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Muslim Migration into the US: A Study of the Motivations and Consequences behind Migration and Settlement Patterns

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SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

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PROJECT TITLE: Muslim Migration into the U.S.: A Study of the Motivations and Consequences behind Migration and Settlement Patterns

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

Signed: Benita J. Howell, Faculty Mentor

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A Study of the Motivations and Consequences behind Migration and Settlement Patterns

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2003 Senior Project
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Muslim Migration into the US:

A Study of the Motivations and Consequences behind Migration and Settlement Patterns

Recent events have brought Muslims into the limelight, whereas before they had been relegated to the back of our minds. Being thrust into the forefront, has led many to realize the existence of Muslims is very real and perceive them as alien entities rather than the citizens they are. It has been a disappointment to the Muslims that throughout American history they have always been seen as a negative presence in America. They, therefore, have been working towards rectifying this situation. The motivation behind this research project is to understand exactly where Muslims migrated from, where they settled within the US, why they decided to leave what was familiar to them and come to a foreign place, and how they have assimilated into society. Another major driving force behind this project is to establish a common thread between migrant Muslims and the early settlers of North America by drawing parallels between their experiences. Finally, there is a desire to douse the flames of division that have arisen; to this end proof in the form of correlations will be provided that America is a nation of immigrants, while some are older than others, we all ultimately migrated here at one point or another.

Understanding Muslims is extremely important for people living in the United States. Although, in the past, there has not been very much public involvement on behalf of the Muslims in the United States, the state of this lack of involvement cycle is rapidly changing today. Muslims are now becoming more involved in politics and public life. Americans now face the need to understand reasons behind increased involvement of the Muslims; it has also become necessary for Americans to understand the reasons behind the rapid growth of Muslims in America. Islam is now the fastest growing religion in America (Haddad and Smith: 1994). Muslims are second only to Christians in their presence in the United States. While in the past
Muslims may have been considered as no better than second-class citizens, today an entirely new dynamic is present in the United States. Another important trend is seen in the Muslim population present in America today. This trend is the fact that in today’s Muslim population, indigenous Muslims have surpassed immigrant Muslims (Tweed article). This results in an additional aspect to consider; leaving no choice but to realize that today’s Muslims are more a part of American society, because they have known no other life experiences to incorporate.

The experience of Muslim immigrants in the United States is extremely unique compared to their presence and experiences elsewhere. Throughout history, Muslims have lived or migrated to areas where there was a history of the country’s occupation or colonization (Hiskett, 226: 1993). This led to the residual effects of resentment towards the host nation. Due to the United States’ more recent creation, America had not colonized a Muslim country. Therefore, the Muslims that migrated to the United States did not bear a history of resentment with Americans. Despite the multitude of reasons behind migration, Muslims settled here with a different mindset. While elsewhere in the world they may have migrated temporarily, as a means of refuge; when they came to the United States they had permanent settlement in mind (Haddad, Haines, and Findly: 1984). Due to this mindset, Muslim immigrants in America proceeded to carve out a niche for themselves, in hopes of creating and living a better life. In addition to this, since the United States did not have the aftermath that could be created by the presence of an ancient Islamic Empire, there was also no lingering Muslim population which resulted in another consequence. It allowed all of the groups of immigrants to gain the ability to have an equivalent amount of influence on the creation of a Muslim population in the United States (Hiskett, 227: 1993).
There are many migratory origin points. So many, in fact, that over 60 different nationalities are represented today (Coward, Hinnells, and Williams, 240: 2000). The greatest majority of Muslims that are in America are African-Americans. These Muslims mainly consist of converts who have come to accept Islam. The next major majority are from South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan (Smith article). The third percentage of immigrants comes from Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The rest of the Muslims make up a group that are from African nations, Iran, Turkey, Southeast and Central Asia, white Americans, and Europeans, among many others (See Figure 1).

Through research it was found that there were three main waves of Muslim migration into the new world (Tweed article). The first wave of migration consisted of the first Muslims arriving on the slave ships. The second wave of migration began in the post civil war era and ended in the 1920’s. The third and final wave of migration begins after 1965 and continues to this day.

The first wave spanned the first settlement of the United States to the mid-nineteenth century. The first wave was considered forced, or involuntary. This was due to the fact that the Africans brought over on the slave ships had no choice as to whether or not they wanted to come to America. Little is known about the lives of these first Muslims, aside from the few autobiographies. The owners of slaves did not deem it important to record the lives of their slaves, aside from maybe slaves of apparently noble lineage (Shaikh, 268: 1992). This has resulted in a lack of information about the lives and religions of slaves that were considered to be of lesser birth. Most scholars agree, however, that the number of African slaves who were Muslim reached the thousands.
There is also a reported connection between this initial influx of Muslims and the multitude of conversions of African-Americans in the twentieth century. The conversions are said to be a means of returning to their African roots. African-Americans once again want to bear the banner of the original religion of their ancestors (Shaikh, 267: 1992). They saw in Islam a means for advancing civil rights, eradicating the legacy of slavery and fighting against institutionalized racial discrimination. In contrast to the first influx of Muslims, the second and third periods of migrations were similar in that they were both voluntary migrations on the part of Muslims.

The second wave consisted of mostly Arab Muslims from Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon. In addition to migrations of Arab Muslims, there was also a huge influx of Eastern European Muslims during the early twentieth century. Also, the end of the First World War influenced migration. Due to the war, there were upheavals in the Islamic world that led many Muslims to migrate to America (Hiskett, 227: 1993). This wave ended in 1924 as a result of the Asian Exclusion Act and the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act. These acts began applying what was known as the "national origins quota system" limiting immigration based on their nation of origin (Smith article). Both of these legislations severely restricted the immigration of Muslims, specifically Arabs whom the United States categorized as being Asian.

Between the second and third periods of migration, there was also migration as a result of the Second World War. The Muslims that came to the United States during this period consisted of those from India, Pakistan, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union. This was also a result of the disruption that the war caused. Also there were other influxes of Muslims. Many Palestinians migrated to the United States after the creation of the nation-state of Israel in 1948.
In addition to this, the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 and the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act of 1953 also somewhat eased rigorous immigration laws and the quota system of 1924.

The final wave of migration occurred after the Legislation of 1965. This legislation relaxed restriction on migrations, and made revisions to previous immigration laws. It repealed the system of quotas that controlled immigration by national origin (Smith article). This allowed a greater number of Muslims to migrate to the United States from more parts of the world. This legislation placed greater emphasis on skills and family ties over those of provenance. Prior to this new legislation, immigration laws were strict and prevented many people from immigrating to the United States. This led to many Muslims to migrate not only from the Arab world, but also from all parts of Asia.

In addition to these three major migratory periods there were additional periods of migration. They were, however, minor compared to these three waves. On the other hand, they did provide an additional means of increasing the Muslim population and adding further diversity to the demography of America. In addition to visualizing where Muslims migrated from and during what periods throughout American history, it is also extremely important to consider why the Muslims chose to migrate to America. It is important to understand the forces that drove migration.

There are many reasons behind migration (Koszegi and Melton: 1992). While it is true that the only actual and accepted, involuntary (forced) migration was by the slave trade and the rest of the migratory periods were seen as voluntary. Some of the Muslims, however, may not view it the same way. Although they may have come to the United States of their own free will, many felt that they had no other choice but to leave what had always been their home to come to an alien land and settle amongst alien and many times hostile people. In contrast to the previous
two groups, there were also those Muslim immigrants present who desired to come to the United States. This group of people comprises the greatest portion of Muslim immigrants in America, both of the past and today.

Among the reasons of migration, the first is that of forced migration. Another motivation behind migration was as a means of refuge. A third cause of migration lay in the desire to gain a better education. The fourth reason behind migration can be attributed to the desire to experience greater economic opportunities. Finally, there was migration of Muslims as a result of one of the previous motivations.

Forced migration ended with the first wave of migration. As previously discussed, this period of Muslim immigration consisted of Muslims migrating from Africa. These Muslims were brought to America to act as slave labor along with the rest of the African slaves. They were brought here as a result of both the threat and the use of violence and force.

Many Muslims immigrated to America as a result of a need to seek refuge (Hiskett, 227: 1993). Muslims sought refuge from either religious, ethnic, or political persecution. Examples of this can be seen in both later periods of migration. For instance, Palestinian refugees arrived after the creation of the Israeli state to flee religious persecution. In 1967, as well, in response to the Arab-Israeli war, many Palestinian Muslims fled from Israel and the surrounding region once again. Also, there were the Lebanese and Iranian Muslims that immigrated to the United States in light of the Iranian Revolution. In addition to these, many Bosnian, Albanian, and Kosovo Muslims immigrated to the United States in attempts to avoid ethnic persecution and ethnic cleansing. There is also the fact that after India gained its independence from Great Britain, fighting between Muslims and Hindus escalated, therefore Muslims immigrated to America from India and Pakistan to escape this religious persecution. There are a multitude of additional
examples throughout history that reflect the need of Muslims to migrate to America as a result of some form of persecution that they face in their native land.

The next reason behind migration lies in a desire to obtain a higher education. Many of the countries where the Muslims immigrated from did not allow for greater educational opportunities for everyone. This idea of obtaining a greater education by migrating to America is seen in the later years of migration. Muslim immigrants saw that they had better access to higher education, which may have been denied to them in their homeland. They, therefore, hoped to realize their dreams and goals by migrated to the United States and taking advantage of the educational opportunities offered.

Another reason behind migration lies in the idea that life in America provided greater economic opportunities. The opportunities that Muslims saw were available were those that would be denied to them either because of their race, religion, or the form of economy present in their nation (Smith: 1999). Examples of this are seen in the migration of Muslims from the area that was considered to be Greater Syria; this was comprised of the nations of Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. The Muslims in this area fled their countries due to adverse economic conditions. These economic conditions were a result of the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Another instance where Muslims migrated for greater economic opportunities can be seen when looking at the Muslims in India and Pakistan (Coward, Hinnells, and Williams, 2000). Since India was predominantly Hindu, the Hindus prevented Muslims from obtaining jobs that were of greater status in the economy. They, therefore, found that they had to leave in order to have a chance at obtaining some semblance of economic freedom and upward mobility. A final area where this is seen is in the Muslims that migrated from the Soviet Union. The Muslims that lived in the
Soviet Union, among many of the other citizens, were unable to obtain greater economic opportunities. As a result, they also turned to America as a means to rectify this problem.

The final basis for migration was a result of some of the previous immigration reasons (Haddad, Haines, and Findly, 198: 1984). This is due to the fact that when Muslims immigrated, it was usually either alone or in very small numbers. The resulted in families and friends being left behind while they sought a better life. Once Muslim immigrants had established themselves in the United States, many of the Muslims sent for their family, relatives, or friends to come join them. They then worked very hard to ensure that their families were supported both economically and emotionally.

Many parallels can be drawn between the first immigrants and Muslim immigrants. The theme of persecution that Muslims faced that resulted in their migration to America is first facet of Muslim migration that is important to consider. The idea that someone is persecuted for their religious practices or political beliefs is common and present for many people, either today or in the past. This is especially true for the first Americans who migrated to the United States. These first immigrants, like the later Muslim immigrants, only desired to flee persecution in their homeland as well. They perceived America as a means to live in peace and practice their way of life without fear, and threats to their lives.

Another similarity lies in the need for an education. This connection lies in the common, somewhat universal, desire to obtain a higher education. Many of the first immigrants as well as Muslim immigrants came to America to achieve a higher education. This education might have been denied to them elsewhere due to their class, while in America education was available to a greater number of people.
One final correlation can be drawn between the first immigrants of America and Muslim immigrants to the America. This similarity lies in migrating to America in order to achieve greater economic status. This is especially true for the first immigrants. The past, common practice that the first born obtains everything to the exclusion of the rest of the siblings, leaving them to fend for themselves, made many people turn towards America. In America they saw a means of creating a living for themselves, and thus overcoming the obstacle of a diminished life.

All of the aforementioned correlations must be taken into consideration whenever one thinks of immigrant Muslims as an alien entity. When all outward differences are stripped away, Muslims are very similar to our founding fathers. Their ideas and motivations were very similar. Therefore, it is imperative that we respect Muslim immigrants for what they endured, just as we respect the people who founded this nation.

Analyzing settlement patterns of Muslim immigrants has proven to be very interesting. Settlement patterns depended not only upon economic and educational opportunities that areas presented, but also on the location of relatives and friends. Despite the fact that many Muslim immigrants were mainly from rural and small communities; they decided to build their homes near both commercial and industrial centers. This resulted in great populations of Muslims in the state of California, which has the greatest concentration of Muslims, and is second only to New York and Illinois. There are also very large populations of Muslims in Pennsylvania, Michigan, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Ohio, Texas, Maryland, and Virginia (Haddad, Haines, and Findly, 197: 1984).

Reasons behind settlement vary greatly, but they did tie into why Muslims initially migrated to the United States (Tweed article). The first reason behind settlement was due to a desire to join friends and family already present in America. If there were no friends and family,
Muslims chose to join and settle in locations where other Muslims were already present. This type of settlement, near other Muslims, was carried out as a result of a need to survive (Metcalf: 1996). Muslims had no idea what they would encounter in this strange place where they were a very extreme minority. Settling near other Muslims provided them with a sense of security.

The second motive behind settlement was the availability of economic opportunities. The economic opportunities presented by a particular area, controlled the amount of Muslim immigrants present. More Muslim immigrants settled in areas where there was a greater abundance and availability of jobs.

A third and final reason behind settlement was that of educational reasons. Muslim immigrants settled in areas that provided greater opportunities of obtaining a higher education. This reason is linked with the other reason of economic opportunity. Both while obtaining an education, and after obtaining an education, the Muslim immigrants had to be able to support both themselves and those who were dependent upon them. There are additional reasons behind settlement, but the motivations discussed above are the main ones that drove Muslim immigrants to settle where they decided to settle.

A closer look at areas along the east coast of the United States can provide some greater insight into Muslim settlements and impacts. A study of the east coast shows that Lebanese Muslim immigrants were among the first immigrants to settle in this area (Haddad and Lummis, 12: 1987). While specifically in the New York region, there were many Pakistani Muslim immigrants along with Yemeni and Turkish immigrants. This area was seen as the nucleus of immigrant activity, and the people that settled here were very diverse (Smith, 56: 1999). The east coast was also unique in that there was movement among both the Muslims and the non-Muslims of the area, the Muslims did not merely keep to themselves (Haddad and Lummis, 13: 1987).
The east coast is considered to be one of the most heterogeneous areas of the nationalities of Muslim populations as well as the religions and ethnicities of non-Muslims (73).

Once Muslim immigrants obtained access to the opportunities that they perceived the United States provided, they pursued many varied areas of occupation. The first Muslim immigrants that came to the United States were mainly unskilled laborers. They, therefore, filled the niche of manual workers in factories, shipyards, and mines (Hiskett, 227: 1993). This is why they settled in industrial societies within the United States; they had no other option or expertise through which they could make a living and survive in America. Later, around the 1950s, when there was an increase in the number of immigrants, there was also an influx of immigrants with better education and professional abilities. Many Muslim immigrants began businesses as restaurateurs and grocers among other entrepreneurships. There were also many Muslim immigrants that were represented in scientific fields and other skilled professions. Now the Muslim immigrant population consisted of both blue collar and white collar workers. Also immigrant Muslims were present in basically every class. Muslims are a part of essentially every field. They are present in professional occupations, as business owners, and as workers in the industrial field.

Once again, analyzing aspects of Muslim immigrant lives in the east coast can provide greater perspective. In the initial waves of migration, and sometimes later periods, it can be seen that the level of education of Arabs was lower than that of South Asians (Haddad and Lummis, 13: 1987). The Arabs, therefore, generally filled occupations in fields that were not among those that had direct competition with people in the United States (68). The east coast also had a very large shipping industry, which led many Muslim immigrants to settle here because that was the only labor for which they were qualified (Smith, 60: 1999).
Levels of acculturation can be studied by looking at the history of the presence of Muslims in the United States (Haddad and Smith: 1994). Initially, when the first, voluntary Muslim immigrants came to America, they were only interested in creating a place for themselves in American society. They were not concerned with the organized practice of their religion, or spreading the religion to other people. They lived on the periphery of society keeping mainly to themselves, and sharing their religion only with those whom they came into constant contact with (Haddad, Haines, and Findly, 197: 1984). If they did have mosques, then the mosques were small and in rental residences and served as the only means of religious and cultural preservation. In was not until later, once they had become slightly more established, that Muslim immigrants looked towards strengthening the stance of Islam in America. Therefore, the levels of acculturation are very diverse.

In studying assimilation, many interesting aspects were found. The initial Muslim immigrants retained most of their cultural practices, while assimilating only enough to form a foundation for future immigrants and generations. This was aided by the fact that new Muslim immigrants would keep them aware of what was occurring in their countries of origins, thus maintaining that tie. As newer generations emerge, they are further from the culture of their antecedents. They can relate only to America, and are therefore acculturated into American society almost fully. This has resulted in a struggle for today’s Muslims to regain a balance between the culture and religion of their antecedents and complete assimilation into American society (Haddad and Lummis: 1994).

The actual level of acculturation can be better understood by considering a key factor—that of the presence or absence of a mosque (Haddad, Haines, and Findly, 203: 1984). Many scholars see a correlation between the presence or absence of a mosque and the extent of
acculturation. Through studies, it was found that if a group of Muslim immigrants had access to a mosque, then their level of acculturation was much lower and the rate of assimilation into American society was much slower than those Muslims who did not have access to a mosque. This is due to the fact that through a mosque, Muslims are exposed to the religion and culture of their antecedents, and therefore realize a different reality than the one of ubiquitous culture of American society by which they are surrounded. If Muslim immigrants do not have access to a mosque, then they have no idea of any other realities or alternatives other than that presented to them by American society. Immigrants therefore assimilate more readily into mainstream American culture. The number of mosques that are present in America today has grown drastically. Currently there are over 1200 mosques in the United States (See Figures 2 and 3). This has helped greatly in the perpetuation of the religion and increased cohesiveness among the Muslims in America.

It is also important to look at the locations of mosques (Haddad, Haines, and Findly, 203:1984). The first mosques were built along the East coast. An example of this is seen in Biddeford, Maine where a group of Albanian Muslim immigrants built one of the first mosques in 1915. In addition to this, there followed the building of more mosques, one of which was built in Brooklyn, NY in 1928 by the Polish (Tartars) Muslim immigrants as well as the one built in Waterbury, CT in 1919.

Another aspect of assimilation corresponds to occupation. It was found that the professional levels of occupation tending to creating greater and quicker assimilation and integration into American society (Haddad and Lummis, 67:1987). This could be attributed to the fact that there were fewer Muslims present at higher levels; therefore, they tended to associate more with American society.
In settling in this new nation, that lacked an established Muslim population, Muslim immigrants had to face several new problems that they had never encountered before (Koszegi: 1992). They had to deal with aspects of society that were acceptable to Americans, but forbidden by the strictures of Islam. Some of these included the presence of alcohol and drugs in society along with the differing views of Muslims and Americans on the proper and acceptable attire for the sexes. There were also many other aspects of life in the United States that the Muslim immigrants had to resist.

In order to combat what they perceived as negative aspects of society they attempted to create both Sunday Schools and private Islamic Schools to battle what they considered to be the negative effects of living in this society (Metcalf: 1996). These endeavors provided little or no results due to many reasons. Among these reasons is that the Sunday school only meets once a week and is no opponent for the public school system that meets five days a week. There was also the fact that the Sunday school was structured too closely along the lines of public schools, thus rendering it less effective. For private Islamic schools, there were many problems as well. There was a lack of funding, which created a lack of a good education. There was also a lack of support, because many Muslims immigrants saw difficulties in their children obtaining higher education after attending these private schools. Currently Muslims are attempting to rectify this situation and fix the mistakes in the system, but work is progressing slowly at the moment.

Another interesting aspect that has been found amongst today’s Muslim population when considering acculturation can be seen in the expression of religion (Hiskett, 228: 1993). It was found that many of the South Asians practiced a more outward expression of their religion. They allowed others to see it in their actions and practice, and shared it with others. In contrast, it was found that many of the Arabs practiced an inward, more personal religion. They desired to keep
their religion more to themselves rather than sharing it with others. This trend can be attributed to many things. One of the reasons could be that most South Asian Muslim immigrants were able to immediately become a part of the middle class and upper middle class society as soon as they migrated. Arabs, on the other hand, had to work much harder in order to gain greater economic class and status (228).

Since many of the Muslims immigrants that comprised the earlier periods of migrations were of Arab origin, many interesting trends were seen as a response to this new nation (Haddad and Smith: 1994). One major theme that can be seen was that the Arabs had a tendency to drift away from their faith. This could be attributed to the fact that the lack of a Muslim population in America made the immigrants hide outward aspects and expressions of their face. Gradually this became the norm, and led to greater assimilation. The Arab Muslim immigrants also went to the extent of changing their names so that they appeared more American. It must be remembered, that all of these actions were carried out in order to prevent discrimination and allow for easier settlement into the United States (Smith, 55: 1999).

While immigrants may be affected by the society into which they settle, correspondingly indigenous people are affected by immigrants. Examples of this can be seen through many aspects of American society. A few of these are ethnic Muslim foods that have been incorporated into society, along with research and other inventions provided by the Muslims (Smith, 55: 1999). Muslim immigration into the United States has forced many Americans to come to terms with the idea that America has many aspects to its population that they had never considered. The Americans had to realize that Muslims are now an active force in society that one must endeavor to understand. This is also a result of recent events and the changing political clime of today's world society.
Recently in the United States there has been an outbreak of patriotism. It has heightened to such an extent that those members of this nation that are seen as different are labeled as unpatriotic and a threat to nationalism. This move towards patriotism has called for greater assimilation by Muslim immigrants. While they have always struggled to maintain an individual identity and a link to their origin nations, they must now assimilate into society and ultimately reject a part of themselves or face persecution and condemnation. It has been a struggle for Muslims to prove that while they are Americans, they also respect and embrace their origins. It is truly a dichotomy, for while the United State has always prided itself in being a nation of great diversity and both allowing and encouraging the freedom to practice individualism; America now calls for its citizens to become a homogeneous people.

The need for Muslim to realize and adhere to an identity raises interesting questions. An argument is created the looks at the opposing ideas of “Muslims in America” versus “American Muslims” (Haddad and Esposito, 3: 1998). It has now become necessary for Muslims to differentiate whether they wish to live in America; existing as a separate group of people merely occupying space in a nation. Or they must embrace the idea of becoming American Muslims; people who are an active part of the United States, while at the same time maintaining their religious affiliation with Islam. Although this may seem like a simple choice to make by many people, it has caused conflicting emotions within Muslims. On one hand, Muslims fear that they must compromise their religion to embrace the identity of “American Muslim.” On the other hand they see the idea of remaining as “Muslims in America” could lead to not only alienation, but also a misunderstanding of their motives (Haddad and Esposito, 4: 1998). Life in America has not only led to increasing confusion for many Muslims, but also a rediscovering of roots (Hasan, 10-11: 2000). This means that in order for Muslims in the United States to be able to be
free to choose an identity, they must first rid themselves of their confusion. They must also
realize that there is enough space for them to incorporate their ancestry into their identity.

Today’s Muslim population of the United States is very diverse. First there is a large
population of Muslim immigrants, which continues to grow due to the arrival of new immigrants.
Next, the Muslim population is comprised of converts. While approximately 85-90% of the
converts are African American, many are also white and European (Hiskett, 229: 1993). These
converts are considered to bring greater strength to the religion. This is due to the fact that they
enter Islam without any cultural connections that may interfere or color their practice of the
religion. Finally, the largest aspect of today’s Muslim population, that has surpassed both of the
previous two, is the offspring of the first two groups. This group is rather different than their
antecedents. This can be attributed to the fact that the only nation that they know of is America
and they are also educated to a much higher degree and level in the United States.

Today’s world society has become extremely complicated and intricate. This can be
attributed to the fact that the world is more tightly connected today than it has ever been in the
past. People, cultures, and nations that may have existed in the background, have become more
prominent and accessible today. The world is at a point where it realizes that everything is
interconnected and has such a large impact on others that it is both astounding and even
incomprehensible. The presence of Muslims in the United States can be seen as one of those
great forces.

Studying Muslims in the United States raises a plethora of questions. In searching for
answers, one gains not only understanding, but also an increased perspective. American society
has come to realize that there is a very vital Muslim presence in the United States today, with a
very old and intricate history. Muslims in the United States are comprised of a very diverse
group that has produced a vast impact not only on American society, but also on each other. They may have come here for different reasons, and made different accomplishments, but they are all common in their migration to the United States. They have integrated into society, while at the same time maintaining their grasp of individuality. Many Americans today still choose to see them as the “other” when in fact they are Americans. Once again, people must realize that America is a nation of immigrants, both old and new, yet all immigrants in the end. Muslims are merely newer immigrants, but they have just as responsibility as Americans because they were also active in the shaping of American society. Differences among people that have led to divisions and animosity are merely superficial. Ultimately everyone has the same basic rights and desires. Only through understanding this can we overcome the tensions and strife that is facing the world today; putting an end to divisions by embracing our similarities and tolerating each others differences.
Figure 1: Ethnic Populations of Immigrants

Ethnicity of Muslims

- African: 3%
- African-American: 33%
- South Central Asian: 33%
- Southeast Asian: 2%
- European: 2%
- Arab: 25%
- Other: 5%

(Courtesy of Jane I. Smith, "Patterns of Muslim Immigration.")
Figure 2: Mosque Populations  
(Courtesy of "Facts about Muslims in America")

U.S. Mosques population by background

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(Data from U.S. Department of State, April 2001)

Figure 3: Mosques in the United States  
(Courtesy of U.S. Department of State: International Information Programs)
Works Cited/Bibliography


