

## Mosque-Based Emotional Support Among Young Muslim Americans

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**Abstract** Despite a growing literature on social support networks in religious settings (i.e., church-based social support), little is known about mosque-based support among Muslims. This study investigates the demographic and religious behavior correlates of mosque-based social support among a multi-racial and ethnic sample of 231 young Muslims from southeast Michigan. Several dimensions of mosque-based support are examined including receiving emotional support, giving emotional support, anticipated emotional support and negative interactions with members of one's mosque. Results indicated that women both received and anticipated receiving greater support than did men. Higher educational attainment was associated with receiving and giving less support compared to those with the lowest level of educational attainment. Moreover, highly educated members reported fewer negative interactions than less educated members. Mosque attendance and level of congregational involvement positively predicted receiving, giving, and anticipated emotional support from congregants, but was unrelated to negative interactions. Overall, the study results converge with previously established correlates of church-based emotional support.

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## Introduction

Social support, or exchanges within one's social support network, has many important implications for mental and physical health and social well-being (House 1981). Although the majority of research on social support addresses secular sources of aid (i.e., family, friends and co-workers), an emerging area of research investigates the role of congregation-based social support networks. The vast majority of this work examines church-based social support networks among Christians. The purpose of this study is to explore the demographic and behavioral correlates of mosque-based social support—that is, congregational support within the Muslim American population. Given the lack of previous research on this topic, the literature review examines available research on church-based social support, as an analogous concept to mosque-based social support. In addition, we describe the role of the mosque within Muslim American communities and its function as a context for social support.

## Church-Based Social Support

Church members are an important, but oftentimes overlooked component of an individual's social support network. Informal church-based social support is any form of assistance from members of the congregation provided in an unofficial capacity and is not part of the church's official assistance programs, such as community outreach efforts. Church-based support includes instrumental, informational, emotional, appraisal, and spiritual assistance. Support from church members has several unique features (Chatters et al. 2002; Krause 2008; Taylor and Chatters 1988). Church-based support is an important aspect of religious participation that is distinct from other measures of involvement such as service attendance because it explicitly involves relationships with other congregational members.

When viewed within a social capital framework, church-based support (e.g., instrumental aid, information) are examples of specific resources that are available to persons who are embedded within social institutions (Yeary et al. 2012) in this case, religious communities. Further, at a broader level, interactional features or processes operating within social organizations, such as shared values and norms, are also identified as contextual or qualitative aspects of social capital that enhance a sense of the group collective (Holt et al. 2012). For example, discrete social network exchanges occur within a community that shares similar values, beliefs and life experiences with the recipient, which enhances perceptions of empathy and support effectiveness. Assistance from church members often occurs within the context of longstanding interpersonal relationships characterized by high levels of trust and mutuality. Finally, church members share a vocabulary and worldview of helping that reinforces valued social norms and obligations to provide aid to others in need and which are rooted in religious teachings (i.e., “Do unto others”) and identities

(Taylor et al. 2000). In sum, faith communities are important resources of social capital that provide the institutional and structural settings (e.g., social networks) for the exchange of religious social capital (e.g., social support). Further, social support relationships occur within a context of shared beliefs, values, and norms operating within faith communities which act to facilitate these interactions and exchanges.

Church-based social support is influenced by a number of demographic and social factors. Research on the demographic correlates of church support indicates that women receive more support from fellow congregants than men likely because they are overall more religious and more involved in their faith communities (Ellison and George 1994; Krause 2002; Krause et al. 2001). However, Taylor and Chatters (1988) found that men received more support than women in their study of African Americans possibly due to the fact that men may have higher status within churches than women. Thus, occupying high status positions within churches may afford men greater support from congregants.

The influence of age on church-based support is mixed. Some studies have found that age is positively related to receipt of church-based support (Krause et al. 2001, 2002), while others have found the opposite (Ellison and George 1994; Krause 2002; Taylor and Chatters 1988). Marital status is associated with receiving support from fellow congregants (Ellison and George 1994; Taylor and Chatters 1988); married congregants receive greater support from fellow churchgoers, especially relative to divorced churchgoers. Finally, religious service attendance, religious participation and involvement in the church are positively associated with church-based support. Research suggests that service attendance and involvement in the church increases exposure to the congregation thereby allowing more opportunities for one's support needs to be recognized by others. In addition, greater levels of involvement and time commitment to the church are associated with developing extensive social ties and deeper integration into church social networks (Chatters et al. 2002; Ellison and George 1994; George et al. 2002; Krause 2002; Krause et al. 2001; Nooney and Woodrum 2002; Taylor and Chatters 1988; Taylor et al. 2005).

Church-based social support, like other types of informal assistance, is associated with several positive mental health, physical health, and well-being outcomes. George et al. (2002) indicate that social support from coreligionists, mediates the well-evidenced positive relationship between religious involvement and health. That is, religious involvement indirectly benefits health through church-based social support. Persons who are more involved in their churches are more likely to receive a variety of social support from other church members (instrumental, informational, emotional, appraisal, and spiritual assistance). These forms of assistance are effective in reducing the likelihood of (i.e., preventive) and/or negative impact of undesirable events on health and well-being. As a result, those who receive greater support from fellow church members are more likely to enjoy good health and well-being (Krause 2002, 2008; Krause et al. 2002; Nooney and Woodrum 2002) and are less likely to experience suicidal ideation (Chatters et al. 2011).

Finally, emerging research indicates that negative interactions (interpersonal conflicts, criticism) are a natural consequence of participating in social networks, secular as well as religious (Krause 2008). These interactions are harmful to a sense of well-being and mental health and are associated with poor psychological

functioning (Krause and Wulff 2005; Krause 2008; Lincoln et al. 2003a, b, 2007), psychological distress (Ellison et al. 2009; Lincoln et al. 2003a, b), and mood and anxiety disorders (Lincoln et al. 2007, 2010). As distinctive social occurrences, negative interactions are particularly injurious to well-being because they are unanticipated, they violate recognized social norms operating within religious settings, and they undermine the sense of positive self-regard such as self-esteem and self-efficacy (Lincoln et al. 2007).

### Role of the Mosque in the United States

In contrast to studies of church-based social support, little is known about congregational support within the Muslim population, or mosque-based social support. Profiles of mosques in the US indicate that they are important religious and social institutions that fulfill a variety of functions and roles for Muslim communities. Unlike mosques in Muslim countries, where their purpose is mainly for worship, mosques in the United States serve additional functions as places for social gatherings, community and political involvement, community resources (i.e., legal, financial, social, cultural), social services, and education (Ghanea Bassiri 2010; Leonard 2003; McCloud 2006; Smith 1999). In fact, many American mosques offer full-time and weekend Islamic schools, which larger mosques are more likely to offer. Over 20 % of American mosques have full-time Islamic schools, with the majority (73 %) of these full-time schools for elementary grades only. Further, about two thirds of all mosques in the United States have weekend schools (Bagby et al. 2001).

In addition to Islamic school, many mosques regularly offer Islamic study classes outside of weekend school, khatirah (short lectures), Arabic classes, sisters' (women only) activities or programs, Qur'an memorization or tajwid classes, youth activities or programs, classes for recently converted Muslims, and fitness and martial arts classes and sports team (Bagby et al. 2001). Moreover, mosques often serve dual roles as religious and Muslim social centers for their communities. Mosques often engage in political and community activities, such as voter registration drives, writing or calling political leaders, hosting politicians, and interfaith dialogues. Community and social services provided directly by mosques include cash assistance for families and individuals, marital and family counseling, prison and jail programs, food pantry, soup kitchen, tutoring and literacy programs, thrift store, and clothes collection for the poor, among other services and programs.

American mosques are considerably different from typical American churches in their intended function and role within their religious community. Many American mosques partially function as a community center for the local Muslim population. As described by Bagby et al. (2001), mosques frequently hold activities that are either religious, social, or both religious and social in nature and are often a prominent gathering space for their local Muslim American communities. In fact, daily use of mosques for both religious and community activities is not uncommon.

Despite these differences, American mosques, as like other immigrant religious institutions, have evolved to look more similar to American churches (Yang and Ebaugh 2001). For example, many mosques in the US are governed by boards of

trustee with lay leadership, which is common among American churches. However, this leadership structure is not common for mosques in Muslim countries, which are primarily and sovereignly governed by religious leaders.

This profile of the diverse religious and social functions of mosques is analogous to the role of religious institutions for immigrant groups in the US (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Yang and Ebaugh 2001), as well as the traditional role of the Black Church for African Americans (Chatters et al. 2002; Taylor and Chatters 1988). In each instance, religious settings represent important community resources that fulfill religious and secular and civic functions, provide a number of tangible resources and services, and operate as a cultural broker to the broader social context. Further, concern and provision for the poor is one of the central principles of Islam that is directly reflected in the many social assistance programs provided by US mosques. Given the central role of the mosque for US Muslims, it is important that we understand the demographic and religious factors associated with support exchanges and interactions within these communities.

### Focus of the Paper

This study explores the relationship between demographic characteristics and religious behaviors of Muslim congregants and mosque-based emotional support (i.e., giving, receiving, and anticipated emotional support) and negative interactions with Muslim congregants. Our aim is to identify the demographic and behavioral correlates of these dimensions of mosque-based emotional support and negative interaction. Based on previous literature on secular social support, church-based social support, and the role of the mosque in the lives of Muslim Americans, we anticipate that service attendance and congregational involvement will positively impact mosque-based emotional support. Furthermore, we anticipate that demographic correlates of mosque-based emotional support will be similar to those found in previous studies examining church-based emotional support.

The overwhelming majority of research on congregational support, religious participation, and factors associated with religious participation is conducted with Christian samples. To our knowledge, no published studies have examined congregational support in the Muslim American population. This study is unique in that it is the first to explore mosque-based emotional support. It makes a significant contribution to the research literature on congregational support and religious participation and sheds light on Muslim Americans' relationships within the mosque, an important religious and socio-cultural institution for many Muslims.

The investigation of religious based social support networks is particularly important in psychology. As noted before, church support networks have been found to be associated with several mental health outcomes (Krause 2008) including suicidal ideation (Chatters et al. 2011) and depressive symptomology. Since there is no research on mosque-based social support, it is important to first describe the correlates of mosque-based social support so that that we can have a full understanding of these networks. Only then can we adequately understand the degree to which mosque-based support networks are associated with various mental health and mental illness outcomes.

## Method

### Participants

Analysis was conducted on a sample of 231 Muslim respondents, who were community members in the Dearborn, Michigan area and undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Michigan's Ann Arbor and Dearborn campuses, which have relatively large Muslim student bodies. Southeastern Michigan and Dearborn, Michigan, in particular, is home to the largest Arab population in the United States (de la Cruz and Brittingham 2003). In fact, Arab Americans make up 30 % of Dearborn's population (it is important to note that not all Arabs are Muslim). Participants were recruited through the psychology departments' subject pool as well as through undergraduate and graduate courses, fliers posted around the campus, and student organizations on campus. Subject pool respondents, psychology students, and marketing students completed the survey in exchange for partial course credit. Community members were recruited through the local mosques and Muslim organizations in the Dearborn area. The study period began in the summer of 2009 and ended in the summer of 2010.

### Measures

#### *Mosque-Based Emotional Support and Negative Interaction*

There are 3 dependent variables which measure mosque-based emotional support: receipt of emotional support, anticipated emotional support, and emotional support given to others; one item measures negative interactions with congregants. All of the dependent variables were measured using the Fetzer Institute and National Institute on Aging's (1999) measures of congregational support. See Table 1 for a full list of mosque-based emotional support items and subscale reliability measures.

#### *Religious Participation*

Religious service attendance was assessed by a single item asking, "Not including weddings and funerals, on average, how often do you attend religious services?" Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*every week or more*). Congregational involvement was measured by a single item asking, "How involved are you with your congregation?" and responses were based on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*not at all involved*) to 5 (*extremely involved*).

#### *Demographics*

Respondents were asked to identify their race/ethnicity as either Black, Native American, Asian, Hispanic, Arab, White, or other. Due to a rather small number of Muslim respondents who identified as either Black, Native American, Hispanic, or other, these four groups were combined into one category and labeled as "other." Gender was coded as 0 for male and 1 for female. Age was measured as a

**Table 1** Mosque-based emotional support items and subscale Cronbach's alphas

Items	$\alpha$
Emotional support received from others subscale <sup>a</sup>	.79
(a) How often do the people in your congregation make you feel loved and cared for?	
(b) How often do the people in your congregation listen to you talk about your private problems and concerns?	
Anticipated support subscale <sup>b</sup>	.95
(a) If you were ill, how much would the people in your congregation be willing to help out?	
(b) If you had a problem or were faced with a difficult situation, how much comfort would the people in your congregation be willing to give you?	
Emotional support provided to others subscale <sup>a</sup>	.79
(a) How often do you make the people in your congregation feel loved and cared for?	
(b) How often do you listen to the people in your congregation talk about their private problems and concerns?	
Negative interaction subscale <sup>a</sup>	.78
(a) How often do the people in your congregation make too many demands on you?	
(b) How often are the people in your congregation critical of you and the things you do?	

<sup>a</sup> Scored as follows: 1 = *never*, 2 = *once in a while*, 3 = *fairly often*, 4 = *very often*

<sup>b</sup> Scored as follows: 1 = *none*, 2 = *a little*, 3 = *some*, 4 = *a great deal*

continuous variable. Respondents' educational attainment was collapsed into three categories: completed high school/GED or less, some college, bachelor's degree or higher.

### Analysis Strategy

Bivariate cross-tabulations are presented using Chi square and Goodman and Kruskal's gamma. Following this OLS regression analysis was performed in a series of three models for each dependent variable (i.e., receiving of support, anticipated support, giving support, and negative interaction). Model 1 tests the influence of demographic variables, Model 2 includes mosque attendance, and Model 3 adds the measure of congregational involvement.

### Results

Table 2 presents selected characteristics of the sample. About 42 % of the sample was male; the mean age was 21.7 years. The majority of respondents (58 %) were of Arab ethnicity, 29 % were Asian, 9 % were White, and 4 % identified with an ethnic group other than Arab, Asian, or White. More than half of the sample had some college education attainment, while more than 15 % had a bachelor's degree or higher, and about 20 % had a high school diploma, GED, or less.

**Table 2** Means of key variables (N = 231)

	%	N	Mean	SD	Range
Gender					
Male	42.42	98			
Female	57.58	133			
Race					
Arab	55.41	128			
Asian	23.38	54			
White	8.23	19			
Other	12.99	30			
Age			21.76	5.61	18–52
Education					
Completed high school/GED or less	19.48	45			
Some college	65.37	151			
Bachelor's or higher	11.26	26			
Mosque attendance					
Never	12.16	27			
A few times a year	35.59	79			
Once or twice a month	14.41	32			
Almost every week	11.71	26			
Every week or more	26.13	58			
Congregational involvement					
Not at all involved	35.59	79			
Slightly involved	25.68	57			
Moderately involved	27.48	61			
Very involved	8.56	19			
Extremely involved	2.70	6			
Receipt of emotional support			2.61	.97	1–4
Anticipated support			3.24	.94	1–4
Giving of emotional support			2.58	.94	1–4
Negative interaction			1.71	.80	1–4

Percents and N are presented for categorical variables and means and standard deviations are presented for continuous variables

Just over 10 % of respondents indicated that they never attended religious services at the mosque outside of weddings and funerals. More than one third of respondents attended mosque a few times a year, about 14 % attended once or twice a month, a little over 10 % attended almost every week, and more than one fifth of respondents attended mosque once a week or more. Few respondents were highly involved with their congregations; slightly more than 10 % of respondents stated that they were either very or extremely involved with their congregations. Roughly two out of three respondents (65 %) had some level of involvement in their

congregations. Bivariate analysis of the demographic and religious participation variables on emotional support and negative interaction is presented in Table 3.

### Receipt of Emotional Support

About one in four respondents reported receiving high levels of emotional support from the congregation (Table 2). Close to half of respondents received moderate levels of emotional support, and about one quarter received little to no emotional support. Table 4 shows three multiple regression models for receipt of emotional support from coreligionists regressed on: (1) demographic variables (Model 1), (2) demographic variables with the addition of mosque attendance (Model 2), and (3) demographic variables, mosque attendance, and congregational involvement (Model 3). Model 1 indicates that respondents with the highest level of education (Bachelor's degree or higher) received less emotional support from congregation members than those with the lowest level (high school diploma/GED or less) of education ( $\beta = -.22, p < .05$ ). When mosque attendance was added to the equation (Model 2), the positive association between educational attainment and receipt of support remained statistically significant. Model 2 findings also indicate a significant relationship between gender and receipt of support ( $\beta = .19, p < .01$ ); women received greater support than men. Additionally, Asian congregants reported receiving less emotional support than the comparison group of Arab congregants ( $\beta = -.21, p < .01$ ). There was a strong positive correlation between mosque attendance and receipt of emotional support ( $\beta = .54, p < .001$ ). Finally, Model 3 revealed that there was a positive association between congregational involvement and receipt of support; all statistically significant relationships from the previous model held with the addition of congregational involvement in Model 3.

### Anticipated Emotional Support

Three quarters of all respondents expected to receive high levels of emotional support from their congregation members when in need (Table 2). Nearly one in three respondents anticipated receiving moderate levels of emotional support from other coreligionists; <10 % of the sample expected to receive little to no emotional support from other congregants when in need. Table 5 depicts the multiple regression analysis of anticipated emotional support from coreligionists. Model 1 reveals that White congregants anticipated receiving less emotional support than Arab congregants ( $\beta = -.17, p < .05$ ). With the addition of mosque attendance in Model 2, gender became a significant predictor of anticipating support; women anticipated receiving more support from their congregation than men ( $\beta = .19, p < .01$ ). With regard to racial differences, those in the "other" race category anticipated that they would receive less support from the congregation than Arab members ( $\beta = -.17, p < .05$ ). However, the coefficient for white respondents was no longer significant when mosque attendance was added to the equation. As expected, mosque attendance strongly predicted anticipated support ( $\beta = .44, p < .001$ ); frequent mosque attendees expected to receive more support than those attending infrequently. Model 3, with congregational involvement added to the

**Table 3** Bivariate relationship between mosque-based emotional support and predictor variables (N = 212)

Predictors	Receipt of emotional support						Anticipated support					
	Low		Medium		High		Low		Medium		High	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Age												
18–22	66.00	33	74.76	77	79.31	46	60.00	12	70.42	50	78.33	94
23–29	30.00	15	20.39	21	8.62	5	30.00	6	22.54	16	15.83	19
30+	4.00	2	4.85	5	12.07	7	10.00	2	7.04	5	5.83	7
$\chi^2$ (df = 4)	10.67*						3.73					
Gamma	-.15						-.23					
Gender												
Male	40.00	20	47.57	49	33.90	20	40.00	8	43.06	31	41.67	50
Female	60.00	30	52.43	54	66.10	39	60.00	12	56.94	41	58.33	70
$\chi^2$ (df = 2)	2.99						.07					
Gamma	.09						.01					
Race												
Arab	52.00	26	57.28	59	61.02	36	55.00	11	56.94	41	57.50	69
Asian	28.00	14	21.36	22	15.25	9	20.00	4	16.67	12	24.17	29
White	10.00	5	8.74	9	8.47	5	10.00	2	15.28	11	5.00	6
Other	10.00	5	12.62	13	15.25	9	15.00	3	11.11	8	13.33	16
$\chi^2$ (df = 6)	3.13						6.82					
Education												
≤High School	12.00	6	18.45	19	25.42	15	10.00	2	16.67	12	21.67	26
Some college	62.00	31	69.90	72	67.80	40	65.00	13	75.00	54	63.33	76
Bachelor's+	26.00	13	11.65	12	6.78	4	25.00	5	8.33	6	15.00	18

**Table 3** continued

Predictors	Receipt of emotional support						Anticipated support								
	Low		Medium		High		Low		Medium		High				
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N			
$\chi^2$ (df = 4)	10.83*														
Gamma	-.33**														
Mosque attendance															
Infrequent	72.00	36	45.63	47	35.59	21	80.00	16	61.11	44	36.67	44			
Moderate	18.00	9	30.10	31	28.81	17	15.00	3	22.22	16	31.67	38			
Frequent	10.00	5	24.27	25	35.59	21	5.00	1	16.67	12	31.67	38			
$\chi^2$ (df = 4)	17.11**														
Gamma	.38***														
Congregational involvement															
Low	70.00	35	31.07	32	15.25	9	95.00	19	43.06	31	21.67	26			
Medium	28.00	14	58.25	60	64.41	38	5.00	1	48.61	35	63.33	76			
High	2.00	1	10.68	11	20.34	12	0.00	0	8.33	6	15.00	18			
$\chi^2$ (df = 4)	39.92***														
Gamma	.59***														
Giving of social support															
Negative interaction															
Low		Medium		High		Low		Medium		High		High			
%		N		%		N		%		N		%		N	
Age															
18–22	69.57	32	74.14	86	77.55	38	71.54	88	76.62	59	81.82	9			
23–29	26.09	12	20.69	24	10.20	5	22.76	28	16.88	13	0.00	0			

**Table 3** continued

Predictors	Giving of social support						Negative interaction					
	Low		Medium		High		Low		Medium		High	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
30+	4.35	2	5.17	6	12.24	6	5.69	7	6.49	5	18.18	2
$\chi^2$ ( <i>df</i> = 4)	6.56						5.74					
Gamma	-.08						-.11					
Gender												
Male	36.96	17	47.41	55	34.00	17	43.55	54	41.56	32	27.27	3
Female	63.04	29	52.59	61	66.00	33	56.45	70	58.44	45	72.73	8
$\chi^2$ ( <i>df</i> = 2)	3.19						1.11					
Gamma	.04						.09					
Race												
Arab	52.17	24	53.45	62	70.00	35	50.00	62	66.23	51	72.73	8
Asian	26.09	12	23.28	27	12.00	6	24.19	30	16.88	13	18.18	2
White	8.70	4	10.34	12	6.00	3	11.29	14	6.49	5	0.00	0
Other	13.04	6	12.93	15	12.00	6	14.52	18	10.39	8	9.09	1
$\chi^2$ ( <i>df</i> = 6)	5.44						6.95					
Education												
≤High School	13.04	6	18.97	22	24.00	12	19.35	24	18.18	14	18.18	2
Some college	63.04	29	67.24	78	72.00	36	64.52	80	71.43	55	72.73	8
Bachelor's+	23.91	11	13.79	16	4.00	2	16.13	20	10.39	8	9.09	1
$\chi^2$ ( <i>df</i> = 4)	8.76						1.74					
Gamma	-.30***						-.07					

**Table 3** continued

Predictors	Giving of social support						Negative interaction					
	Low		Medium		High		Low		Medium		High	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
<b>Mosque attendance</b>												
Infrequent	73.91	34	46.55	54	32.00	16	51.61	64	46.75	36	36.36	4
Moderate	13.04	6	30.17	35	32.00	16	20.97	26	36.36	28	27.27	3
Frequent	13.04	6	23.28	27	36.00	18	27.42	34	16.88	13	36.36	4
$\chi^2$ (df = 4)	18.45**											
Gamma	.40***											
<b>Congregational involvement</b>												
Low	71.74	33	30.17	35	16.00	8	40.32	50	27.27	21	45.45	5
Medium	26.09	12	57.76	67	66.00	33	48.39	60	64.94	50	18.18	2
High	2.17	1	12.07	14	18.00	9	11.29	14	7.79	6	36.36	4
$\chi^2$ (df = 4)	36.90***											
Gamma	.57***											
							14.59**					
							.16					

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 4** Results from linear regression predicting receipt of emotional support (N = 189)

	Beta coefficients ( <i>SE</i> )		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Gender (female)	.04 (.15)	.19** (.14)	.14* (.13)
Race			
Asian	-.06 (.18)	-.21** (.16)	-.21** (.15)
White	-.13 <sup>†</sup> (.26)	-.07 (.23)	-.08 (.22)
Other	-.01 (.37)	-.10 (.34)	-.11 <sup>†</sup> (.32)
Age	-.03 (.02)	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Education			
Some college	-.12 (.20)	-.03 (.18)	-.06 (.17)
Bachelor's or higher	-.22* (.29)	-.24* (.25)	-.23* (.24)
Mosque attendance		.54*** (.05)	.26** (.07)
Congregational involvement			.38*** (.07)
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.05	.26	.34

Reference category for race is Arab. Reference category for education is high school diploma/GED or less

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

equation, demonstrated that congregational involvement was positively associated with anticipated support ( $\beta = .34, p < .001$ ). More involved individuals anticipated receiving greater levels of support from fellow congregants than individuals who are less involved in their congregations. All relationships from Model 2 remained significant with the addition of congregational involvement to the model.

### Giving Emotional Support

As indicated in Table 2, nearly one in four respondents gave high levels of emotional support to other congregants, and more than half gave moderate levels of emotional support. About 25 % gave little to no emotional support to other congregants. Table 6 depicts the multiple regression models for giving emotional support to mosque members. Model 1 showed that White members reported giving less support to their congregation than Arab members ( $\beta = -.17, p < .05$ ). In Model 2, with mosque attendance added to the equation, Asian members reported giving less support than Arab members ( $\beta = -.26, p < .001$ ). Education and gender were also significant predictors in this model. Similar to receipt of support,

**Table 5** Results from linear regression predicting anticipated support (N = 189)

	Beta coefficients ( <i>SE</i> )		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Gender (female)	.06 (.14)	.19** (.14)	.14* (.14)
Race			
Asian	.04 (.17)	-.08 (.17)	-.09 (.16)
White	-.17* (.25)	-.11 (.24)	-.13 <sup>†</sup> (.23)
Other	-.09 (.36)	-.17* (.34)	-.18* (.33)
Age	-.08 (.02)	-.06 (.01)	-.04 (.01)
Education			
Some college	-.08 (.19)	-.01 (.18)	-.03 (.17)
Bachelor's or higher	-.11 (.28)	-.12 (.26)	-.11 (.25)
Mosque attendance		.44*** (.06)	.20* (.07)
Congregational involvement			.34*** (.08)
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.06	.20	.26

Reference category for race is Arab. Reference category for education is high school diploma/GED or less

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

highly educated congregants gave less support than congregants with the lowest education level ( $\beta = -.22$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and women reported giving more support than men ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $p < .05$ ). As expected, mosque attendance positively predicted giving support ( $\beta = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Finally, Model 3 shows that congregational involvement was positively correlated with giving support ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Additionally, all predictors from the previous model remained significant when congregational involvement was added (although the gender effect was marginal in Model 3).

### Negative Interactions

Only about 10 % of the sample reported high levels of negative interactions with coreligionists, and one in three respondents experienced moderate levels of negative interactions. The majority of respondents (60 %) experienced minimal negative interactions with the congregation (Table 2). Table 7 depicts the

**Table 6** Results from linear regression predicting giving of support (N = 189)

	Beta coefficients (SE)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Gender (female)	.04 (.14)	.17* (.13)	.13 <sup>†</sup> (.13)
Race			
Asian	-.13 <sup>†</sup> (.17)	-.26** (.16)	-.27*** (.15)
White	-.17* (.25)	-.11 (.23)	-.12 <sup>†</sup> (.22)
Other	-.01 (.36)	-.08 (.33)	-.09 (.32)
Age	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.02 (.01)
Education			
Some college	-.10 (.19)	-.02 (.17)	-.05 (.17)
Bachelor's or higher	-.20 <sup>†</sup> (.27)	-.22* (.25)	-.20* (.24)
Mosque attendance		.48*** (.05)	.24* (.07)
Congregational involvement			.34*** (.07)
R <sup>2</sup>	.06	.23	.30

Reference category for race is Arab. Reference category for education is high school diploma/GED or less

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

multiple regression models for negative interactions with mosque members. Model 1 indicates that White congregants experienced fewer negative interactions relative to Arab congregants ( $\beta = -.23$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This effect remained unchanged when mosque attendance ( $\beta = -.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) was added in Model 2 and congregational involvement ( $\beta = -.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) was added in Model 3. Also, in both Models 2 and 3, highly educated members reported fewer negative interactions with other members than persons with the lowest education level ( $\beta = -.21$ ,  $p < .05$  and  $\beta = -.20$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively). In contrast to results for receiving, giving or anticipating emotional support, gender, mosque attendance and congregational involvement were not associated with negative interactions with mosque members.

Ancillary analysis (not shown) was conducted to investigate whether immigration status (US vs. foreign born) was associated with any of the measures of social support. Immigration status was not significant in any of the regression models.

**Table 7** Results from linear regression predicting negative interactions (N = 189)

	Beta coefficients ( <i>SE</i> )		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Gender (female)	.06 (.11)	.09 (.12)	.08 (.12)
Race			
Asian	-.10 (.14)	-.14 (.14)	-.14 (.14)
White	-.23** (.20)	-.22** (.20)	-.22** (.20)
Other	-.02 (.29)	-.04 (.30)	-.04 (.29)
Age	.13 (.01)	.13 (.01)	.14 (.01)
Education			
Some college	-.08 (.15)	-.05 (.15)	-.06 (.16)
Bachelor's or higher	.20 <sup>†</sup> (.22)	-.21* (.22)	-.20* (.22)
Mosque attendance		.12 (.05)	.04 (.06)
Congregational involvement			.11 (.07)
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.08	.09	.09

Reference category for race is Arab. Reference category for education is high school diploma/GED or less

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

## Discussion

This study explored the demographic and religious correlates of giving, receiving, and anticipating mosque-based emotional support and negative interactions. About one in three respondents reported receiving high levels of emotional support from coreligionists, and three in four respondents expected to receive high levels of support from the congregation. Indeed, about half of all respondents anticipated receiving support very often from others if they were ever in need. Also, one in two respondents reported giving high levels of support to other congregants. Previous research involving samples of the entire adult age range (Taylor et al. 2005) and of the elderly (Krause 2002; Krause and Bastida 2011) reflect somewhat higher levels of receiving support.

The majority of the sample reported low to moderate levels of negative interactions with other congregants. This finding is consistent with previous literature on church (Chatters et al. 2011; Krause 2008) and family support networks (Akiyama et al. 2003; Lincoln et al. 2003a, b, 2010), which finds that conflict and

criticism are present in these relationships, but are not a frequent occurrence. The findings from this study indicate that overall for young Muslims, congregation members are more caring and supportive than they are caustic and critical.

Consistent with literature on church-based social support (Chatters et al. 2002; Taylor et al. 2005), mosque attendance and congregational involvement were positively related to receiving, giving, and anticipating emotional support from Muslim coreligionists. Persons who attended mosque frequently and were highly involved congregants received higher levels of support, gave more support, and anticipated receiving greater levels of support than congregants who attended mosque less frequently and were less involved. Previous literature on church-based social support suggests that those who are more involved in their churches have more opportunities to develop social ties that integrate them within the church (Krause 2008; Taylor et al. 2005). In turn, the more an individual is embedded within this social network, the more support the individual receives from this network. Consequently, mosque attendance and congregational involvement were consistent correlates of giving, receiving, and anticipating emotional support from fellow congregants.

The data also revealed that Muslim women received and anticipated receiving significantly more emotional support from fellow congregants than Muslim men. Additionally, women gave marginally more emotional support to other congregants than did men. These findings are congruent with previous research on church-based support; research on Christians has found that women receive greater levels of support than men (Ellison and George 1994; Krause 2002; Krause et al. 2001). Further, these studies indicate that women's frequent religious attendance helps explain this effect. That is, Christian women attend religious services more frequently than men, which results in women receiving greater support.

Interestingly, there was no gender effect for service attendance in the current Muslim sample. Supplementary analysis (not shown) indicated that men attended mosque significantly more frequently than women, which is consistent with literature on Muslim religious attendance (e.g., Bagby et al. 2001). Men tend to attend religious services more frequently than women because they are required by Islamic law to attend Jumu'ah (i.e., Friday prayer) weekly, whereas women are not required to do so. Additionally, in many Muslim cultures, women's religious roles tend to conform to traditional gender roles and activities. For example, although women are less likely to attend religious services, they are often involved in preparing for events and religious celebrations such as Eid al-Fitr (i.e., holiday marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan) which may include decorating the mosque or preparing meals that will be served at the mosque. Consequently, women may have fewer opportunities to develop social ties through weekly religious service attendance than do men. However, their participation in other activities at the mosque may compensate for this and even allow them greater networking opportunities with other women due to the time- and labor- intensive nature of these activities.

Further, it is important to acknowledge gender differences in the composition of support networks and social interaction patterns within the mosque. Participation in mosques and associated events is often gender segregated (e.g., services, classes,

social events, dining halls); the level of segregation depends on the mosque's level of religious conservatism, with more conservative mosques being more strictly gender segregated. Consequently, unrelated men and women rarely interact with each other at mosque. Thus, Muslim men would most likely exchange support with other men and women with other women. In addition, broader gender socialization practices encourage boys to be strong, independent, and self-reliant (Beal 1993; Eagly 1987), while girls are socialized to be caring, nurturing, and communal from a young age, which shape expectations of women as caregivers (Beal 1993; Eagly 1987), factors which are consequential for supportive relationships.

In the context of the present study, Muslim women are more likely than men to receive and anticipate emotional support from fellow congregants. Given patterns of gender separation within mosques, it is likely that support networks and exchanges are gender-specific as well. That is, women are more likely than men to receive and anticipate emotional support from fellow female congregants and men are less likely to receive and anticipate emotional support from other men. These findings illustrate how gender influences religious and social support behaviors and may explain why men received and anticipated lower levels of emotional support than women, despite the fact that they attended services more frequently (attendance at Jumu'ah),

With respect to race/ethnicity findings, Asians reported receiving less emotional support from mosque members than did persons who identified as Arab. Asians also reported giving less support to fellow coreligionists than Arabs. Overall, Asians give less and receive less emotional support from coreligionists as compared to their Arab counterparts, patterns that may be due to important cultural differences regarding support exchanges that distinguish Asian and Arab Muslims. Whites indicated experiencing less negative interactions in the mosque than Arabs did. Whites also had significantly lower levels of anticipated emotional support and giving emotional support than Arab Muslims, but these findings were rendered insignificant when controlling for frequency of service attendance. Previous research on family support networks indicates that more frequent interactions with family provide greater opportunities for both receiving assistance (Chatters et al. 2002) and negative exchanges (Akiyama et al. 2003). Our findings suggest that young Whites' lower levels of service attendance and network involvement decreases the opportunity to receive and provide emotional support.

Finally, congregants with higher levels of education reported receiving and giving less support and having fewer negative interactions at mosque than those with lower levels of education; there were no education differences with regard to anticipated support. Persons with higher levels of education may rely on mosque-based support networks less due to the availability of other resources that education affords them. In addition, relative independence from mosque-based networks may mean that they experience fewer circumstances that potentially involve negative interactions. Age was unrelated to receiving, giving and anticipating emotional support, as well as negative interactions. However due to the truncated age range and education levels of this young adult sample, these findings should be viewed cautiously.

Limitations of this study should be noted. This study is based on a non-probability, convenience sample of young adults. It is younger than the general US

and Muslim American population and a large proportion of this sample consists of college students. For reason of convenience, college students may be more likely to attend Jumu'ah service organized by a Muslim student organization on campus with other students rather than at a local community mosque. Jumu'ah service on college campuses may be qualitatively different from service held at a local mosque with respect to organization and attendees' experiences. Together, these factors may restrict the representativeness of this sample and the generalizability of study findings. Nonetheless, this sample provided the first opportunity to examine the congregation-based support networks among young Muslims and provides an initial exploration of the role of religion and religious networks among this understudied population.

Future research on mosque-based social support should examine race/ethnicity differences within Muslims in patterns of mosque-based support. It is important to recall that Arab Muslims are identified with several different countries and nationalities across North Africa and the Middle East, while Asian Muslims are associated with countries across South Asia, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. Research should explore the ways that race/ethnicity acts in concert with religion to shape identities as Muslims and whether broader Asian and Arab cultural identities and values (e.g., pan-Arabism) operate differently with respect to mosque-based social networks and support provision. Similar to studies of church-based support that have explored denominational differences, investigations of mosque-based social support should examine potential differences by major Muslim denominations (i.e., Sunni, Shia). Such an approach would allow us to better understand the diversity that exists within the Muslim population and its significance in relation to supportive relationships.

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