Muslim Families in the United States

Trevan Hatch
Brigham Young University - Provo, trevan_hatch@byu.edu

Loren Marks

See next page for additional authors

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In 2004, we drew attention to the fact that almost all of the social science research on religion and families examined Christian families—and only Christian families (Dollahite, Marks, & Goodman, 2004). Specifically, we noted a "conspicuous" absence of research on both Muslim and Jewish families (p. 422). We have made a pronounced effort to include both Muslim families and Jewish families in the American Families of Faith project, and virtually all of our work includes both along with Christian families from various denominations. Some of our recent work has focused solely on Muslim families or Jewish families (e.g., Alghafli, Hatch, & March, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; Hatch & Marks, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; Marks, Hatch, & Dollahite, unpublished manuscript). In the next two chapters, with American Families of Faith project members Trevan Hatch (who holds a graduate degree in Jewish Studies) and Zahra Alghafli (a practicing Muslim from Saudi Arabia who has researched and published several recent works on Muslim families), we take a closer look at Muslim (chapter 8) and Jewish families (chapter 9).

When students, friends, or family ask us what we research, and we include Muslim and Jewish families in the response, they often say something like, "Wow, that's so interesting!" Similarly, when we are in the presence of a group of scholars, it is not uncommon for many in the group to want to discuss our research on Muslim and Jewish families—and what we are finding and publishing.

What makes Muslims (and Islam) and Jews (and Judaism) of such interest to so many people? What can we learn about how religion influences family life from these two religions? Further, what can we learn from Muslims and Jews about what it is like to be a religious minority family in the United States?
In the next two chapters, we will highlight multiple aspects of Islam and Judaism that may answer some of these questions. Specifically, we will briefly examine, for both Muslim and Jewish families, two of the three dimensions of religion (as defined in chapter 2): religious practices and religious community. Before continuing, we will briefly address the question: Why, of all the religions in the world, do we choose to focus only on Muslim and Jewish families? First, most of the research we have cited throughout this book is based on samples of Christian families in the United States. Therefore, much of what you have learned in the previous chapters of this book (with the exception of our AFF data) has been drawn from studies of Christians. Thus, we feel a need to devote chapters to the two other “Abrahamic faiths” that constitute the great majority of American families of faith.

But why focus only on the Abrahamic faiths and not on other religions? Regarding what are often called the “Eastern religions” (Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, etc.), very little empirical research has been conducted on the religious experience of these families. In addition, the Eastern religious traditions are less familiar to most Western students, and, therefore, much more space would be required in this book to adequately address these traditions. Judaism and Islam, on the other hand, are typically more familiar to many Western readers, perhaps because these religions are featured in the media more often and also share some roots with Christianity (Agius & Chircop, 1998). In fact, Judaism and Islam, along with Christianity, are often grouped and labeled together as “Abrahamic religions” because they trace their heritage back to the ancient patriarch Abraham. As readers attempting to learn more about how religion impacts families, it is vital for us to explore Jewish and Muslim populations because they are important and influential religious minorities in the United States.

The rich context of religious minority families offers the chance to highlight issues like identity formation in youth and emerging adults, the importance of social support from their religious community, and the unique challenges religious minorities face as they strive to live their religion. In this chapter we feature Islam and the 25 Muslim families from the American Families of Faith project.

What Is Islam? Who Is a Muslim?

The words “Muslim” and “Islam” come from the same root (slm), meaning “peace” or “submission.” Islam is the name of the religion, and a Muslim (literally meaning “one who submits”) is an adherent of that religion. Islam is the religion of over one billion people worldwide, roughly 20% of the world’s population. Islam was founded by the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century CE. Muhammad was born in Mecca, the home of the Kaaba sanctuary of over 350 idols. Beginning at age 40, Muhammad reported that he had received several revelations from the heavenly messenger Gabriel that were later transcribed and combined in one volume known as the Qur’an (Koran).

The death of Muhammad fractured the Muslim community. One segment maintained that Muhammad’s son-in-law, Ali bin Abi Taleb, should lead the Umma (“Muslim community”). Ali’s followers were known as Shi’at Ali, or the “Party of Ali,” more commonly referred to today as Shi’ites or Shia Muslims. The other major segment argued that the Umma should choose the next leader, as Muhammad did not specifically identify his successor before his death. This group selected Abu Bakr, Muhammad’s father-in-law, as the next leader, and are commonly known as Sunni Muslims or Sunnis (meaning a clear path or right way of practice). Today, roughly 80%-85% of Muslims worldwide follow Sunni Islam. Within 300 years of Muhammad’s death, Islam had spread from Arabia to China and India in the East to Spain and Portugal in the West and from Morocco to southern Africa.

Muslims in the United States and Muslim U.S. Demographics

Historians are unsure about the location of the first mosque in the United States (Howell, 2007) let alone when the first Muslims immigrated to the United States. It is likely that African Muslims, brought to America during the slave trade, represented the first sizable group of Muslims in America. Some have estimated that up to 15% of African slaves brought to the U.S. were Muslim (Diouf, 2013). The most recent study on American Muslims (Pew, 2016) estimated that 3.3 million Muslims live in the United States—about 1% of the total population. Some have projected this figure to double within three decades. Only about 10% of the U.S. Muslim population are legal immigrants, and roughly 20% of adult Muslims in the United States are converts (Pew, 2016). According to one source, 75% of converts to Islam in the United States in the five years following September 11, 2001, were women (Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006). Another study of Muslims in 39 countries revealed that a majority of self-identified Muslims are deeply devoted to the beliefs and practices of Islam (Pew, 2013). Of course, as among all faiths, there is a range of degree of religious adherence among Muslims.
We now turn attention to various aspects of Muslim family life that illustrate ways religion impacts Muslim individuals and families in the United States. Specifically, we will review: (1) some of the challenges that Muslims face as a religious minority in the United States; (2) the impact of the religious community and social support for Muslim families; and (3) a few important aspects of religious observance in the home.

Challenges of Being a Religious Minority: Muslim Perspectives

In the years since 9/11 and the subsequent War on Terror, Islam and the Muslim population have been front and center in Western media. The three issues involving Muslims and/or the Middle East that seem to garner the most attention in the media are terrorist groups, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the treatment of women. All three issues are highly charged with emotion and are often represented in sensationalized ways. In other words, most of what Americans hear in the media about Islam is negative and may or may not be representative of Islam or the majority of Muslims. Those in the popular media rarely discuss Islamic theology or Islamic religious practices in the home as practiced by most Muslim families. The focus tends to be on violent and extremist groups that are not representative of the majority. As a result of both 9/11 and subsequent media coverage, hate crimes against Muslims reportedly increased by 1600% (from pre-9/11 levels) in both Canada and the United States (Canadian Islamic Congress, 2002; Cheng, Ickes, & Kenworthy, 2013).

The Muslim Practice of Hijab

Two of the most commonly discussed topics on Islam in the media are violence and the treatment of women. Concerning the latter, the female head covering, called hijab, receives significant media (and scholarly) attention. Typically ignored is that Muslim men are also enjoined to cover their heads during worship and the fact that the practice of covering the head or hair for women and/or men when in public or at worship is practiced by millions of people in other faiths as well (e.g., Orthodox Judaism, Orthodox Christianity, Sikhism).

In connection with hijab, it is a common practice in Islam for Muslim women to cover their hair in public or in the presence of men who are not part of their family—although individual and cultural adherence and expression vary widely. In Islam, the principle of hijab is a system of modest dress implemented, ideally, to protect humanity against illicit sexual interaction between men and women who are not married. Hijab means “curtain” and usually refers to the head covering, although the extension of hijab might include a full body covering and a veil (niqab) that completely covers the face. The broader principle of hijab is widely applied in Islam as a head covering, even though none of the seven references to hijab in the Qur’an concern head coverings or women’s dress, but rather a general separation of the sexes (White & Mir, 2007). Due to the ambiguous nature of the scriptural passages regarding female dress, some Muslim feminist commentators have suggested that hijab and other similar traditions must be reinterpreted for modern times.

Given both media-related and academic attention to the principle and/or practice of hijab, and the highly visible expression of the practice, it is not surprising, then, that several participants in the American Families of Faith project discussed hijab—and many did so at length and in depth. While most Muslim AFF participants (female and male) spoke positively about hijab, a few implied challenges were identified. Many participants went beyond the physical manifestations of hijab, like veiling and covering, to discuss what they saw as the underlying and foundational principles, including modesty and appropriate barriers and distance between the sexes. The following excerpts are illustrative. As Tamara, a Shia wife and mother, explained:

In my opinion, hijab is not just about clothes. . . . It is a whole institution of separation [between men and women] that was made by the creator of everything . . . God has set certain standards. According to my religious belief . . . one of the things is modesty at a level where you have to totally ignore the other gender. . . . That is a sacrifice, especially when you are a teenager.

Jane, a Sunni wife and mother who was also an adult convert to Islam, similarly reported:

I cover my head. Why do I cover my head? Because in our religion, I do not want men to flirt with me. Let’s face it, if I were standing next to a woman in a bikini, men would lust over her and not over me. I don’t want men to lust over me, whether I’m married or not. One of the ways to prevent that is to cover up. . . . I don’t call this a sacrifice. Think about all the women who spend hours and hours doing their hair, I
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don’t have [to do] that . . . I used to have to get up at the crack of dawn to style. [Now] I can get up and wash it, dry it, braid it, and go. I don’t have that pressure or the pressure of wearing fad clothes. I don’t think it’s a sacrifice in any way. I think I gained beyond my wildest dreams. I feel that in Islam, I have more rights than I did before.

Ali, a Shia husband and father, referenced past discussions he and his wife had regarding hijab and said:

Something we [as a couple] have grown to agree about [is] there has to be a gender separation in the sense that she would not communicate . . . much across gender and [that] she would dress conservatively. That keeps the woman away from a strange man and by covering half of her face or more. What this does is block identity, because if you have many people who dress that [modest] way, the woman is not going to be talked about. So if they dress that way there is a barrier and I think that is what hijab is in Islam.

Notice the language used in these quotes regarding the justification of hijab: gender “separation,” “blocking identity” of women, placing “barriers” between genders, “modesty at a level where you have to totally ignore the other gender.” This type of language was mentioned in a positive context with affirming undertones by practicing Muslims, both men and women. The laws concerning the separation of sexes implemented in Islam to guard against illicit sexual practices were portrayed and viewed as noble among the Muslims we interviewed.

Many non-Muslim Americans, however, may perceive the justifications and practices associated with hijab as sexist, primitive, and a stumbling block for women rather than a stepping stone to a higher functioning society. This is where the challenge arises for Muslims in many Western countries. It may not be the hijab in and of itself that is the challenge, but rather (1) the perception of hijab that perpetuates the media narrative that Muslim women are mistreated and that they have minimal or no individualized identity because they must cover up to avoid inciting sexual thoughts in men; and (2) the separation of the sexes in American society is extremely difficult in a practical sense, as mentioned by one Muslim: “As a Muslim, we don’t shake hands with the opposite sex, so that sometimes creates problems. When you meet someone for the first time . . . that sometimes creates a problem.”

Another Muslim husband, Mohammad, explained that his wife, Alya, an American convert to Islam, experiences frequent persecution because of hijab:

Some of the people who are ignorant in American society view [her] as almost like a traitor to her own country [the U.S.]. You know, people get really irritated with her. They just see her and they just start shouting out kind of hate speech because they see that she is a white lady wearing a scarf. It is something I do not have to endure because when I go out, nobody knows that I am a Muslim. Nobody cares, but when they see her, it hurts big time for me that she has to go through this sometimes.

Speaking generally, whether a given individual, Muslim or non-Muslim, female or male, is supportive of hijab or opposed to the practice, the American Families of Faith interview data reveal an important issue relating to hijab. Namely, the practice is negotiated and discussed by marital partners and has relational implications—both positive and painful. It seems that hijab carries with it both identity and ostracism. We now move from the personal (and relational) issue of hijab to a discussion of the Muslim religious community.

Muslim Religious Community

Social support from the local religious community can be important for an array of families, but it may be particularly vital for the social well-being of religious minorities, both as individuals and as families. We will not revisit previously reviewed research again here; however, the following quotes from AFF participants provide us more to think about. Further, because most available data are drawn from white, Christian samples, we have the relatively novel opportunity to learn more about how the faith community serves Muslim (and diverse but predominantly non-white) families. Ahsan, a Middle Eastern immigrant and Muslim husband, discussed the personal and familial importance of his mosque:

Not being from here, I don’t have any immediate family around us, and most of us [at my mosque] are like that. So all these, as you would call it, your congregation, is sort of like your extended family. So, yes, it does affect your family, in that you have your children to bring too, and they would intermingle with other children that ARE like them.

A Middle Eastern wife and mother, Asheka, similarly said of her mosque:

[My religious congregation] is important because when I take my son to the congregation and he sees other people who have the same religious beliefs, it [helps] him to grow in an Islamic religious community.
So, especially for the kids it’s really important to go to the religious congregation and especially it’s more important in this society because we can only meet other people of my religion when I go in the religious congregation. ... It’s also (especially) important for me and other women because they don’t go outside so much, but when they go to the congregation they can learn from other people and they can have some socialization and [this] helps build their mind ...

Another Muslim wife and mother, a white U.S.-born convert to Islam, explained:

Alya: [Our religious] community is good for the kids. [It helps them] to be able to see other kids who are Muslims. They do not have a lot of interactions at school. They do not see a lot of Muslims at school. So, it is good when our oldest daughter can see other girls with hijab on and she feels more normal. She sees other people like her.

Mohammad, husband of Alya, reflected:

Where I grew up, there were a lot of Muslims. Lots of what I learned was through that interaction. So, thank God, it happens in this community that at least we can get some of it. Without the community, I think we would be lost completely because [Alya] comes from a culture that had no Islam in it. I came from a culture that split half-and-half; [there was half of the] culture that had Islam in it. So really, the community helps Without the community we really would be struggling. [Actually], I think we are struggling now; without the community we would be drowning. That is one thing we look at—you know, maybe one day down the road we [will] move somewhere where the [Muslim] community is bigger. I mean, there might be an Islamic school that is well enough [established] for the children to go to. That is something we look at and talk about.

In the preceding interview data excerpts, we have heard mothers and fathers repeatedly reference the religiously specific social support that Muslim faith communities offer to their children, and this theme recurred often in the data. However, some participants also talked about personal, qualitative, and social benefits that they received as adults. Omar, a Sunni Muslim originally from Jordan and a father of two, said:

When you go to pray at the mosque, [for men] it is obligatory to go to the mosque. Everyone is equal at the mosque, you can stand wherever you want. The poor person is standing next to the rich man ... the sick is standing next to the healthy, the white is standing next to the black. There is an equality. From a societal standpoint, that brings the society together. No one is better than another, except by his good deeds. ... Everyone stands in line. Before prayer, the prayer leader tells you to close the gaps (so your shoulders are touching your neighbor) ... and then we pray together. ... This brings a society together.

Omar’s wife, Angie, one of a few white, U.S.-born, adult converts to Islam in the AFF sample, went on to explain:

We dress humbly [in the mosque] so that we don’t make poor people feel bad. That way you don’t know whether you are standing next to a doctor or a poor man. You can’t tell. Where I used to go to church, you wore your very best (and I was guilty of this) and then [when someone is dressed poorly] you think, “Oh, what are they doing here?”

In this section on Muslim faith community we first documented the child-centered benefits reported by parents. We then moved to personal and social influences of the mosque on the perceptions, attitudes, and thinking of the parents themselves—as the latter few excerpts illustrate. In the next section, we move from the mosque to the home as we examine family-based religious observance in Islam.

Muslim Religious Observance in the Home

We have written elsewhere, in connection with family and home-based religious rituals and observances:

The small body of research that examines religious, family-level ritual has yielded some interesting findings—namely, that shared religious activities may contribute to intimacy and commitment in marriage and that family religious activities “also represent a potentially unique pathway to facilitate family cohesion” (Mahoney et al., 2001, p. 590). ... [Even though we know relatively little about the whys and hows of family-level religious rituals] family ritual (especially religious family ritual) seems a promising phenomenon for social researchers to examine. (Marks & Dollahite, 2012, pp. 187, 186)

Our interviews with Muslim families have delivered some valuable insights on the phenomenon of religious family (and individual-level) rituals. Based
on American Families of Faith data, two of the most salient rituals or religious observances in the Muslim home are: (1) daily prayer (salat) and (2) fasting during the holy month of Ramadan.

Prayer (salat)

We turn first to prayer or salat. Omar, an Arab-American Muslim father, explained, “Prayer in Arabic is called salat. . . . [Salat] means connection, it is your time to connect with God” (Marks & Dollahite, 2012, p. 198). Another Muslim husband, Tal, said:

There [have] been times when [I] was mad and I had to go and pray to calm down. When you pray, you have to center yourself and you have to submit to Allah and you can’t be angry and submit—it just does no work. So yes, prayer can help, definitely. You will become more rational and reasonable.

From Tal’s reflection, we see that even apparently individual-level rituals like personal prayer can have family-level and relational implications. Another Muslim husband explained the influence of family prayer:

When you pray you have to center yourself and . . . submit to Allah. You can’t be angry and submit. It just does not work. . . . Especially after prayer . . . the whole house [will settle] down. There is no TV, there is no internet, there is nothing, and there is pureness of communications there and it comes straight from the heart. You know, you just can’t get that any other way . . . especially [the] close[ness] with the children.

Ashkah, a Muslim mother and wife, also took time to discuss and explain the familial nature of prayer in her home.

[Prayer] is something we do as a family. You are worshiping as a family and it gives everybody time to stop and interact with each other afterwards. And you know, you’re teaching your children something that is good. You are worshiping God and that, to me, is heartwarming because we are all there . . . So to me, it’s good. It seems like a family time.

One unique element of Muslim belief related to the practice of prayer that recurred in the AFF interviews is that united prayer, as a marital couple

or as a family, was reported to be superior to personal prayer. This belief was referenced and explained by two Muslim husbands:

Orhan (Sunni husband): We believe that “together-prayer” has more rewards than just praying individually. So, this is one thing husband and wife can do together to increase their rewards . . . in the afterlife.

Iliashim (Sunni husband): It is statutory in our family that if you pray by yourself, you get some [benefit], but if you pray with your family, you get more [benefit]. It’s also social, you know, you feel more comfortable when you pray with your wife and when you pray with your children. It’s [provides] a unity, you feel more comfortable when you pray together.

Few in the American Families of Faith project explained the whys behind shared couple prayer and faith with as much texture as Rekah, a Muslim wife and mother, who said:

Marriage is one of the most virtuous or most spiritual foundations in society. It is a very religious thing for me. And we think of it as one of the traditions of our Prophet, so it’s a very spiritual thing. . . . We have a lot of traditions that say when a man and wife get together, [when] they marry, they have actually started a foundation. And both of their faiths become complete. For example, the worship that you used to do when you were single is so much more, worth more, after you are married. So it really increases the value of your faith, when you are married. We think of it as a way to progress spiritually. We become partners in growing religiously.

Having discussed the individual, couple, and family-level influence of prayer (salat), we now turn to a second and final Muslim family religious practice, the Ramadan fast.

The Month of the Ramadan Fast and Muslim Families

Ramadan refers to the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is a time of fasting, one of the five pillars of Islam (the other four pillars include the
declaration of faith, prayer, charity, and pilgrimage to Mecca; see Alaghaflj et al., 2014). Muslims are to refrain from food, drink, or engaging in sexual relations during daylight hours. After sunset it is common to eat a small meal following the evening prayer. Later, many partake of a large meal, and some eat a third meal in the morning before sunrise. Some individuals are exempted from fasting including young children, menstruating women, the elderly, those traveling, and the afflicted. Children are introduced to fasting by incremental steps to ease them into the process. The Islamic calendar is lunar, and, therefore, annual events are not tied to any particular season, but change from year to year. This makes fasting (including abstaining from fluids) more difficult during summer months where the days are longer and hotter. Many practicing Muslims also abstain from many other pleasures during Ramadan to completely and symbolically break from the world. Some of these pleasures may include listening to music, applying bodily fragrances, and participating in any major activities of excitement (e.g., celebrations or parties).

No other topic seemed to excite quite as much enthusiasm among the Muslims interviewed for the AFF project as the month of fasting during Ramadan. It was not uncommon for parents, especially fathers, to discuss this religious practice in a passionate manner. A Sunni husband named Gulam said:

The thing that we really enjoy and cherish is the month of Ramada... because we do so many things together as a family. We wake up in the middle of the night. We sit together, we eat together, and we pray together. [We] go to [the mosque] and bring food. And we get together as a family.

A Shia Muslim named Raghib reported:

[Ramadan] is a very, very good experience for us. I think what fasting does is [that] it makes everything else so insignificant. Seeing the family, the marriage, human life—[these are] really the most important things in the world, because everything else means nothing, really. [During the year] we do get carried away with worldly things, the houses, the cars, and all of that, I think—[but Ramadan] really brings you right to the ground and [gets you] grounded with God.

A Sunni wife named Noreen expressed her feelings as follows:

I think that religion affects our married life, because [on] this point we can agree: [the Ramadan fast is sacred]. We spend some time without arguing. For example, when we both fast, we do our activities together. We break the fast together [and] we wake up at midnight and eat before fasting. So we do these types of things together. . . . At this point we again agree and that’s how religion is making our life, going together and growing together.

We conclude our discussion of Ramadan with the reflections of husband named Ismail who explained:

Ramadan has been prescribed to us where every Muslim is supposed to [fast]. It’s one of the five pillars of Islam. So . . . we get up early, very early in the morning [to] have a meal together, like a breakfast. We have a meal together, and then after the meal, we read Qur’an, our scripture. And after we do that, it’s time for prayer. We pray together . . . [then], in the evening [after sunset], which is the time of breaking [our] fast, again, the same thing happens as during the morning; We all come together as a family, and we eat together and we thank God together, we pray together. After [that] we break the fast. And then we do more prayers. So the whole month of Ramadan is a very unique experience. We do a lot less of the worldly things and a lot more of godly things than we normally do. . . . When you do those kinds of things together every day . . . it . . . bring[s] people together and it strengthens our beliefs and [our] family.

in the brief interview excerpts from Noreen (a Muslim mother) and Ismail (a Muslim father), we are presented with the word “together” 14 separate times, underscoring that Ramadan seems to hold a potent unifying function for some Muslim families. These cultural and religious minority families draw strength and cohesion from a unique facet of Islam that combines family and faith.

Conclusion

We have seen through the eyes of a small sample of 25 American Muslim families how the local Islamic community and various religious practices impact individuals and families. Muslims experience challenges in the United States, and many of these challenges are related to perceptions of non-Muslims regarding the treatment of women and violence in Islam. Most religious minorities face some level of perceived ostracism or lack of full acceptance,
but many Muslims seem to experience even more challenges. In the eyes of those outside the faith, some challenges may be viewed as self-inflicted due to the literal separation of the sexes attached with stricter interpretations of hijab. Many Muslim women will not talk to, deal with, shake hands with, or mingle with men who are not related to them. This creates many practical and cultural challenges for those living in the United States. Most religious minority families have to deal with negative stereotypes, scheduling conflicts, or dietary rules (impacting school functions and work parties). In addition, like Orthodox Jewish families, Muslim families must also deal with fairly strict laws regarding gender issues such as modesty in dress and interaction with those of the other gender who are not family members.

This chapter has also helped illustrate how important the religious community is for religious minorities and their identity and well-being. Muslims rely on frequent interaction with other like-minded members of the Islamic community (ummah), and that interaction comes primarily during local Muslim community events and worship services at the mosque (masjid). Some Muslim participants stressed that the mosque is a place where unity of purpose and faith is fostered because, in both idealized belief and often in practice, class and racial divisions break down. Ideally, because the mosque is a place of equality, the poorest man may kneel and pray next to the wealthiest man.

Regarding religious observance in the home, prayer (salat) was frequently mentioned as both personally and relationally helpful. For many (if not most) of the Muslim families in the AFF project, fasting during Ramadan seemed to be the most salient religious practice. These religious practices, according to AFF Muslim participants, help unify families and create a bond between husbands and wives and between parents and children.

Chapter Summary Points

1. Islam is a sizeable global religion; approximately 20% of the world's population is Muslim.
2. The two major denominations of Islam are Sunni and Shia, and both rely on the Qur'an as their holy book.
3. Muslims in the United States account for about 1% of the population, but the number of Muslims may double over the next few decades.
4. Among the challenges facing modern Muslims are the sensationalism around the small minority of Muslims that are terrorists and the cultural treatment of women in some countries.

5. The use of the hijab is an Islamic practice that some find controversial; AFF Muslim participants reported both positive and negative ramifications of its use, such as establishing identity but also increasing ostracism.
6. AFF Muslims families often referenced the importance of the mosque in the religious development of their children and for their own benefit.
7. The two notable home-based rituals Muslim families reported were daily prayer and fasting during Ramadan.

Review Questions

1. How do historians believe Muslims first came to the United States?
2. What reasons did the AFF participants give for wearing the hijab?
3. What benefits did AFF participants attribute to mosque worship?
4. According to the responses from AFF Muslim families, how does daily prayer affect family life?
5. From what things do Muslims abstain during Ramadan, and what does this symbolically represent?

Notes

1. This chapter is authored with Trevan Hatch and Zahra Alghafli. Narrative excerpts are from the American Families of Faith research project, except where otherwise indicated.
2. We will not focus on the third dimension of religious beliefs, primarily because, while beliefs are extremely important in Christianity, they are less important in Islam and Judaism. We recommend Prothero (2010) as a valuable introductory resource on these traditions.

References


