do you refer to your masjid as "Islamic Cultural Center"?
95% Yes 5% No

Few masjids are located in rural America and in our study none are, whereas 65% are in large cities of over one million, with the balance being in small town America. Understandably and not surprisingly, 65% of the masjids are ethnic in composition or consist of immigrant nationals from the Imam's own homeland. This was true of early Catholic immigrant communities as well as Jewish communities. That composition naturally changes over time, and within another generation, it will be a rare masjid that is distinctively ethnic or of common nationality. Because most masjids are in large cities, eight of ten masjids are in communities where there is at least one other masjid and, according to the responding Imams, their relationship is positive and regular. What is very helpful to learn is that virtually all masjids (95%) prefer to call themselves "Islamic Cultural Centers" rather than mosques or masjids. The trend is national and pervasive and serves well the Muslim communities mission to contribute to the wider society as a faith community sharing religious and cultural beliefs and practices. A church and a synagogue are historically used for prayer and worship, whereas the Islamic Cultural Center has as its mission the providing of prayer and worship space within the context of a wider service venue for the nurture of the religious community and the fostering of its cultural diversity. Worship, prayer, education, social life, and public meetings constitute the range of activities fostered within the facilities maintained by the Muslim community's Islamic Cultural Centers.

CHAPTER FIVE

AUTHORITY AND JURISDICTION: The Freedom and Responsibility of Governance

(nurturing the faith community)

This category of information is designed to address issues related to the governance of the Imam's own faith community and the masjid. We will explore conflict issues as relates to Imam-masjid relationships, contracts, duties, accountability, etc. Issues related to control over job security and professional contract services and appointment, the relationship between the American Imam's masjid and the Islamic authorities in his homeland, interests and problems related to an American Islamic authority, and the desire of the immigrant Imams to establish a judicatory capacity to control quality and type of Imam training, and masjid contracts for Imam services for purposes of maintaining security and stability will be considered in detail.

It should be pointed out that these issues, problems, and interests are not unique to the Islamic community nor the Imams but rather characterize every religious tradition. Questions of jurisdiction and governance over the faith community's belief system, personnel, and property are equally present in Christianity and Judaism, with each varying according to each tradition's theology and polity. These issues have been discussed somewhat in Part One of this study and in substantial detail in Morgan's book cited in the resource bibliography entitled, *Scholar, Priest and Pastor: Ministry Priorities Among Clergy Today (a study of stress and satisfaction in the workplace)*. What awaits us in the following is the need for an identifiable chain of command based upon the Imams' perceptions of authority and jurisdiction. There are several models relevant to and presently functioning within other religious traditions, particular Christian denominations. Let us describe briefly the two models most commonly used in the Christian traditions of the Catholic and Baptist denominations.

Jurisdiction and governance comprise a triangle of authority within religious traditions, with the more "congregationally" governed communities fostering a broad membership-based authority (thought of as *horizontal*) and the more "hierarchically" governed communities fostering a narrow base of authority (thought of as *vertical*). There are slight variations on each of these two models found in various denominations of the Christian tradition but the Catholic (vertical) and the Baptist (horizontal) models are the most common and universally understood methods of governance and jurisdiction within the Christian tradition.

The Catholic Church (*vertical* model) is governed by the Pope in Rome who is the unquestioned single source of final authority. This authority is disseminated through the bishops of the Church's dioceses (judicatory domains) appointed by the Pope and, through them, to the priests of the parishes (the local judicatory domains) appointed by the bishops. From Pope to bishop to priest to parishioner is the vertical chain of command with no room for negotiation or contravention. The bishops hold the property deeds to all parishes which belong, in turn, to the Church and governed by the Pope and the appointment of priests to congregations is the sole right of the bishops with no jurisdiction from the parishioners who are to be served by the priests. All funds coming into the local congregation are administered by the authority of the priests who answer to the bishops who answer to the Pope. Bishops, in turn, are selected solely by the Pope and no one may be a bishop without the Pope's blessing. The model is ironclad in terms of authority and jurisdiction and no one or any group of individuals may establish a Catholic parish without the bishop's consent.

Within the Baptist (*horizontal* model) model of Church governance, the local congregation is the sole authority over its own affairs including ownership of the property and the hiring and firing of the clergy. The local congregation appoints its clergy and pays their salary. No funds leave the congregation except as that local congregation decides itself what to do and how to do it. Any Baptist person, clergy or not, may establish a Baptist congregation and that congregation has complete and final authority over all of its affairs in terms of what it believes, teaches, property it owns or builds, clergy it hires or fires. These are the two extreme and most common models of governance within the Christian Church. Now, let us turn to the masjid.

1. As an Imam, do you serve the masjid under a professional contract?
65% Yes 35% No

2. If yes, does it specify due grievance process?
75% Yes 25% No

3. Does your contract specify your allocation of time for community work?
10% Yes 90% No

4. If you have a contract, how many years is the duration of time you are to serve under it?
2 year contract average

5. Is there a committee or council of masjid members who control the contract?
65% Yes 35% No

Few professionals in the United States serve institutions without a legally binding contract. However, in religious communities, legally binding contracts are less common and more problematic owing to the traditional separation of Church and State in America. The State and Federal governments are extremely reluctant to get involved in contract disputes involving religious communities and their clergy. However, some 65% of all immigrant Imams studied in this survey hold a professional and legally binding contract. This is higher than in many Christian traditions and reflects an awareness on the part of the Imam, and possibly the masjid, of the fair and proper use of the contracted relationship. Also, and very helpful, is the discovery that 75% of those holding contracts with their masjid have a grievance process built into the relationship. This usually solves many problems and when outside intervention or mediation is called for, things run more smoothly with a contract containing grievance procedures. Obviously, clergy contracts do not cover every contingency as only 10% of the masjids have built into their Imam contract the “allocation of time for community work.” Some Imams are very eager to be involved in the wider community while others avoid it. Some masjids are desirous of their Imam being active in the community while others prefer not. A contract stipulation would avoid any misunderstanding about the Imam’s use of his time.

Of those Imams who enjoy having a contract with the masjid, two years is the average duration after which renegotiations are in order. Automatic renewals are not advisable since both the board of directors of the masjid as well as the Imam should have a right to reflect upon the previous two-year contract performance and to discuss the coming two year contract period. Salary and performance should always be discussed by both the board and the Imam. The fact that 65% of the masjids have a governance board is very helpful as there is an

identifiable structure for contract discussions.

6. How did your masjid find you for purposes of employing you as their Imam?

50% referral 20% founded 30% Grand Mufti

7. What were the professional qualifications required of you for the position as Imam?

80% College 10% High School Diploma 10% Experience

8. How are grievances solved in a dispute between you and the masjid governance body?

55% Mediation 45% Group

9. Does your masjid's governance body answer to any higher source of authority?

50% Yes 50% No

10. Do you personally rely upon directives from your homeland to you as an American Imam?

55% Yes 45% No

As in the Baptist model where local congregations find their own pastors rather than in the Catholic model where the bishop simply "assigns" a priest to a parish, the board of directors of the masjid is essentially responsible for "finding" an Imam to serve them. When our surveyed Imams were asked how they found employment in the U.S. as an Imam, half said they were "referred" by a colleague or someone known to the masjid in need of an Imam whereas three in ten indicated that they were specifically recommended by the Grand Mufti of their homeland. Interestingly enough, two in ten said they became the Imam of a masjid that they themselves had founded. Like the Baptist model where individual pastors can establish their own congregations, some Imams have taken the initiative to found their own masjids. In turn, as with the Baptist model, the newly established masjid then elects a board of directors which then becomes the employer of the founding Imam and, thus, he in some way loses control and governance over the masjid he himself established. This is the Baptist model where the newly founded congregation elects or appoints a board of deacons who then take control of the property, funds, and the hiring and firing of the pastor serving them. Sometimes, they eventually even fire the founding pastor! None of this can happen in the Catholic model where all control is in the hands of the bishop and none in the hands of the parish with the priest answering, not to the parish, but to the bishop directly.

Qualifications are, again, determined by the local masjid rather than a "higher authority" as is likewise true with the Baptist tradition where there are no specifically set required credentials to be a Baptist minister other than simply being called by a congregation to be their pastor. Some congregations set higher standards, such as a university degree and some even a graduate degree, but this is determined solely by the individual congregation and not a higher authority as with the Catholic model where the priest must have four years of college and four years of seminary in order to serve in any capacity as a parish priest. Imams are called by masjids which have varying levels of educational expectations with eight in ten requiring a university degree but one in ten only a high school diploma, and another one in ten only verifiable experience. If the Imams in the U.S. are going to finally establish themselves as an identifiable body of professionals, they are going to eventually have to set national standards for training and credentialing and then establish institutions in the U.S. which can offer training to meet those standards. Until that happens, every masjid will be on its own to

set standards, salaries, benefit packages, etc. This practice, as in the Baptist model, does not work in favor of the Imams but rather serves the more selfish interest of individual communities of faith. Without identifiable and enforceable standards of training, the profession of Muslim clergy will have difficulty ever establishing itself as a force in American society.

Illustrative of potential problems has to do with the settling of grievances between the masjid and the Imam with just over half indicating that “mediation” is used where the balance say that a “group” is responsible for settling differences. This is the Baptist model and it works sometimes and sometimes it does not. Where it fails, the pastor is forced to leave. In the Catholic model, no such mediation or group has any power as all decisions regarding grievances are in the hands of the bishop and settled by him alone, usually in consultation with the priest involved. Again, half of the masjids appeal to a “higher authority” for the settling of grievances without identifying what that higher authority is. We can assume, however, that since just over half of the Imams look to the higher authority of their homeland religious leader as their outside source that both the masjid and the Imam are dependent upon their homeland leadership for directives in settling disputes, grievances, locating Imams, etc. Of course, if the American Muslim community is to ever take its place as an international force for the teaching and propagating of Islam, there is going to be the need for a serious address to this issue of “outside” versus “inside” jurisdiction and governance.

11. Does your masjid rely upon directives from the homeland in its local affairs and activities?
100% Yes

12. Are you pleased with the governance of your masjid?
85% Yes 15% No

13. If not, explain.
All said there was need for a Board of Directors

14. Would you prefer a higher governance authority in America for your masjid?
100% Yes

15. Would you approve of a Mufti as final authority over you and your masjid
100% Yes

No more telling answer can have been given to the question of governance than the fact that 100% of the Imams say they rely upon directives from their homeland religious leaders in dealing with local affairs and better than eight in ten say they are pleased with this practice. All have said, however, that a strong local board of directors is desirable and beneficial for the overall management of their masjid. Even more telling is the fact that all of the surveyed Imams say they would prefer a higher governance authority in America than that of relying upon their homeland religious leaders. They all agree to a man that they would approve of a designated American religious leader, a Mufti, to serve as their final authority in America. Clearly, the Imams are interested in moving away from the Baptist model and towards the Catholic model of authority and jurisdiction. The advantage is control over standards, credentials, salaries, hiring and firing practices and policies. The disadvantage is that the local masjid must give up much of its autonomy such as holding the deed to its own property, making hiring and firing decisions without outside interference, and setting salary and benefits

without outside consultation with the established source of authority. Both the Baptist and the Catholic models have their strengths and weaknesses and it will be the responsibility of American Imams to determine which model best suits their needs and expectations within the context of an American Islam.

16. Would your masjid's governance council accept an American Mufti as supreme authority?
100% Yes

17. What governing body holds the deed to the property of your masjid?
100% called for a Board of Directors

18. Would your masjid give up the deed to a higher governing authority in America?
60% Uncertain(?) 40% No

19. Do you think your masjid would accept the ruling of such a governance council?
90% Yes 10% No

20. Would you approve of the censoring of a masjid that was defiant of an American governing body?
55% Yes 45% No

21. Would you accept the ruling of an American governance council of Imams in settling a dispute between you and your masjid?
75% Yes 25% No

22. Will your masjid pay for you to take an advanced degree in Islamic studies?
45% Yes 55% No

These final seven questions are central to our discussion and will constitute the basis upon which this particular immigrant Muslim community and their Imams must make future decisions regarding authority and governance related to their individual and corporate life. Failure to resolve these issues regarding jurisdiction and decision-making processes will perpetually hamper the leadership because without an established plan there will be irregularities, inconsistencies, a widening gap between the educated and uneducated Imams, and the ever expanding scope of issues related to compensation and benefits for the Imams serving American masjids. A hopeful sign is that all Imams in this survey indicated that their communities are ready and willing to accept the jurisdiction of an American Mufti as their supreme authority. This sounds very much like a shift from the present *de facto* Baptist model to a decidedly Catholic model of governance.

Somewhat more problematic is the discovery that, though 100% of the masjids hold their own property titles, four in ten Imams say their masjids would not be willing to give up the title to their property to an American Mufti with six in ten "uncertain" about such a willingness. It must be pointed out here that much of the authority exercised within the Catholic model is derived precisely because the bishops hold the property deeds and, thus, "own" the congregation's property. Without this kind of power, the Baptist model takes over with every congregation holding its own deed to its building and grounds. And, beyond building and

grounds, the local masjid assumes the right to hire and fire its religious leader and to establish compensation standards on its own without reference or deference to a “higher authority.”

However, and somewhat confusingly, though there is a great deal of uncertainty about who should/could/would/must hold the deed to the masjid’s property, there is a 90% approval for the American Mufti to exercise his authority over the masjid’s affairs. The ambiguity and confusion comes when 90% say they would accept such an authority but 45% say they would not accept that authority “censoring” a masjid for non-compliance with its rightful governance and decision-making. Imams cannot have it both ways. Everyone accepting an American Mufti must also be willing to accept his rulings on governance matters. As it stands now, half say they will while half say they will not. Imams and masjids must decide! Yet, 75% of the Imams say they would accept the jurisdiction of such an American authority figure in settling disputes between Imams and masjids even though one in four say they would not accept such an authority. Herein lies the tension and stress of leadership.

Needless to say, there is much to be decided here and the American Muslim community will need to settle its own affairs within the context of its own traditions, both from their various homelands and from within the growing indigenous traditions emerging within Islam in America.

CONCLUDING REMARKS TO PART TWO

Unlike Part One of this study which involved a narrative discussion of the various component parts of the professionalization of ministry and its relationship to the historic and traditional role of the Imam in the Muslim community, Part Two is decidedly quantitative in its collection and analysis of data gathered from an identified immigrant ethnic group of Imams who are now serving in the United States. This is the very first study of its kind dealing with empirical data gathered directly from American Muslim clergy. This section of the book has explored a full range of issues related to ministry including data related to five specific categories of information, namely, personal biography, family life, education, faith community, and authority and jurisdiction.

Each category has relevance to the nature and function of professionalism, whether we are dealing with Christian, Jewish, or Muslim clergy. The autobiographical information was most relevant in terms of who these individuals are now serving in America as immigrant Imams. The Imam’s family life tells us a great deal about their perceptions of what it means to be an Imam, a husband, a father, and a religious leader in their faith communities. Education is central to the professionalization process, whether we are dealing with the law, medicine, education, or ministry. Their training is very telling in terms of to what extent they are or are not qualified and ready to serve a Muslim community in America. To know the Imam is to know his faith community and to understand the characteristics of the masjid. To know its membership, activities, finances, and mission is to understand the pressures and expectations felt by the immigrant Imam in America. And, of great importance to the “professional organization of Imams” in America, we have learned a great deal about attitudes regarding governance, the exercise of faith-based authority, and the range of jurisdiction issues recognized by both the masjids and the Imams serving them. Here, more than any other place in this study, we are confronted with the pressures of the professionals governing the faith communities of American Muslims. Many issues, problems, and opportunities are confronted

in this section of the survey.

Regarding personal biography, all survey participants are immigrants from the same country speaking the same primary language while all are conversant in English. Nearly ten years of service in the U.S. has given them a real exposure to the American understanding of what a professional clergyman is and does. All drive automobiles, watch television with preference for international news, most have a parent still living but not with their families. Some of these Imams belong to an immigrant-linked clergy group and better than half participate in the local ecumenical clergy association with virtually all of them affirming their positive reception within that group. Better than half of the responding Imams have a former member of the family as a Imam and they wish their sons to become Imams as well. Just under forty years old and married nearly fifteen years on average, most have been an Imam for more than fifteen years with more than half still hoping to return to their homeland one day. Most have never lived outside their homeland before coming to America and nearly half came to the U.S. specifically to serve as an Imam in the Muslim community.

Regarding their family life, all of their wives are natives of and speak the national language of their homeland with three out of four fully conversant in English as well. Nearly half are U.S. citizens and average 36 years of age and married fifteen years on average with two children. Imam wives have U.S. permits to drive automobiles and just less than half hold a university degree and just more than half have employment outside the home averaging about \$25,000.00 annual income. Their children usually attend public school and these wives have visited their parents in their native homeland within the past three years. They watch television for news, education, and entertainment and less than half wear western clothes and virtually all wear the hijab. Their children have ethnic/nationally-linked names though eight in ten were born in the U.S. and nearly half of the Imams are U.S. citizens themselves. Few Imams and virtually none of their wives have been divorced.

Regarding the Imams' education, most Imams had decided that they were going to be Imams by the age of 15 and with their parents' full encouragement and support. Most eventually studied an average of five years in their homeland to become Imams. Generally speaking, the Imams are pleased with their Arabic recitation skills which they learned in their native homeland high schools. They are less than satisfied with their personal Islamic library holdings and most are "very" certain that their Friday sermons are important. Over half hold university degrees and have non-Muslim friends and clergy friends in their communities. All are desirous of pursuing a doctorate in Islamic studies and believe firmly that it is both possible and desirable to be able to study to become an Imam in America. Most believe that there are internationally distinguished Muslim scholars living and teaching already in America. Only half feel their English sufficient for public speaking but virtually all feel they would greatly benefit from training in pastoral counseling, even from a non-Muslim. None of the masjids being served by Imams participating in this survey pay for their Imams' continuing education. Few Imams belong to any professional associations and very few have had any training whatsoever in counseling but would be very interested in having such training, particularly if provided from an Islamic perspective.

Regarding their masjids, average membership size approaches 400 but average only about 75 in regular attendance at Friday prayers. Most members are of the Imam's own nationality and homeland and less than half say they have American-born converts in their communities. The average annual budget for the masjid is \$145,000.00 with just over half owning their building free and clear of debt. Of those who still owe on their property, the outstanding indebtedness is just over \$100,000.00. Three out of four members are first-

generation immigrants with only about 10% in the professional classes of law and medicine. Less than half of the masjids have a day school but most have an after school program and, on occasion, use their building for public non-Islamic meetings. The Imams' average salary is \$33,000.00 and less than half have their Social Security paid by the masjid and even fewer have a health plan provided by the community. Virtually no masjid provides a retirement package. Just under half of our survey group say prayers in English but nearly all say their masjids would welcome English prayers at the Friday service. Just over half of the Imams preach in English on occasion with the balance preaching in their native language. Only a small number actually preach in Arabic. Male membership averages about 38 years of age and most masjids have a women's program but few sponsor outreach programs in the community. All masjids have websites and all Imams have email. Most masjids are in large cities with some in smaller towns but none in the rural areas. Preferring to call all of their masjids "Islamic Cultural Centers," membership is mostly ethnic in keeping with the Imam's own nationality and language. Most of the larger cities have more than one masjid and their relationship amongst themselves is positive and productive.

Regarding authority and jurisdiction, both the Imam and the masjid are confronted regularly with issues related to the governance of the faith community. Better than six in ten Imams serve under a legal contract which includes a grievance process with a duration of, on average, two years but none carry provisions for the allocation of time in community work. Half of the Imams found their positions through referrals of colleagues and friends with three in ten being recommended by the Muslim leader of their homeland. Most needed a university degree to secure the Imam's appointment. Half of the Imams say their masjid answers to a higher authority for decision-making and governance policies coming particularly from their homeland religious leadership though the Imam himself says only about half of the time is he answerable to the homeland leadership. However, he reports that his community relies all of the time on such jurisdiction. However, nearly half say they would not give up the title to their property to such an authority figure while the remaining half say they are very uncertain as to their feelings in the matter. Virtually all Imams say their masjids would accept the jurisdiction of an American Mufti but nearly half would not approve of such an authority censoring another masjid for defying a ruling by such an authority. Yet, 75% say they would accept such authority when dealing with disputes between Imams and masjids.

CONCLUSION

This M.E.C.C.A. Project (Muslim Education Council on Clergy in America) is only the beginning of what is anticipated to be an ongoing series of longitudinal studies of Imams serving in the United States. Like John Dewey once said when asked about the University of Chicago where he taught, "It may not be a great university, it is simply the best there is!" The MECCA Project research team feels similarly about this study of Muslim clergy in America. It is a first and not a last attempt to come to a fuller and more productive understanding of the nature and role of the Imam serving Muslim faith communities in America. The more they understand about their own ministry and the needs of their faith communities, the better clergy they will be and the better served their communities will be. This is the goal of the MECCA Project and all of its initiatives in this regard.

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