Essay
Teaching with Online Middle East Newspapers

Special Section
Researching Western Muslims

Reviews
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Introduction

Abdulkader H. Sinno
Indiana University

The field of studying Western Muslim minorities is expanding, with increasing numbers of established scholars shifting some of their research attention to it and quite a few doctoral students writing their dissertations on the topic. The reasons are obvious: the numbers of individuals with some connection to Islam in North America and Western Europe are increasing fairly quickly; the discourses of politicians and the media about them can be exceptionally hostile; immigration, counter-terrorism, and even welfare policies are targeting them de facto; a dedicated cadre of highly-mediatised activists relentlessly attacks them and claims that they constitute a fifth column and are incapable of integration; they are discriminated against in employment and education; some public figures portray gender relations within their communities as pathological; and some Western Muslims were involved in attacks on soldiers and citizens of their own countries.

The Review invited contributions from five experts in the field to provide a description of the state of knowledge in several substantive areas of research on Western Muslims, to evaluate the methodological state of the art in researching them, and to suggest additional approaches to interested scholars.¹ This is perhaps a good juncture to make such an assessment because the substantial growth of scholarly interest in the topic is both recent and highly segmented across disciplines and methodological lines. The contributors hope that the review pieces will help to integrate knowledge across disciplines, provide easier
entry into this area of research, and illustrate the diversity of methods that could be brought to bear on each area of inquiry. Our target audiences are graduate students who wish to write dissertations on Western Muslims or who started doing so, more advanced researchers looking for an overview that transcends their own discipline or specialty, and colleagues considering migrating to this topic. In the spirit of other RoMES special sections and the journal’s editorial direction, we intend our essays to be provocative rather than comprehensive, and aim to introduce rather than to complete scholarly conversations.

Two important and connected assumptions underlie the contributions to this project: that it is sensible to define research on Western Muslims as a field and that the term “Western Muslims” is the best one to use even though individuals with a connection to Islam in North America and Western Europe are very diverse. Contributors to this special section of the Review do not consider “Muslim” to necessarily mean a religious identity, but an identity that may have religious, racial, political or cultural dimensions. They also do not assume a priori that a sense of community exists among Muslims across Western countries or within any of them. Similarly, they do not assume that all Western contexts and publics are similar.

Still, there are very good reasons to use such terms. Muslim identity may be in flux and it may sometimes be irrelevant, but it is hard to escape in the context of today’s politics in Western Europe, the United States and Canada (the “West” for short in this collection). For example, I know from my own research that politicians who define themselves as “culturally Muslim” or even as “secular Muslim” find themselves dealing with “Muslim” issues and being considered as “Muslim” by their own political parties, by minority constituents who feel connected to them or indigenous ones who do not trust them, by jealous rivals wishing to discredit them, by the media when they need “Muslim” voices, and by civil society’s organizations. Even those who define themselves in opposition to Islam as practiced by their families, such as the former Dutch parliamentarian Ayaan Hirsi Ali, end up being understood (and used) in the context of the broader politics of Western Muslim minorities. More broadly, non-religious members of Muslim minorities are defined as “Muslims” by the media, by Muslim organizations, by religious leaders, and in the speeches of many politicians. Non-Muslim European politicians talk of “Muslims” in their countries nowadays more so than of “Pakistanis” or “Turks.” Surveys (Allen and Wike, 2009, inter alia) have also shown the substantial consolidation of a “Muslim” identity among Western Muslims, as opposed to ethnic identities. Even if someone from a Muslim background wishes to do so, it is not easy to escape being a “Muslim” in the West anymore, as many of the studies cited in Erik Bleich’s contribution show. The category may
have been created by opponents of Muslims who wanted to create an enemy
Other (Shooman and Spielhaus, 2010) but it has now become an inescapable
component of identity forged by external pressure and internal dynamics. To
borrow from two eloquent contributors to this field of scholarship, Muslims
and Islam have been racialized (Jamal 2009) and “being Muslim is not just a
matter of faith, but also a sociological fact” (Klausen 2009). Studying Muslim
minorities in the West is therefore just as legitimate as studying ethnic or
other religious minorities.

There are also substantial analytical and methodological advantages to
focusing on Western Muslims as opposed to Muslims generally or Muslim
residents of specific countries. As Kambiz GhaneaBassiri argues in his
contribution to this collection, knowing something about Muslims in
Muslim-majority countries tells us little about Muslims living in the West.
And while there are major institutional, sociological, economic, political,
demographic and cultural differences across Western countries and across
Muslim communities in these countries, processes of globalization and
transnationalism keep the dynamics among state, public and Muslim minority
within each Western country from being independent from the ones in other
countries. Anti-Muslim rhetoric in the United States and many European
countries, for example, often borrows from such discourses in other Western
countries and advocates of these views spread them across borders in person
and through online media and institutional means. Western Muslim thinkers,
thelogians, and leaders also think and act across borders. For example, the
Swiss theologian and Oxford Professor Tariq Ramadan invests his energy in
developing a jurisprudence adapted to the situation of minority Muslims that
speaks to the concerns and interests of devout Muslims across the West, and
the US Islamic Society of North America recently had a Canadian President,
Professor Ingrid Mattson. Pan-European and international media also bring
news of tensions, terrorist attacks and discrimination in each of these countries
to potentially all living rooms and computer screens in the West. And while the
European Union has expanded eastward, patterns of immigration only justify
including Western European countries with substantial Muslim immigration
in the last five decades under this category.

Another advantage of the term “Western Muslims” is that it accurately
reflects a sense of belonging and permanence among Muslim individuals who
are not immigrants (descendants of immigrants and converts), an increasingly
large proportion within these minorities (see Justin Gest’s article). Individuals
who practice the religion or who belong to ethnic groups that are traditionally
Muslim are now estimated to make some 1-2% of the North American population
and 4.5% of Western Europe’s population, and many of them were born in
The Pew Foundation (2011a, 124) estimates that the percentage of Muslims in Western and Northern Europe will increase by 57% to 7.1% of the total population by 2030 and that several European countries will have proportions of Muslims that approach or exceed ten percent by then, and quite a few of them will be third and fourth generation citizens of their countries. Of course, many Western Muslims may assimilate to the point of making Muslim identity irrelevant but that does not seem likely in the short run. Muslims are now an integral part of the West and their designation needs to reflect this reality. In addition, using the term “Western Muslim” does not distract from diversity and differences—it allows for comparative studies that explain differences and patterns on the national and even subnational levels. Such comparisons, if rigorous and focused enough, could even be policy-relevant.

In this spirit, the five papers in this collection focus on theories and methods in each area of research instead of regions or countries. The contributors leverage their expertise of such research in comparative context to identify promising research topics and the methods best suited to tackle them. Kambiz GhaneaBassiri discusses the theoretical and methodological possibilities for writing histories of Western Islam and Muslims and makes a case for ‘relationality’ in particular. Erik Bleich defines the term Islamophobia to allow the measurement of the phenomenon in a way that permits comparison with other types of biases and the tracking of its manifestations and intensity over time and across locales, and suggests strategies for doing so. Justin Gest discusses qualitative and quantitative research on the socio-economic integration of Western Muslims and suggests ways these approaches could dialogue synergistically and be improved upon separately. He also advocates embedding the study of Muslim minorities in the context of migration studies by de-emphasizing the role of the religion. Ariane Chebel d’Appollonia charts the landscape of research on security and the civil rights of Western Muslims and suggests new openings in this area. Finally, Abdulkader Sinno describes recent developments in researching the politics of Western Muslim minorities and identifies potential research topics and methods inspired from work on other minorities, particularly in the rich US context.

As with all else in life, we had to make compromises. Our constraints were space and the lack of availability of expertise on some topics that we would have liked to cover in addition to our five core topics. These include gender issues among Western Muslims; theological and cultural developments, including the evolution of religious practices; institutional adjustments and accommodation; the development of Western mosque communities, sects and institutions; Muslim artistic expression; Western Muslim architecture;
the preservation of Western Muslim oral histories; the experiences and roles of converts to Islam in shaping Western Islam; and transnational influences and migrations. We hope that readers will still find our contributions useful.

Works Cited

End Notes
1These papers are based on presentations and exchanges at a conference titled “Muslims in the U.S. & Europe: Islamophobia, Integration, Attitudes, and Rights,” organized by Abdulkader Sinno at Indiana University on September 23, 2011. Funding and support were provided by several units at Indiana University, including the Center for West European Studies and the Center for the Study of the Middle East.
2Australia and New Zealand could also be subsumed under the “West” for the purpose of this topic.
3For example, the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik was inspired by American anti-Muslim activists; the Dutch critic Ayaan Hirsli-Ali was given a position at the American Enterprise Institute to continue authoring her critiques of Islam and Muslims; US Islamophobes and other anti-Muslim writers often mention events in Europe to make their case about the danger of Islam to the United States; and the aggressively anti-Muslim Dutch Freedom party leader Geert Wilders has been invited on many occasions to the United States to spread his views.
437% of Muslim-Americans, for example, were estimated by Pew to have been born in the United States (Pew 2011b). Already in 2001, some 50% of British Muslims were born in the UK (UK Statistics Authority’s 2001 Census).
Writing Histories of Western Muslims

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The historical study of Muslim-minority communities in regions commonly associated with “the West” is a field in its infancy.1 It was not until the 1980s that the enormously diverse groups who adhere to Islam in Western Europe, the United States, and Canada came to be categorized primarily by their religion rather than by their varying races, ethnicities, nationalities, class, or status as immigrants or colonials. This new categorization resulted largely from the recognition of a religious resurgence in public life that was punctuated by the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the “Rushdie Affair.” It was also informed by histories of modernity and experiences of European imperialism that pitted a “modern West” against a “Muslim Orient.” Consequently, as Yasemin Soysal (2001: 165) and many others have noted, “at issue” in the study of Western Muslims has been “the compatibility of Islam—its organizational culture and practice—with European categories of democratic participation and citizenship.” Not even the study of African American Muslims escaped this binary opposition between Islamic identity and democratic citizenship; early studies of the rise of Islam among African Americans generally explained the separatist tendencies of African American Muslim nationalist organizations, such as the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam, in terms of their appropriation of an Islamic identity.2 Whether writing about immigrant or indigenous Muslims, scholars have been preoccupied with determining whether Muslims pose an anti-democratic, anti-modern threat to Western societies or if they are yet...
another addition to the religious, cultural, and political diversity of Western nation-states.

The underlying assumption of both these positions—that Islam and the West are inherently opposed to one another—has obfuscated the historical experiences of Western Muslims by framing their lives in terms of an Islamic past situated in Arabia and classical Islamo-Arabic texts (Asad 1997:190-191) and by defining the West in terms of the Enlightenment and a modern present. As Jacques Waardenburg (2004: 27) rightly observed, “Islam in the West” has become integral to an internal discourse about Western society, politics and security—a discourse that overlooks what Westerns Muslims have done and thought over several generations by “projecting one’s own ideas—including wishful thinking and nightmares—onto a largely unknown entity indicated by the term ‘Islam’.” It is thus not surprising that when in the 2000s a handful of scholars began to examine Western Muslims’ lives in their historical contexts, they also began to challenge their framing within the politicized dichotomy of “Islam and the West” as being ahistorical.

**Theoretical and Methodological Potential**

Western Muslims’ histories call into question the juxtaposition of Islam and the West by recalling the relations Muslims have formed through their religious practices, community building efforts, and interpretations of Islam in order to act on their historical context. The theoretical and methodological contributions this field stands to make, however, transcend the politics of our times. This is a field yet to be mined, and it is to this task of identifying its hidden riches that I wish to turn in this essay.

Western Muslims’ histories provide an opportunity for rethinking many of the analytical categories with which we have come to conceptualize modernity and the relationship between Muslim majority and Western societies in the modern world. The history of Western Muslims, by centering the lives and actions of those who have been at the peripheries of not only European empires but also of narratives of modernity and modern Western nation-states, demonstrates that many of the categories used to explain the modern world—secularism, fundamentalism, nationalism, globalization, human rights, Western civilization, Islamic civilization, and so on—are not ontological categories but rather products of historical attempts to control and manage the enormous diversity of the modern world (Malik 2004). More specifically, they were categories developed to manage and make sense of diversity through binaries distinguishing a self from an other—the civilized from the backward, the national from the colonial, the citizen from the alien, the secular from the religious, the modern from the traditional, the Occident from the
Orient. Western Muslims’ histories, being both Islamic and Western, occupy a conceptual space in modern discourses between these binary categories. As such, Western Muslims’ lives challenge both notions of European indigeneity and Islamic authenticity. They also complicate the notion of diaspora because many of them are converts at home in their own lands, and others are third- and fourth-generation Western Muslims, who self-identify with no land other than where they were born and now live.

While many of the bifurcating categories developed to make sense of diversity in terms of a self and an other focus on conceptual borders and their maintenance, the writing of Western Muslim histories involves the study of the relations that form through the porous membranes of boundaries. It entails examining the means and mechanisms by which Western Muslims relate ‘Islam and the West’ in their individual and collective lives. These relations are greater than the sum of their Western and Islamic parts; they are themselves productive of historical change. The writing of Western Muslims’ histories is thus significant, not so much because it outlines Muslim contributions to “the West” or recalls a past forgotten in the age of “clash of civilizations” or “war on terror,” but because it calls for new methodologies and paradigms for understanding the modern world. Leila Ahmed, for example, writes that her study of the history of Western Muslim women’s activism completely reversed her understandings and expectations of feminism and Islamism: “This then is the conclusion I find myself arriving at in light of the evidence surveyed... that it is, after all, Islamists and the children of Islamists and not secular or privately religious Muslims who are most fully and actively integrating into this core and definingly American tradition of social and political activism.... It is they...who are now in the forefront of the struggle in relation to gender issues in Islam” (2011: 296-297).

Relationality
Since Western Muslims are situated in an in-between space, the relations they create between a self and an other differ significantly depending on the varying contexts in which they participate socially, politically, culturally, and religiously. Therefore, their histories need to develop methods and an analytical vocabulary that could capture and make sense of the relationality of their lived experiences. As an emerging subfield, there is currently no methodological trajectory or consensus in the historical study of Western Muslims. The utility of analytical concepts often employed to discuss “cultural mixing”—hybridity, symbiosis, syncretism, hegemony, resistance—have yet to be fully explored in regard to the history of Western Muslims. Their usefulness thus remains to be seen, but they appear limited insofar as they presume a
distinct self and an other interacting in history rather than focusing on the liminal or relational spaces between the self and the other as themselves fertile ground for historical change and identity formation. These liminal or relational spaces consist of mediums, concepts, institutions, and practices through which Western Muslims maintain relations among varying religious, ethnic, racial, gender, and national identities.\textsuperscript{8} By way of example, in the early modern era, monotheism emerged in Europe as a conceptual means of identifying a consensus among Jews, Christians, and Muslims through which the diverse religious encounters of the modern world could be negotiated. More recently, the notion of “Abrahamic religions” has come to the fore as a means of shaping interfaith relations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, particularly in the United States. While the pattern here is obvious, the relations these terms sought to negotiate through a consensual concept have not been historically contextualized in regard to Western Muslims’ lives. What historical factors contributed to the popularity of one and the waning of the other over time? What lessons did purveyors of the notion of “Abrahamic religions” learn from the earlier use of “monotheism” and what sort of communal and inter-religious consensus did they wish to enact through their choices? What were the historical effects of these concepts on Western Muslims’ self-understandings and relations with non-Muslims?\textsuperscript{9}

**Polyvalence and Polysemy**

If the study of the histories of Western Muslims calls for methodologies suitable for understanding relationality, polyvalence and polysemy could perhaps serve as a basis for the analytical vocabulary needed to express this relationality.\textsuperscript{10} The diversity found among Western Muslims coupled with their situated in-between-ness have often engendered institutions, concepts, and practices that are open to multiple meanings and thus could pragmatically mediate relations between diverse understandings of religious duty, cultural practices, and political belonging. African slaves in antebellum America, for example, lived in a world where the same religious beliefs and practices were subject to widely varied meanings. Their polyvalence helped bridge individual differences in ethnicity, race, and religion, without eliminating these markers of difference. Enslaved literate Muslims in the United States, for example, often treated the Lord’s Prayer and \textit{al-Fātiḥa} (the first chapter of the Qur’an) as interchangeable daily prayers.\textsuperscript{11} When “Abdul Rahman (a Mandingo Muslim who after decades of slaving gained his freedom and travelled the North to raise money for the manumission of his family) was asked in 1828 to write the Lord’s Prayer in Arabic, he actually wrote \textit{al-Fātiḥa}.\textsuperscript{12} This act could be seen as a subtle form of resistance (Diouf 1998), ironically issued from a man who married an African
American Christian woman whom he reportedly accompanied to church (Austin 1984; 168, 187), but it is more likely that in the poly-religious context of antebellum America, al-ʿFāṭiḥa was functionally polysemous for ʿAbdul Rahman. In other words, ʿAbdul Rahman wrote the Lord’s Prayer that he knew and in the process ascribed new spheres of meaning to both al-ʿFāṭiḥa and the Lord’s Prayer (GhaneaBassiri 2010: 85).

**Pluralism**

Since the relationality of Western Muslim histories is negotiated differently by different actors in varying historical circumstances, its study begins with the assumption that diversity is the norm and thus calls for the pluralization of our terms of analysis. There is no modernity, but negotiated modernities. No monolithic Muslim community but Muslim communities with varying visions of Islam that stand pluralistically in relation to one another as well as to non-Muslim communities. While anthropological and sociological studies have explored ethnic, gender, class, generational, and sectarian tensions among Western Muslims, much less attention has been paid to how these tensions evolved to shape new Western Muslim identities, institutions, and practices over time. One of the ways in which Muslims have dealt with intra-religious tensions has been to interpret “the West” as a terra incognita upon which an idealized Islam could be realized, divorced from cultural practices and problems of the “old world.” This separation of religion and culture is a common trope in the history of Islam in the United States, dating back at least to the early 1920s when the Ahmadi missionary, Muhammad Sadiq, proselytized Islam as a race-blind religion that could solve America’s “color problem.” Since then it has been varyingly employed by such diverse groups as the Nation of Islam, immigrant Muslim activists, and African American Sunnis to define their diverse religious beliefs and practices as authentically Islamic. However, it has not been adequately historicized nor systematically studied because scholars have generally viewed it as a mechanism of adaptation rather than an enduring pattern of Western Muslim history.

**Transnationalism**

The relationality of Western Muslims’ lives requires not only that we use a pluralistic language to write their histories but that scholars also situate them transnationally. Western Muslims, throughout their history, have been seen as liminal figures, who could serve as conduits and translators between “Western” and “Muslim” peoples. France founded the Great Mosque of Paris at the heart of its empire to signal a new relation with its colonial subjects who fought in World War I. In the United States, President Dwight Eisenhower helped
inaugurate the Islamic Center of Washington, D.C. in 1957 to mark the United States’ new relation with client states in the Middle East after World War II. After Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Saudi and Kuwaiti officials, who for years financially contributed to national Muslim organizations in the United States and Canada, called on these groups to help gain support for a US-led war against Iraq. One could cite many more such examples of the transnationalism of Western Muslims. “Today, the Muslim diaspora is the most prominent interlocutor between the two sides [Islam and the West],” Iftikhar Malik (2004, 181) writes. “The diaspora can offer a fresh view of the Islamic heritage and a better understanding of the Muslim predicament.”

Throughout their history, Western Muslims have personified transnationalism. Similar to the trope of the separation of religion and culture, transnationalism has been a part of Western Muslim history for many years, dating back at least to the early-eighteenth century, when the Royal African Company employed Job Ben Solomon (a Fulbe Muslim of notable ancestry who was sold into slavery in Maryland in the early 1730s before gaining manumission at the hand of British aristocrats) to expand English trade inland in Africa (Bluett 1734, Moore 1738, and Grant 1968). Today, in the midst of revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa, Western Muslims are once again intermediaries, explaining to “the West” their co-religionists’ emotions and calming anxieties about the future relations between “the West” and the Middle East and North African by personifying a cosmopolitan transnationalism.

The transnational space in which Western Muslim histories unfold is not a de-territorialized, globalized space as some like Olivier Roy (2004) have suggested. Transnationalism has been both imagined and institutionalized in Western Muslims’ everyday lives and cultural memories. Its manifestations over time, however, have not been comprehensively studied for what they reveal about how diversity has socially, culturally, and politically been negotiated in the modern era.13 When Western Muslims act as translators or are employed as cultural ambassadors, they are generally casted as negotiating national and international relations anew, irrespective of their long history of transnationalism.14 John Bowen (2010:6), for example, writes, “Muslims who are engaged in deliberating about Islam in France must navigate between two spatially distinct realms of justification: a transnational one, based on the norms and traditions of Islam, and a national one, based on the civic values of France.” The history of French Muslims, however, suggests that there is a third space between these two realms bequeathed by efforts of prior Muslims in France to negotiate this same distinction socially, religiously, politically, and institutionally.
Conclusion
The histories of Western Muslims have only recently been critically examined, but they stand to make considerable theoretical and methodological contributions to our understandings of Islam and the modern world. While the diversity of the modern world has generally been examined through bifurcating categories that distinguish a self from an other, the histories of Western Muslims, situated in between “Islam and the West” calls for a rethinking of the modern world by viewing diversity—not as an intractable problem that needs to be explained or contained—but as the grounds on which modern experiences, identities, institutions, and concepts are formed. Western Muslim lives draw attention to how relations between different religions, cultures, societies, nations, races, ethnicities, and genders—varyingly negotiated depending on context and maintained through polyvalent media, concepts, institutions and practices—are not just products of history but themselves productive of history.

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End Notes

1The notion of “the West” as a unified cultural complex is a problematic notion that I have critiqued elsewhere, particularly when it is defined in contradistinction from Islam. See Kambiz GhaneaBassiri (2010: 4-8). In this essay, I use the West and its derivative forms, not as a cultural complex, but as a shorthand reference to Western European nations, the United States, and Canada.

2See, for example, Lincoln (1994) and Essien-Udom (1962). A similar critique of scholarship on African American Muslims could be found in Jackson (2005).

3Bernard Lewis’s writings (inter alia 1993, 1994) on “Islam and the West” are the most influential examples of scholarship that interprets the modern presence of Muslims in Western Europe in terms of the ancient history and legal discourses of Muslims. For an influential discussion of the modern West as a product of Enlightenment thought, see Lilla (2007). Even
when scholars do not adhere to such essentialized understandings of “Islam and the West,” they often frame discussion of Western Muslims in terms of their commensurability or incommensurability by asking how Muslims are self-identifying in an inherently foreign society. See, for example, Haddad and Esposito (1998), Haddad (1987 and 2002), and Smith (2009).


For a classic study of how conceptions of religion both establish boundaries and cut across them, see Chidester (1996: particularly 259-266).

For a recent, exemplary study of relational history, see Makdisi (2008).

For an illuminating discussion of some of these questions, see Hicks (2010).

Bruce Lawrence (2002) first introduced polyvalence and kaleidoculture as analytical concepts through which diversity and multiculturalism could be re-imagined in the modern era in terms of equivalency.

In addition to the example of ‘Abdul Rahman, see the autobiographical manuscript of ‘Umar ibn Said (2011: 74-75), where he indicates that, before coming to a “Christian country, he recited al-Fātiḥa for prayer and now he recites the Lord’s Prayer:

A photocopy of his manuscript can be seen in Austin (1984): 190.

Some steps toward such analysis have been made by Curtis (2007), GhaneaBassiri (2010: 254-263), and Howell (2009).

For examples of attempts to examine contemporary Western Muslims’ transnational roles with reference to their histories, see Aidi (2011), Hicks (2010), Silverstein (2004), or Werbner (2002).
Islamophobia was originally developed as a concept in the late 1990s by political activists to draw attention to rhetoric and actions directed at Islam and Muslims in Western liberal democracies. In recent years, Islamophobia has evolved from a primarily political concept toward one increasingly deployed for analytical purposes. Researchers have begun using the term to identify the history, presence, dimensions, intensity, causes, and consequences of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim sentiments. In short, Islamophobia is an emerging comparative concept in the social sciences. Yet, there is no widely-accepted definition of the term. As a result, it is extremely difficult to compare levels of Islamophobia across time, location, or social group, or to levels of analogous categories like racism, anti-Semitism, or xenophobia.

This essay reviews prevailing usage of the term Islamophobia, offers a definition that will be useful to social scientists in many circumstances, and briefly outlines the ways in which scholars have studied Islamophobia in the West.

Islamophobia as a Concept
Islamophobia emerged in contemporary discourse with the 1997 publication of the report “Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All” by the Runnymede Trust, the British race relations NGO. Since then, and especially since 2001, it has been regularly used by the media, by citizens, and by NGOs, particularly in Britain, France, and the United States (Lee et al. 2009: 92-3; Zúquete 2008: 321-2). Although the term has become relatively common, there is little agreement
about Islamophobia’s precise meaning. Some authors deploy Islamophobia without explicitly defining it (Bunzl 2007; Cole 2009; Kaplan 2006; MacMaster 2003; Poynting and Mason 2007; Halliday 1999). Others use characterizations that are vague, narrow, or generic. Gottschalk and Greenberg (2008: 5), for example, call it “a social anxiety toward Islam and Muslim cultures.” Geisser (2003: 10) discusses a “rejection of the religious referent…the Muslim religion as an irreducible identity marker between ‘Us’ and ‘Them.’”

Even when definitions are more specific, there is still significant variation in the precise formulations of Islamophobia. Lee et al. (2009: 93) define the term as “fear of Muslims and the Islamic faith.” Similarly, for Abbas (2004: 28), it is “the fear or dread of Islam or Muslims.” Zúquete (2008: 323) describes Islamophobia as “a widespread mindset and fear-laden discourse in which people make blanket judgments of Islam as the enemy, as the ‘other,’ as a dangerous and unchanged, monolithic bloc that is the natural subject of well-deserved hostility from Westerners.” Semati (2010: 1) calls it “a single, unified and negative conception of an essentialized Islam, which is then deemed incompatible with Euro-Americaness.” In one of the most carefully-considered definitions, Stolz (2005: 548) asserts that “Islamophobia is a rejection of Islam, Muslim groups and Muslim individuals on the basis of prejudice and stereotypes. It may have emotional, cognitive, evaluative as well as action-oriented elements (e.g. discrimination, violence).” In sum, for Lee et al. and for Abbas, Islamophobia is exclusively about fear (or dread), directed at either Islam or Muslims. For Zúquete and Semati, it involves either more than fear or perhaps excludes fear, and is directed uniquely at Islam and not at Muslims. For Stolz, it is rejection of either Islam or Muslims that extends beyond thought-processes to include concrete actions.

Because the term Islamophobia has at times seemed too imprecise or politically loaded, some observers propose avoiding it altogether. Authors have criticized it for being applied to widely divergent phenomena (Cesari 2006: 5-6; Zúquete 2008: 323), because it implies fear of Islam as a faith when the “true” problem is negative stereotyping of Muslims as a people (Halliday 1999: 898), and because it risks stigmatizing all critiques of Islam (Halliday 1999: 899; Zúquete 2008: 324). Some will agree with John Bowen (2005: 524), who has observed that, “because the term has come to be used in this overly broad way and is highly polemical, using it as an analytical term is a bit dicey.” At the same time, Islamophobia has taken root in public, political, and academic discourses. It exists not only for political reasons, but also because it attempts to label a social reality—that Islam and Muslims have emerged as objects of aversion, fear, and hostility in contemporary liberal democracies. As Gerring (2001: 67) has argued, “to deprive the social science community
of certain words, or of certain uses of commonly understood words, is bound
to create confusion, and also to limit the usefulness of social science as a way
of apprehending the world.” Under these circumstances, there is substantial
merit to making Islamophobia a comprehensible and meaningful concept for
social scientists as well as for political actors.

In recent work (Bleich 2011), I have drawn on scholarship on concept
formation (Goertz 2006) to develop a definition of Islamophobia that can
be useful in social scientific analysis. I propose that Islamophobia can best
be understood as indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam
or Muslims. Because not all criticism constitutes Islamophobia, terms like
indiscriminate—or cognates like undifferentiated or un-nuanced—cover instances
where negative assessments are applied to all or most Muslims or aspects of
Islam. As with parallel concepts like homophobia or xenophobia, Islamophobia
connotes a broader set of negative attitudes or emotions directed at individuals or
groups because of their perceived membership in a defined category. Viewed in
this way, Islamophobia is also analogous to terms like racism, sexism, or anti-
Semitism. Aversion, jealousy, suspicion, disdain, anxiety, rejection, contempt,
fear, disgust, anger, and hostility give a sense of the range of negative attitudes
and emotions that may constitute Islamophobia. Finally, directed at Islam or
Muslims suggests that the target may be the religious doctrine or the people
who follow it (or whose ancestors have followed it, or who are believed to
follow it). This recognizes the multidimensional nature of Islamophobia, and
the fact that Islam and Muslims are often inextricably intertwined in individual
and public perceptions.

Two insights can help determine the degree to which a statement or a person
can be classified as Islamophobic. In their discussion of anti-Americanism,
Katzenstein and Keohane identify the intensity of an individual’s adherence
to a particular position. They assign changeable opinions less weight than
more durable predispositions, such as distrust or bias (Katzenstein and
Keohane 2007: 19-24). For Sniderman and his colleagues, the more frequently
and consistently an individual offers a negative evaluation (or withholds a
positive one) of a group or its members, the more prejudiced he or she is
(Sniderman et al. 2000: 23-5). Following these insights, a one-off negative
opinion about Islam or Muslims constitutes low-level Islamophobia. At the
other extreme, expressions of unshakable hostility are high-level examples of
Islamophobia. The more consistently an individual expresses a greater number
of such intensely held biases, the more Islamophobic he or she is. The greater
the prevalence, consistency, and intensity of Islamophobic expressions and
individuals, the greater the Islamophobia is in a given social group or society.
Drawing on the concept formation literature and on the scholarship on racism,
sexism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and homophobia makes it possible to construct a definition of Islamophobia that is useful in a number of different contexts. Building a clear and justifiable definition of Islamophobia is itself a first step toward comparing its levels across time, space, and social groups.

**Measuring Islamophobia**

Beyond simply identifying its key definitional components, social scientists also need to measure Islamophobia. To date, most observers, scholars, activists, and politicians have provided evidence of Islamophobia that suffers from one of three weaknesses. Some authors rely on extremely indirect indicators of contemporary Islamophobia, such as noting its deep historical roots (Matar 2009) or identifying current socio-economic disadvantages concentrated in Muslim communities (Tausch et al. 2007). Others provide examples of Islamophobia that are anecdotal or symbolic, such as examples of violence directed at Muslims (EUMC 2002: 13-30, 2006: 62-89) or the use of “Bin Laden” as a schoolyard taunt (Cole 2009: 1682). A third type of research conflates Islamophobia with attitudes toward overlapping ethnic, national-origin, or immigrant-status groups. In these cases, contemporary histories of anti-Arab, anti-South Asian, or anti-immigrant sentiments and policies (MacMaster 2003; Poynting and Mason 2007; Vertovec 2002) or examples of discrimination or attacks against groups that are predominantly Muslim (EUMC 2006: 44-62), or composite measures that mix together responses about Islam/Muslims with those about national origin or ethnic groups (Stolz 2005: 555-56) serve as indicators of Islamophobia. These approaches and observations are each useful to a degree. Yet, because they use indirect, anecdotal, or conflating measures, they cannot provide a systematic base line for analyzing and comparing Islamophobia across time, location, social group, or to intolerance directed at other minority groups.

What are the indicators that best reflect “indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims?” The best ones are direct survey, focus-group, or interview data. The ideal measures involve carefully tailored questions through which respondents accurately reveal the extent of their indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims. Of course, this data is hard to come by. It is not my goal here—nor do I have the space—to spell out exactly which questions should be asked of respondents or which experiments should be undertaken. But it is helpful to note that there are precedents for students of Islamophobia in the form of longstanding scholarship on racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, anti-Americanism, xenophobia, sexism, and other types of negative attitudes and emotions (among others, see Kleinpenning and Hagendoorn 1993; Smith 1993;
As most studies in these cognate fields have emphasized, the key to uncovering reliable indicators of Islamophobia lies in consistency. The more consistently negative the attitudes and emotions of respondents to a series of questions, the more confident we can be that they are expressing Islamophobia. Questionnaires can also aim to discern different levels of intensity of responses (aversion versus fear versus hostility) and of intensity of adherence to Islamophobic positions (an opinion versus a predisposition such as a bias). One good starting point for further discussion and testing is the Islamophobia Scale, developed by Lee et al. (2009). These researchers used a 5-point Likert-type scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” on which 223 undergraduate students responded to questions such as “If I could, I would avoid contact with Muslims,” and “Islam is a dangerous religion.” These types of questions may have diminished utility if expressing open Islamophobia becomes less socially acceptable, but in the current historical context, they are direct measures with a high probability of accurately revealing Islamophobia.³

There have also been a number of surveys undertaken in the United States that ask similar questions over a number of years, or that ask a suite of related questions specifically about Islam and Muslims in a given year. These types of surveys allow researchers to gather and to analyze systematic data on Islamophobia, and permit them to assess the correlates of Islamophobia. Nisbet et al. (2009) and GhaneaBassiri and Gronke (2011) offer comprehensive literature reviews in this vein and have themselves overseen data collection that permits analysis of factors associated with Islamophobia in the United States.⁴ In contrast to these positive models, it is important to remember that the fewer and the more indirect are the questions asked in surveys, focus groups, or interviews, the more difficult it is to measure the consistency, intensity, and nature of Islamophobic sentiments. In particular, any arguments about Islamophobia that rely on a single survey question should be viewed with skepticism.

Looking beyond survey, focus group, and interview data, one can also measure Islamophobia by examining unsolicited statements proffered by politicians, civil servants, public figures, religious leaders, journalists, bloggers and others whose words are recorded for posterity. It is possible to undertake systematic analyses of news content about Islam and Muslims (Moore, Mason, and Lewis 2008), or to examine the changing nature of far-right political rhetoric vis-à-vis Muslims (Zúquete 2008), or to discuss the interpretation of Islam by a prominent writer such as Oriana Fallaci (Talbot 2006). To the extent that projects like these are systematic—by reviewing all major news stories, far-right rhetoric,
or best-selling authors—they can convey important information about the prevalence and nature of Islamophobia at specific times and places.

Because consistent and reliable indicators like those cited above are difficult to come by, we often have to infer the presence of Islamophobia from its effects. The key is to understand the quality of the indicator and the likelihood that it reveals the underlying phenomenon. Experiments can be a fruitful means for uncovering attitudes and emotions toward particular out-groups. For example, Adida, Laitin, and Valfort (2010) have developed a series of experiments to gauge non-Muslim French participants’ generosity toward French Muslim participants. They found that non-Muslim French exhibit less generosity toward Muslims under a variety of circumstances, and that this outcome depends more upon emotional sense of threat than upon rational beliefs about expected Muslim behavior (Adida, Laitin, and Valfort 2010: 4, 20).

Some behavioral effects of Islamophobia, like hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims, are typically tightly connected to underlying attitudes and emotions. Others, like a low percentage of Muslims in public office in some countries (see Abdulkader Sinno’s contribution) or significant socio-economic disparities between Muslims and non-Muslims, are much less direct indicators of Islamophobia as they may be largely explained by other causes. While it is important not to ignore such indirect indicators, they have to be assessed carefully in order to avoid overstating the role of Islamophobia in determining these outcomes. Wherever possible, it is best to establish the presence, extent, and dimensions of Islamophobia using the most direct indicators available, and to specify the precise mechanisms that connect that Islamophobia to the precise outcomes of interest.

**Conclusion**

It is possible to conceptualize and to measure Islamophobia, but it is not a straightforward task. I have offered one specific definition of Islamophobia, though I recognize that some observers may find this definition too broad or too narrow for their own purposes. In terms of measuring Islamophobia, it is important to remember that analysts and observers frequently disagree over how to capture levels of any important concept (such as racism, economic health, public well-being, or democracy). This is a standard challenge for social scientists, and it is one that applies equally to Islamophobia. Some may prefer to use methods that highlight Muslims’ own responses to perceptions of Islamophobia, or to undertake more contextual analyses of the circumstances that give rise to such sentiments and the ways they can be subverted (see, for example, the contributions to Shryock 2010). I argue here that one extremely productive way to assess levels of Islamophobia is to seek out the most direct
indicators of “indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims.” Assembling multiple, reliable, and consistent indicators provides a more systematic and accurate sense of Islamophobia within a particular society at a specific time.

It may not be possible to develop a meaningful aggregate index of Islamophobia given the currently available data, and there are some purposes for which attempting to do so would be pointless. But it is vital to move beyond using indirect, anecdotal, or conflating indicators as evidence of contemporary Islamophobia. Once we have a common conceptual language and more consistent tools for measuring Islamophobia, we can more accurately assess its trends over time, its variation over space or social groups, and its intensity relative to negative attitudes and emotions aimed at other status minority groups. Developing Islamophobia as a concrete and usable social scientific concept is not only the basis for meaningful comparative and causal analysis in academia, it is also the foundation for more informed public debates and for more effective policy decisions.

Works Cited


End Notes

1 There is even a website called http://www.islamophobia.org, and the concept has also gained acceptance in official UN discourse: http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/sgsm9637.doc.htm.
Grosfoguel and Mielants (2006) offer four separate perspectives on the meaning of Islamophobia.

One may also investigate whether the expressed Islamophobia is a constant and durable presence in respondents’ lives, or whether it is triggered by or modulated based on particular circumstances such as survey question priming.

Articles that provide meta-analyses of surveys in the United States and Europe include Pangopoulos (2006), Field (2007), and Bleich (2009).

These connections are clearest when the data does not suffer from conflation with other motives for hate crimes or discrimination. The FBI, London’s Metropolitan Police Service, and a few other European jurisdictions collect data specifically on anti-Muslim hate crimes (on the FBI’s collection of “anti-Islamic” data, see Kaplan 2006); on field audit studies to test for racial discrimination, see Quillian (2006).
Are Western Muslims integrating? Can Western Muslims integrate? Over the past 20 years, significant attention has been invested in examinations stimulated by the extensive public commentary addressing such questions. This brief review aims to demystify the examination of Western Muslims’ integration in the interest of re-embedding this subject matter in the broader scholarship about immigration and settlement. Within this expanding field of study, Western Muslims can (and should) be examined at the community level, where specific ethno-cultural groups represent but case studies among hundreds of Western Muslim communities that differ in their immigration context, countries of origin, sects, and ethno-cultural backgrounds. Simultaneously, the collection of statistical data should be used to test hypotheses that are developed in studies of such communities. The dialogue between qualitative and quantitative approaches provides research openings to more rigorously push the state of knowledge in this area, and I describe some of these openings below.

In pursuing these openings, we must be wary of reproducing Western Muslims’ otherwise exceptional treatment in the public sphere and careful not to dignify baseless claims about Muslims that assume a priori that Islamic religiosity influences the attitudes of individuals and communities in ways that are different from other religions, and to embed examinations of contemporary Muslims in larger debates about integration. Through a cursory survey of key integration indicators, we see that Western Muslims and their descendants are actually integrating into destination societies the way others did before them.
The Fallacies of Activist and Politician-led Discourses

Over the past 20 years, there has been a steady flow of well-publicized theses that question whether Muslim communities can and are integrating into Western societies. This discussion has been a favorite of tabloids, but it is frequently adopted by politicians and elevated into more rigorous periodicals and documentaries attracted to sensational claims about Islam’s “competing loyalty” and “real meaning.” For some observers, Muslims supposedly raise their faith’s obligations above civic duties in a way that makes Muslim and Western existences irreconcilable and puts social cohesion and the governance of democratic destination states at severe risk.²

Second generation European and North American Muslims have by now experienced entire childhoods and adolescences in Scottish, Swedish and Saskatchewan schools, absorbing local media content, speaking national languages, and interacting with other Western Muslims and non-Muslims. Equipped with advancing tools of global communication like satellite television, video conferencing, and internet-based social networks, young Muslims may be more accurately thought of as hybrids who connect multiple (perhaps contradictory) sociopolitical attributes across different identity forms (Gest 2010: 100-110). This should cause us to question the treatment of second and third generations of Muslim immigrants as foreigners with fundamental cultural differences. In this way, Muslims are not only treated as somehow apart from other immigrant communities (as highlighted above); there is also a tendency to “trap” in the immigrant frame people who have actually been outside of it for one or more generations.³

Skeptics mesmerized by religious differences interpret Muslim individuals’ integration through a lens so tainted by the contemporary obsession with Islam that they fail to see how Islam is powerfully contextualized and itself transformed by the variable sociopolitical environments in which Western Muslims are situated. Indeed, Muslim diversity has been shown to increase in response to integration (Open Society Foundation 2009). Alas, journalist Christopher Caldwell (2009), for example, chooses not to examine Western Muslims as minority communities subject to the same structural limitations, disadvantages and interdependencies as other populations. And even some scholars such as Peter Skerry (2010) attempt to promote greater awareness of certain broadly-defined entrenched cultural differences between Muslims and Westerners.

The goal of this brief exposé of the dominant Muslim-suspicious political and activist discourse is to underscore the importance of researching the integration of immigrant-origin Muslim communities in the context of similar immigrant origin communities, or as one case among many experiencing
certain social and political phenomena. Only doing so allows adequate control for whether an Islamic identity or faith affects an individual’s processes of integration.4

The Context of Integration

The literature about immigrants’ adaptation is diverse, reflecting different normative and positive understandings about integration. At its core, integration is about the equilibrium of adaptation between migrants and natives. While some scholars and observers believe integration requires the assimilation of newcomers to the requirements of local culture, others contend that both immigrants and natives are obligated to adjust their preferences to reach a mutually acceptable set of relations. Still others argue that immigrants’ adaptation is more necessary in some spheres of interaction than others. Brubaker (2001: 534) argues that although the concept of “assimilation” is ‘discredited’ and ‘analytically disreputable,’ it remains useful to analyze neighboring communities’ enduring differences. Multiculturalists are more concerned about the space afforded for difference between neighboring communities, and the ways that the local state and native population adapt to the presence and needs of newcomers. Empirical examinations have found variation in the approaches of different states with different migrant communities (prominently, Joppke 1999, 2007; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Favell 2001; Baubock 2003; Ireland 2004; Koopmans et al. 2005; Messina 2007; Maxwell 2010). It is therefore essential to consider the different realms and periods of assimilation for different populations, rather than just “how much” assimilation is taking place (Brubaker 2001). Western Muslims are not independent of these histories. In fact, their presence has altered their courses, as governments have in some cases designed policy to respond to popular fear of demographic and normative change.

Integration is ultimately not only a matter of immigrants’ assimilation anyway. Majority communities adapt as well.5 While immigration to a new place confronts the migrant with new norms, preferences and socio-civic requirements, migrants’ alternative worldviews also compel destination societies to determine what is acceptable and can be accommodated in their polity (see Meer 2012). The process of assimilation is therefore first structured by the rules and customs that a government and society must decide to enforce. In other words, the destination state must decide what migrants must assimilate to. This process entails substantial (though frequently superficial) reflection about what it means to be British, what is required to thrive as a Spaniard, or what qualifications one must meet to participate as a German. From another perspective, it is a question of what
unites a national community, what a citizenry has in common. Since the ubiquitous proliferation of internet and satellite communication, national communities have been exposed to an infinite number of foreign cultural resources that dilute the uniqueness of any one place. Along with global immigration, this process of deterritorialization has stimulated efforts (especially in Europe) to excavate, ‘museumize’ and sanctify the purported pillars of national cultures from the past—memorializing elements that often have little enduring significance for the purposes of distinction. In so doing, this search unearths histories of cultural conflict long since moderated by time or tolerance. However, it is in this context of cultural reconstruction that migrants, governments and societies have approached their counterpart—each approach itself an act of adaptation.

Understanding the role played by each of these three sectors—government, native society, and migrants themselves—sensitizes the researcher to the impact they hold on conventional integration indicators. Some indicators of integration are subject to government facilitation. Naturalization is not only a product of immigrants’ desire to meet a set of qualifications; it is highly contingent on the nature of those qualifications, as they are set by legislators and ministries. Several European states have acted to condition naturalization or other forms of immigrants’ legal entitlement on meeting qualifications customized to make it harder for those holding “Muslim” values or characteristics from accessing them. Bloemraad (2006) and a report by Meyers and Pitkin (2011) reveal how citizenship attainment is highly influenced by variable regimes across states. (Also see Hainmueller and Hangartner 2011.) Political participation rates by immigrants are not merely a reflection of immigrants’ desire to engage civically; they depend on their eligibility to vote, unionize or protest, as set by the state. It is subject to the recruitment strategies of political parties, the institutionalized rules of representation, and the facilitation of claims-making associations (Koopmans and Statham 2001, Abdulkader Sinno’s article below). Language acquisition, a condition of naturalization in many states, is subject to immigrants’ duration of residency and willpower, but also to support offered by the government (Stanat and Christensen 2006). States differ in their readiness to subsidize and regulate classes, provide learning materials, make courses culturally inoffensive, and set attainable levels of proficiency.

Other indicators of integration are to a meaningful extent subject to third-party, societal influence. Feelings of “belonging,” as solicited by many immigrant public opinion surveys, may be viewed as a reflection of the extent of immigrants’ assimilation. However, they tend to be profoundly connected to
immigrants’ experiences and interactions with native citizens of the destination state. Taylor (1994: 25) writes that “our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others—and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves.” Employment rates among immigrants are regularly interpreted as a reflection of immigrants’ work ethic and contribution to the destination state’s economy. However, job acquisition is very much subject to employer discrimination and exploitation (Open Society Foundation 2009: 109-132). This subjectivity in societal (but also governmental) treatment is influenced by public discourses, which may favor or discriminate against a given community. Indeed, fear motivates or validates double standards that distort the dynamics of integration for both natives and immigrants.

Finally, other forms of integration are largely subject to the volition of immigrants themselves, less structured by policy or third-party treatment than the indicators discussed above. Fertility rates—often drastically different between the states of origin and destination—are a useful way to observe whether immigrant groups are adapting to destination state family structures. Sociocultural values are frequently solicited by immigrant public opinion surveys in the interest of assessing convergence or divergence between native and immigrant worldviews. National identification is also regularly measured by surveys concerned with immigrants’ identity construction. While some instruments assume a false mutually exclusive relationship between religious, cultural and national affiliations by asking respondents to choose between them, better instruments simply ask whether or how strongly immigrants’ identify with their destination nationality.

I do not mention Islam or Western Muslims in the discussion above because these indicators and processes of integration are relevant to all immigrants, not only Muslims. A persistent difficulty in much of the qualitative and quantitative research about Western Muslims is that assessments of their integration are neither contextualized among other immigrant communities nor concerned with key debates in the prevailing integration literature about political incorporation, citizenship, or transnationalism. The differences that (diverse) Muslim perspectives pose to (equally diverse) Western trends in social politics do not exempt Muslim immigrants’ process of integration from the considerations above. Indeed, what makes Western Muslim communities such fascinating case studies is the ways that the dynamics of their identity and their securitized social position evoke grander debates about integration—not the way Muslims make these debates suddenly moot.
So Different Anyway?
Importantly, when examining many of the above indicators of integration, we find that Muslims are actually adapting to Western societies quite well. In fact, focusing exclusively on the indicators that are the least subject to variable government and third-party treatment, the evidence suggests that Western Muslims have already adapted in significant ways. In a 2011 report by the Pew Research Center, demographers show that Muslim women in twenty-five European countries currently have an average of 2.2 children each (Pew 2011: 132). While this rate is still above the European non-Muslim average of 1.5 children per woman, it is significantly lower than the fertility rates for women in most European Muslim immigrants’ countries of origin. The fertility gap between Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe is expected to further narrow. By 2025 or 2030, the average fertility rate for Muslim women in the 25 countries for which data are available is expected to drop to 2.0 children per woman, while the average fertility rate for non-Muslim women is projected to increase slightly, to 1.6 children per woman. This exhibits increasing convergence between European Muslims and non-Muslims.

There also is a strong moderation effect in individuals’ values and trends in Western Muslims’ national identification. In a recent study, Inglehart and Norris (2009) find that the basic socio-political values of Muslims in European countries fall about midway between those prevailing in their country of origin and their country of destination. The authors choose not to disaggregate their data according to generational differences, but it is reasonable to hypothesize that there would be even greater value convergence between non-Muslim Europeans and latter generation Muslim migrants who were born, raised and educated in Europe. Among American Muslims, the Pew Research Center (2007: 32–34) finds that 63% see no conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society. Asked about whether American Muslims should assimilate, 43% of the Pew sample says new arrivals should “mostly adopt American customs and ways of life.” While 26% believe Muslims should “mostly try to remain distinct from the larger American society,” another 16% volunteer that new immigrants should try to do both. From a social perspective, 51% of the sample reports having relatively few Muslims in their inner friendship circle.

With regard to national identification, 47% of American Muslims interviewed by the Pew Research Center (ibid.) said they think of themselves first as a Muslim—comparable to the 42% of American Christians who said they think of themselves as Christians first when surveyed in 2006. In Europe, the Gallup Coexist Index (2009: 19) shows that British, French, and German Muslims are more likely than the general populations in those three countries to identify strongly with their faith. However, Muslims surveyed are also as likely (if not
more likely, as in the United Kingdom) than the general public to identify strongly with their countries of residence. It is worth noting that this finding is based on an extensive survey that (unlike Pew) does not require respondents to choose between their nationality and religion. Thus, in the spheres of integration less subject to government or third party interference, there is substantial evidence that Western Muslims are adapting and reflecting trends that otherwise characterize non-Muslim Westerners.

**Trajectories for Future Research**

Thoughtful, probing, qualitative work has done the most to advance the field so far. It remains important to underscore new ways Muslims are diversifying, thereby contesting monolithic public images. It also remains valuable to ask questions that interrogate the stratification and exclusion characterizing the integration of many Muslim communities. The availability of quantitative data, such as the statistics drawn on above, is a recent development in the study of Western Muslim communities’ integration. Interest in this minority group has mostly motivated qualitative investigation because of the rarity of survey samples large enough to analyze. A large number of scholars have accordingly attempted to address key philosophical and empirical questions about Muslim adaptation by using in-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnography, and even scriptural analysis. As interest in Muslim public opinion has increased in the past decade, surveys and other quantitative instruments have slowly moved from examining sentiments about terrorism and the interpretation of scripture to measuring more mainstream matters of immigrant settlement. Despite this promising evolution, there is still a paucity of quantitative and experimental studies that assess testable hypotheses. Nearly all of the advanced statistical studies and survey works cited either do not consider Muslim minorities within the broader comparative context of non-Muslim immigrant groups (such as Inglehart and Norris 2009), do not account for non-religiosity (such as Pew 2007), or fail to test established hypotheses from scholarly fieldwork (such as Gallup 2009; 2011). The current frontier of discovery thus exists where quantitative instruments are employed to address contentious debates unearthed by rigorous qualitative investigation. There is a backlog of such qualitative work that has remained largely un-tested for generalization.

In this way, future research could seek to embed Western Muslims’ integration in some of the key research questions that are threaded through immigration studies today: What is the effect of country of origin on immigrants’ capacity and inclination to engage politically? Why do Muslims from the same country of origin integrate in different ways in different states? What are the varieties of Western Muslim religiosity and what are their effects on social, economic
and political integration? How have transnational networks affected the evolution of immigrant public opinion and political behavior? As this brief review evinces, Muslims are subject to the same pressures, incentives, and desires as other immigrants. And in many respects, they are responding with adaptation patterns that mirror trends observable among immigrants of other faiths and nationalities. The differences posed by Islam and Muslims' alternative cultural preferences should therefore enrich this larger discussion, rather than make it suddenly immaterial.

Works Cited


End Notes

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3Muslim convers, an important group that frequently produces figures that represent the interests of Western Muslims, are not immigrants at all.

4Several scholars have already done that. Early work by researchers like Pnina Werbner (e.g. 1991), Mohammad Anwar (e.g. 1991), Yvonne Haddad (e.g. 1997), Steven Vertovec (e.g. 1994), and Favell (e.g. 1998) analyzed “Asian,” “minority” and “ethnic” politics and social trends by comparing a variety of ethnic immigrant groups. Since then, Haddad (2011) has continued to argue that American Muslims are indeed going through the same cycle of integration and acceptance as other groups before them. Similarly, Amaney Jamal (2005) examines trends in mosque participation and group consciousness specific to South Asian, Arab and non-immigrant African American Muslims. Recently, the Gallup Muslim American Survey (2011) compares responses from American Muslims to those of American Mormons, Jews, Catholics, Protestant and the non-Religious. And, focusing on Europe, books by Garbaye (2006), Laurence and Vaisse (2006) and Laurence (2011) place Muslim experiences in a more institutionalist and/or comparative framework.

5Issues of Muslim minority integration are particularly salient in states where Muslim individuals comprise more than a quarter of the incoming migrant population (Holland, Belgium, France, Norway, Sweden, Greece and the United Kingdom), and in others with some of the largest projected increases in the number of Muslim residents (Switzerland, Austria, Italy and Spain). See Pew Research Center (2011).

6Importantly, 18% of American Muslims surveyed identified as both “American” and “Muslim” equally (compared to 7% of American Christians). This reflects the hybridized nature of Muslim identities.
The suspicion of Muslim minorities in Western countries did not start with the attacks of September 11, 2001. The post 9/11 period, however, amplified existing prejudice. Muslims have come under intense scrutiny on the chance that they might be terrorists and have been targeted by most of the counter-terrorist measures adopted since then. In the United States, the initial objective was to catch foreign radicals, as illustrated by the FBI’s massive investigation called “PENTTBOM” which sought to identify aliens involved in the attacks. Additional measures such as the Absconder Apprehension Initiative (AAI) and the implementation of the National Security Entry-Exit registration System (NSEERS), adopted in 2002, targeted foreign Muslims. The enactment of new statutory provisions designed to identify and apprehend foreign terrorists was soon followed by a catch-all strategy targeting all Muslims living in the US. Furthermore, the broad definition of what constitutes a terrorist threat (as developed by the 2001 PATRIOT Act, the 2005 REAL ID Act, and the 2007 Protect America Act) has allowed US authorities to extend the list of terrorist offenses—leading to increased infringement on civil liberties in the name of security. Governmental discrimination also fueled prejudice against Muslims by providing a justification for anti-Muslim sentiments. A large section of the public welcomed racial/ethnic profiling and various measures limiting the civil rights and the civil liberties of Muslims as a way to improve homeland security.

Europe experienced a similar trend. Pre-existing anti-Muslim sentiments were reignited by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the London bombings,
the Madrid bombings. They were also exacerbated by failed plots, such as the one at the Glasgow airport, and a series of heated controversies about, among other issues, the construction of mosques and the issue of hijab. As in the United States, Muslims have been excessively targeted by immigration and counter-terrorist initiatives, both at the national and EU levels. In addition to social and political exclusion, Muslims have been the victims of security measures such as profiling, special registration, wiretapping, incarceration, interrogation, and removal. Furthermore, several European countries have restricted access to naturalization by subsuming citizenship laws to anti-terrorist legislation.

Perspectives on the Civil Rights of Western Muslims

Violations of the civil rights of Muslims (citizens and foreign nationals alike) in the current context of securitization have been extensively documented from at least three perspectives. The first one is the contribution of civil rights movements, advocacy groups, human rights agencies, and Muslim organizations that report anti-Muslim incidents and investigate violations of civil rights. A cross-national comparison of these violations reveals four commonalities. First, the majority of civil rights deprivations are committed by governmental authorities such as border patrols, police, military, and public housing agencies. Second, despite variations over time, the number of reported violations is not decreasing in most Western countries. Third, post-9/11 repercussions are increasingly gendered, with men targeted by security measures and women (especially those wearing hijab) targeted by hate crimes. Finally, Islam has become the privileged topic of many terrorism experts and policy-makers whose discourse is influenced by binary cultural stereotypes (such as Islam versus democracy, and secularism versus religious fanaticism). This discourse, in turn, still informs political practices based on the “normality” of extraordinary measures defined as “lesser evils.”

The second perspective is provided by legal scholars and ethicists who critically examine the civil rights controversies that have raged since 9/11, including the abuse of “security powers” by law enforcement agencies, the use of torture, the legal “black hole” of Guantanamo, as well as the unconstitutionality and immorality of any form of discrimination. In the case of Muslims, some studies analyze how human rights standards are commonly disregarded by democracies through the expanding notion of “guilt by association,” while the fear of the “enemy inside” leads to the abuse of exceptional powers by Western governments. This perspective also includes studies focusing on the legal challenges raised by the accommodation of Islam, especially in European secular societies, as well as the issue of citizenship.
in the context of the securitization of immigration and integration issues.\textsuperscript{15} The common assumption is that a greater sense of Muslim civic engagement would prevent further violations of civil rights. Yet, this leads to two different kinds of recognition of Muslims—either as a religious minority or as a racial/ethnic minority—meaning choosing one of the various juridical models for the protection of minorities.\textsuperscript{16}

The third perspective focuses on how Muslims perceive their situation and how they react in the current context of securitization. Key findings based on surveys, electoral studies, and interviews reveal that shared experiences of discrimination in the post 9/11 era have enhanced group consciousness among all Muslims in Western societies.\textsuperscript{17} This group consciousness often relates to religion through the notion of Islamic identity; yet, the identification process can also be fueled by a “symbolic religiosity” or a “symbolic ethnicity” leading to the emergence of “Muslim atheists.”\textsuperscript{18} This increased sense of common identity translates into political-civic mobilization in various ways. There is evidence of a stronger mobilization among Muslims, as illustrated by the intensification of the activities of Muslim organizations focusing on the issue of civil rights, as well as a higher level of political visibility combined with increasing turnout rates of Muslim voters.\textsuperscript{19} In most Western countries, the main object of Muslim participation in mainstream politics is empowerment. The denial of civil rights to Muslims has thus served to mobilize them through civic participation in order to fight for their rights. In the United States, the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) and the American Muslim Council (AMC) played a key role in the formation of the first “Muslim bloc vote” in 2000. A coalition of Muslim organizations formed the American Political Coordination Committee, endorsing G.W. Bush. American Muslims increased their mobilization after 9/11. The discriminatory aspects of counterterrorism caused a shift in partisanship. A coalition of ten Muslim organizations formed the American Muslim Task Force on Civil Rights and Elections, endorsing John Kerry. This was coupled with successful mobilization efforts, resulting in a 20% increase in Muslim American voters. US Muslim political involvement continued to achieve a higher level of visibility during the 2006 Congressional elections, which were characterized by the election of the first Muslim member to the US Congress, Minnesota Democrat Keith Ellison.\textsuperscript{20} This trend was confirmed by the 2008 presidential election when Muslims overlooked differences they have among themselves. Nearly 90% supported Democrat Barack Obama, and a significant portion of voters cited civil rights issues as the main factor driving their choice. In addition, religious and non-religious organizations made efforts to deconstruct the perception of Muslims as a potential terrorist threat in the hope of reducing
discrimination. The Fiqh Council of North America, for example, stated that it was religiously acceptable for enlisted US Muslims to take part in the fight against terrorism. Community groups have repeatedly condemned al Qaeda and suggested that Muslims should help the FBI in preventing terrorist attacks. Other proactive initiatives that have been developed by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) and other civil rights organizations include initiating legal action, contacting politicians on state and federal levels, engaging in lobbying activities, and organizing educational outreach programs for the general public.21

In Europe, the struggle for recognition in the public space encompasses the formation of Muslim political organizations or parties, the increased institutionalization of relations between Muslim organizations and public authorities, as well as social and political mobilization by Muslims.22 Some studies focus on the various types of Muslim organizations—their goals, leaders and activities.23 Other studies analyze the current mobilization of Muslim communities within the perspective of social movement theory and the “politics of identity.”24

In spite of these efforts and as Abdulkader Sinno explains in his contribution to this special section below, Muslims remain politically underrepresented and are less politically engaged than other groups.25 In Europe, Muslims are also disadvantaged in employment and schooling.26 Furthermore, violations of civil rights and discrimination in most institutional spheres generate an increasing sense of alienation which, in turn, fuels political distrust and social radicalization that sometimes manifests itself in protests or violence. Disaffection from mainstream politics is increased by the anti-Muslim discourse of politicians and lack of opportunities for full political inclusion.27 These limitations have two major disadvantages. First, the weak political representation of Muslims in Western countries impedes the development of a serious “civil rights movement” that achieves civic equality. Second, the violations of the civil rights of Muslims in the name of security create more insecurity by fueling the resentment of Muslims who feel unfairly marginalized and become more receptive to terrorist recruitment.28

The Road Ahead for Researchers

The three perspectives I review above suggest a number of research questions that deserve to be addressed further: is Muslim “otherness” any different than that of other minorities whose civil rights have been transgressed in previous (actual or perceived) times of emergency? What are the different strategies used by various Muslim communities to secure their civil rights? What is the potential impact of Muslim civic mobilization on identity politics? What
are the invisible costs of discrimination against Muslims in spheres such as education, the economy or the law?

Addressing these questions in a rigorous social scientific way would help to better understand what motivates “claims making” by Muslims in various Western societies and to quantify the effect of civil rights violations on their lives. There is a need to further build on the few comparative studies available to develop involved theories that place the Muslim experience within the context of the experiences of other minorities. The current backlash against Muslims fits into a long history of religious discrimination against Jews on both sides of the Atlantic, Catholics in the US, and Protestants in Europe. Previous episodes of egregious violations of the civil rights of both citizens and non-citizens in the United States include the Alien and Sedition Acts of the 1790s, the Chinese Act of 1882, the Palmer Raids and the Red Scare that followed World War One and the internment of persons of Japanese ancestry during World War Two. It was not until 1952, with the passage of the McCarran Walter Act, that Asians were allowed to become US citizens. Furthermore, the criminalization of illegal immigration targeted aliens racially constructed as “unwanted”—from the Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth century to the Hispanic immigrants today. Similar civil rights deprivations took place in Europe, and like in the United States, they were justified by the trade-off between liberties and security in times of national emergency. The current securitization thus inspires a feeling of déjà vu in terms of the retrenchment of civil liberties for distinct groups among the general population. Does this mean that we tend to overestimate the uniqueness of the situation faced by Muslims? Opinion polls and surveys, for example, often rely on the assumption that the “otherness” of Muslims is a given fact. Therefore, they tend to emphasize the alleged particularities of Muslims in terms of religiosity, social values, identity and loyalty (see Justin Gest’s contribution to this special section). It is worth noting that the majority of Western Muslims are both mainstream and very similar to other minorities who face comparable issues of dual allegiance/identity and are equally, if not less religious and socially conservative than these minorities.

Studies seeking to explain why Muslims face difficulties in asserting their rights suggest a number of characteristics, such as the ethnic and sectarian diversity of Muslim communities and the lack of centralized/hierarchical organization in Islam. Yet, other ethnic and religious minorities that are extremely heterogeneous enjoy various levels of mobilization and institutional recognition. As Justin Gest also argues, comparative studies could help to de-essentialize Muslims and Islam by identifying similarities and differences in the processes of integration, representation, and institutional accommodation.
Some drivers of discrimination are unique to one target group and do not lend themselves to a comparative study. The ongoing dynamics of securitization, for example, does not seem to have an end in sight. Unlike prior times of emergency, the war on terror is a conflict without end, and without limits. Japanese Americans, for example, had their civil liberties restored, if only after the end of hostilities. The war on terror offers no comparable prospect of victory and thus little likelihood of a comparable restoration of rights. Each terrorist attack, from Times Square to Islamabad, makes it more difficult for Muslims to assert their rights.

In this context, what are the different strategies available to various Muslim communities for securing their civil rights? Most studies focus on different types of Muslim organizations (religious, political, professional, cultural, or mixed), on the nature of their activities (spiritual regeneration, political activities, civil rights advocacy), and on the scope of their mobilization (local, national, transnational). There is room for researchers to deepen this line of inquiry to account for complexity at the local and national levels. Patterns of accommodation are contingent on different historical conditions and different forms of government. Furthermore, similar objectives (recognition, equality before the law, and full citizenship) can be achieved through various strategies and forms and degrees of accommodation. Muslims sometimes make claims simultaneously for differential (e.g. accommodation for religious requirements) and egalitarian (e.g. treatment similar to other religious groups) rights, both at the collective and at the individual levels. These demands are not necessarily contradictory, and we should therefore move beyond the traditional dichotomy between differentialism and civic universalism in the evaluation of the “level of integration” of Muslims. In addition, the notion that Muslims have identical demands in various Western countries is misleading, even if their claims are legitimized by identical concerns.

Another area of potential research interest is to explore why different contexts produce similar issues. For example, although the relationship between state and church in the United States differs dramatically from the secular patterns found in many European countries, the US version of the “mosque issue” looks extremely European. Perhaps the answer to this unexpected similarity lies at the local level. The violation and protection of civil rights varies across subnational units in some countries such as the United States in part because of variation in local legal and government institutions. Opportunities and constraints for Muslim civic mobilization are also affected by the micro-politics of accommodation.

Another area open for rigorous research is the politics of identity among Muslims in the current context of limitations on their civil rights and liberties.
Like other minorities in a context of excessive securitization, Muslims suffer from their “visibility.” Yet, more than other minorities, Muslims need to become more visible as a way to be more effective in affirming their rights. Against the negative visibility fueled by discrimination, a proactive visibility can provide a platform from which Muslims formulate their demands. Yet, moving toward a more self-conscious politics of identity involves choosing among several strategies of self-presentation (as religious minority, cultural group, or political constituency) and political action (an interest-based pan-ethnic strategy like US Hispanics, a coalition of “people of faith” like other religious minorities who downplay the particularities of their religion by promoting the common interests of religious communities against secular interests, or a “linked fate” option designed to rally all minorities suffering from discrimination). The many decisions made in these areas have reshaped the identities of Western Muslims and members of their broader communities in very complex and diverse ways that are not easy to discern short of involved research on the local level or very large scale surveys that lend themselves to comparison across countries and locales.

Finally, we still do not know the exact costs of discrimination on the lives, livelihoods, education, health and well-being of individuals associated with Islam. The reason is that many of these costs are invisible until researched in a methodical way. In spite of some existing research, we do not know accurately yet how many more rejections identifiably Muslim individuals have to experience in comparison to non-Muslims before receiving an invitation to interview or a job offer. The same applies to potential bias within juries and among judges against Muslim defendants, members of admissions committees at schools and universities, voters towards Muslim candidates, and landlords in majority areas. While enough good experimental research, and this is the only method to use to gauge this invisible cost, has been done to show the enormous scale of anti-Muslim discrimination, there is a need for more comparative and fine-tuned data to complete the picture.

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End Notes

1 According to the DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG), this initiative led to the detention of 1,200 individuals within two months after the attacks. All the 762 aliens placed in INS custody as a result of PENTTBOM were identified as Muslims on the basis of their respective country of origin (OIG 2003). In November 2001, Attorney General Ashcroft launched a “mass interviews” program for men aged 18 to 33 from countries in “which intelligence indicates al Qaeda terrorist presence or activity,” and who had entered the country after 2000. The State Department also slowed the process of granting visas for men aged 16 to 45 from certain Arab and Muslim countries. Finally, delays in the citizenship process were implemented for Arabs and Muslims (see CHR&GJ 2007).

2 Enforcement practices focused on the deportation of individuals from Muslim countries. In November 2002, the INS expanded the NSEERS and required male nationals (“special registrants”) of 25 countries admitted prior to 9/11 to register with the INS. Of the 25 countries of “elevated national security concern,” only one (North Korea) is not a Muslim state. The Clear Law Enforcement for Criminal Aliens Removal Act (CLEAR, adopted in July 2003) also targets foreigners by giving local police the power to enforce federal immigration laws.

3 The Bush administration used the Material Witness Statute, 18 U.S.C. §3144, as a means to detain Muslims, both foreign nationals and US citizens, without charges for an unlimited time period. US citizens Lindh, Padilla, and Hamdi were detained as enemy combatants without right of due process.

4 In a poll conducted by Cornell University in 2004, for example, 22% of US respondents agreed that citizens should be profiled based on being Muslim or of Middle Eastern heritage; 27% believed that Muslims should be required to register their whereabouts with US authorities; and 29% agreed that Muslim civic organizations should be monitored by law enforcement agencies (MSRG 2004).


6 The EU Common Position and Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism, adopted in December 2001, broadened the definition of terrorism considerably, and new crimes of association with terrorism were created. This trend was reinforced by, among others, the 2002 Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism, the 2004 Hague Program, the 2005 Directive on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, and the 2005 Counter-Terrorist Strategy. At the national levels, concerns about violations of civil liberties refer to various legislative instruments, such as the Terrorist Offense Act adopted by Belgium in 2003, the Italian Law 155/2005, the French Law on “everyday security and combating terrorism” adopted in 2001, the Perben Laws of 2004, the “security packages” adopted by Germany in 2001, the British Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2005 and the Terrorism Act of 2006. As in the United States, these laws target both citizens and non-citizens. In addition, European countries have adopted new restrictive immigration measures targeting “unwanted aliens.”

7 This securitization of integration is illustrated, for example, by the British Nationality, Immigration and Nationality Act of 2002, the revision of the Alien Act in Germany in 2005, the new requirements introduced by the French government in 2006 regarding access to permanent residence and the “loyalty” of applicants to naturalization.


9 On the gendered aspect of discrimination, see Cainkar (2009: chapter 7). See also Haddad et al. (2006).
See Jackson (2007).

On this lesser evil perspective, see Ignatieff (2004). Examples of this perspective can be found in Nelson (2009).


See Aluffi and Zincone (2004).

Some scholars suggest that securitization has increased a sense of “common destiny” and, therefore, a stronger Muslim identity. See Barreto and Bozonelos (2009), Barreto, Masuoka, and Sanchez (2008).

This trend is confirmed in the United States by the growing number of Muslims (up to 15% in 2010) who have no specific religious/ethnic affiliation, thus describing themselves as “just Muslims” (see Pew, 2011). On the emergence of “Muslim atheists” in Europe, see Kaya (2009: chapter 6).

On the impact of discrimination on registration and turnout rate, see Ayers and Hofstetter (2008), Barreto and Dana (2010), Jalalzai (2009). On the relationship between group consciousness and political participation, see Cainkar (2010) and Jamal (2005).

A second Muslim, André Carson, was elected in a special election in 2008.

Organizations such as Amnesty International (AI), Islamic Supreme Council of America (ISCA), Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) and others have been active in raising awareness and providing education about Muslims to members of government, law enforcement agencies and educational institutions. See Peña (2007), Terry (2006).


See Bonnefoy (2003), McLoughlin (2005), Salvatore (2004), Statham et al. (2005), Vertovec and Peach (1997).

In the United States, for example, 64% of Muslim respondents to a Pew Survey (2010) said they voted in the 2008 presidential election, compared with 76% of the general public. In 2011, 66% said they were certain they were registered to vote, compared with 79% among the general public. Muslim involvement is also low in most European countries, especially in Austria and Sweden (See Herding 2010). On the issue of prejudice against voters and candidates, see Braman and Sinno (2009).
For example, although Muslims of four generations now live in Germany, 80% of them do not have German citizenship. In France about 50 percent of Muslims, mostly of Maghreb origin, are French. The large majority of them, however, are under the age of eighteen and therefore cannot vote. In the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, 50 percent of the Muslim population cannot vote either. On the issues faced by Muslims in Western politics, see Sinno (2008).

See Barreto and Dana (2010), Ireland (2000).

See Boubeker (2008). This “security/insecurity” spiral is also fueled by international terrorist organizations using the violations of civil rights in Western countries in order to justify their conception of a “just war.” On the impact of the excesses of securitization on radicalization, see Chebel d’Appollonia (2010).

Examples of comparative analysis with other minorities can be found in Haddad, Smith, and Esposito (2003), Martinez-Ebers and Dorraj (2010).

Civil rights deprivations in times of emergency are part of European history. In France, for example, foreigners suspected of espionage were listed by police authorities in the carnet b. Detention camps that had been set up during World War I in order to address the alleged subversive threat posed by immigrants coming from belligerent countries were reconstituted in 1938 to detain Spanish Republicans who had fled the dictatorship established by Franco. Meanwhile, the fear of Bolshevist contagion coupled with the spectre of a Fascist fifth column increased suspicion of immigrants and foreign-born citizens. Discrimination against immigrants and other foreigners perceived as a threat culminated during World War II. Various categories of “suspects” (including anti-Fascist refugees from Italy and Spain, Communists, and Freemasons) were sent by the French Vichy regime to concentration camps. Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria were categorized in Great Britain as “enemy aliens” and sent to internment camps in Canada and Australia. Comparing the current situation of Muslims in Western countries to previous episodes of discrimination is important for at least two reasons. First, it demonstrates that contextual factors matter as much as the characteristics of minority groups targeted by “security measures.” Second, there are lessons that can be drawn from the past in order to better understand the various strategies used by minorities in securing their rights despite prejudice. A comparative approach does not suggest any kind of “hierarchy of suffering.”

See Tessler (2003). This is illustrated, for example, by the common assumption that, in the case of Muslims, there is an antagonism between various identity “markers,” such as religion, ethnicity and sense of national belonging. A Pew survey in 2005 found that, given a choice of identifying as first Muslim or Christian or as first a citizen of their country, the majority of British, French, and German Muslims chose faith, while the majority of British, French, and German Christians chose country. Some have taken these results as substantiating the danger of over accommodating religious differences. A Gallup poll conducted in 2006 by Zolt Nyiri, however, found that Muslims in Paris and Berlin tend to identify themselves as strongly with France and Germany (46% and 35% respectively) as members of the general public in those countries (46% do so nationwide in France, 36% in Germany). Muslims in London are even more likely to have a strong British identity (57%) than the British at large (48%). Ethnically and religiously based mobilization does not perpetuate segregated identities, but rather a mutually reinforcing ethic and national identification (Nyiri 2010). Other minorities do the same when asked to choose one “marker” on the assumption that religion and nationality are exclusive. One question asked by the 2006 Latino National Survey was how Latinos identify themselves: as Americans, as Latinos, or as members of particular national groups? When forced to choose only one identity, the number of those who answered “American” was low. Yet when Latinos were allowed to report multiple identities, two-thirds of the respondents identified themselves with the United States, with a large majority emphasizing the importance of speaking English as being part of being American.
It is worth noting that Muslims in the US are about as religious as Hispanics. According to the Pew Research Center, 69% say that religion was very important in their life. Two-in-three (66%) Hispanics say that their religious beliefs are a very important or a somewhat important influence on their political thinking. Among Hispanic evangelicals, more than eight-in-ten (86%) feel this way. Indeed, a clear majority of evangelicals (62%) say religious belief is a “very important” influence, a far greater share than among Latino Catholics (36%) and mainline Protestants (38%). A significant minority (30%) of Hispanics, however, say their religious beliefs are either not too important or not at all important to their political thinking. Likewise, 30% of Muslims say that religion is somewhat or not all important in their life. See Pew Hispanic Center (2007) and Pew Research Center (2010).

In terms of religious organization, Muslims are quite similar to Protestants (weak global structures, strong localism) and very different from Catholics and Orthodox Christians (both strongly hierarchically organized). Yet, Catholic communities are extremely diverse in Western countries. This diversity is reflected by the multiplication of, and competition among, Catholic organizations. Jewish communities are also very diverse. Some European governments are trying to institutionalize Islam by creating “representative bodies” similar to those developed for their Jewish communities in the past.

See Abdulkader Sinno’s contribution to this collection for a brief review of research by sociologists, anthropologists and other ethnographers who are looking specifically at the interaction of Muslim institutions and actors with representatives of the state at various levels.

On the dilemma of visibility/invisibility, see Cainkar (2002), Haddad and Smith (2002).

On the issue of the overrepresentation of Muslims in prison, see Farhad Khosrokhavar (2004) and Joly, Beckford and Khosrohavar (2007).

On employment, see Adida, Laitin and Valfort (2009). On the legal field, see Braman (2009).
Muslim minorities in the West have become the improbable targets and tools of the discourses of some politicians in the search for votes, right-wing newspapers and tabloids seeking enlarged readerships, and Conservative activists advocating for their causes. These discourses have often taken bizarre twists, such as the surprisingly successful attempt during the 2007 Democratic primaries by a right-wing organization to depict (the Christian) candidate Obama as a Muslim who attended a “Madrasa” as a child. While the hoax was soon exposed by CNN, surprisingly many mainstream media outlets (e.g. Fox News) uncritically adopted the story and 12 to 18 percent of the American public continues to believe that President Obama is a Muslim.¹ Some other recent curious political events that instrumentalize Muslims include vociferous attacks on elected female politicians who choose to wear a headscarf in Belgium, the use of racist language towards Muslim minorities by European candidates and politicians in several countries, and the framing of Muslims as a danger to welfare in Denmark or gay rights in the Netherlands.

Such puzzling political behavior indicates that there is still much to be understood about the politics of Western Muslims, which I understand to mean both their instrumentalization for political purposes by others and their own political activism and engagement. Some research topics in the first area include understanding how Muslim minorities are instrumentalized in politics, the political spaces they are allowed to occupy or that their members attempt to fill, the attitudes of Western publics towards Muslims generally and
Muslim candidates in particular, and the role of media outlets and religious institutions in shaping politically relevant public opinion of Muslims. On the Muslim side, it is interesting to explore the evolution of the views, well-being, activism, and voting behavior of members of Western Muslim minorities, the political dynamics affecting their political representation and integration, and the quality and quantity of Muslim political representation. I describe below the state of the art in researching the policy-relevant and theoretically interesting aspects of the politics of Western Muslims, identify lacunae in academic knowledge, and suggest methodological approaches to fill them.

Attitudes Toward Muslim Minorities and their Political Instrumentalization

Western Publics have very negative attitudes towards Islam, Muslims in general and Muslims among them (Wike and Grim 2010). Dislike of Muslims is largely correlated with feelings of fear and threat, among other factors (Nisbet et al. 2011; Benson, Merolla, and Geer 2011). These are feelings that can, and are, being effectively used to achieve political goals such as restricting the civil rights and liberties of Muslim minorities and undermining Muslim candidates and other public figures. Fear is also leveraged to promote policies that have little to do with Muslims. In Denmark, for example, welfare is being “Islamized” in the discourses of right-wing parties the same way that it was associated with Blacks in the 1980s in the United States (Kettunen, Michel, and Petersen 2013) and the so-called “Muhammad cartoons crisis” was stoked in no small part by concerns about vote getting and coalition making (Klausen 2009a). In the United States, the so-called “Victory Mosque” campaign to paint the desire of moderate Muslims to build a house of worship in Manhattan as an act of support for al Qaeda’s attack dominated the discourse of Republican politicians only in the months leading to the 2010 elections, well after the mosque project became public, and disappeared from the airwaves almost immediately after the Republican electoral victory even though there were no changes in the plans to build it. The reason Republican politicians and right-wing media used the Park 51 mosque so vociferously during the campaign is that they knew from long-existing studies that voters tend to vote more for Republicans when concerned about matters of security and threat. They therefore heightened feelings of threat by raising the specter of a Muslim “victory mosque” by fallaciously analogizing it to historical mosques in Istanbul and Muslim Spain. Many European far-right and populist parties, and now increasingly right-of-center parties, also frame such symbolic issues (e.g. the four minimalist minarets in Switzerland and the niqâb worn by a tiny minority of European Muslim women) as existential threats for similar electoral reasons.
The instrumentalization and othering of Western Muslims in the discourses of influential Western politicians, Evangelical churches, and media outlets suggests several lines of research. The first deals with the public attitudes that allow such strategies to be effective. It is not clear what makes Americans support extreme measures such as depriving American individuals of constitutional rights just because they are Muslims, as 44 percent did in 2004 according to a survey commissioned by Nisbet and Shanahan (2004). While demographic correlates are important and useful, we do not know what sways a member of the public to adopt such views and what sources of information influences her most. Well-crafted experimental designs would allow the quantification of influences on different types of individuals from different media (religious, partisan, and news) and persons of authority such as Evangelical preachers and different types of politicians. The experimental treatments would of course have to be customized for each national context.

One way to explore how the use of electoral strategies that capitalize on negative attitudes towards Muslims increases Islamophobia within the public is to prepare a series of national surveys that anticipate their use. The researcher would conduct a base survey of attitudes towards Muslims early in the electoral cycle before parties and candidates attack the minority and repeat the survey soon after the attacks and in the wake of the election campaign. This approach would allow the measurement of both their immediate and residual long term effects. If such electoral strategies are used on a regional basis, then the surveys will consist of a natural experiment that can isolate the effect of the use of these strategies from other factors that may also increase hostility towards Muslims such as wars involving US troops in the Middle East.

Another track that would dialogue with the experimental approach by informing its design would be to conduct both qualitative and quantitative content analyses of the media, religious and political discourses that target or instrumentalize Muslims. Such studies would provide valuable clues about the purpose of such discourses by measuring their frequency and timing, and would reveal the full panoply of rhetorical strategies used to galvanize target audiences across media, periods and types of elections. Experimental designs also allow for testing the effect of different types of anti-Muslim discourses by varying the content of frames used in political messages.

A third track would be to analyze the dynamics of groupthink on Muslim issues. When the bizarre attacks on then candidate Obama took place, only two public figures in the United States asked rhetorically “so what if he were a Muslim?”—a CNN journalist and retired General Collin Powell. Very rarely does anyone other than Muslim organizations respond to the many attacks on the minority and Muslim organizations receive little media coverage. Such
Impact of Othering on Muslim Well-being, Mobilization, Attitudes and Voting Behavior

The instrumentalization of Western Muslims for political gain involves the promotion of negative depictions and the assumption that they are, at the least, threatening and implacable nemeses. These stereotypes have receptive audiences within most Western publics and their airing unchallenged, as they often are, by individuals in positions of power and prominence makes them legitimate to adopt, act upon and enforce. The increasing acceptance of these depictions likely encourages discrimination against individuals with an apparent connection to Islam in areas such as education, the job market, housing, services, and political recruitment. It most likely also encourages hate crimes, social hostility, damage to relationships, and stress to physical and mental health. This impact on Western Muslim lives, welfare and well-being is under-researched and deserves to be quantified both for academic and policy reasons.

Western Muslim individuals respond emotionally and strategically to political instrumentalization and marginalization, and their social repercussions. Some ways, such as the shift of the bulk of support among Muslim Americans from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party between the 2000 and 2004 elections are well documented (Barreto and Bozonelos 2009). Others, such as the propensity of members of the minority to mobilize and the methods of political action its members choose, deserve more scholarly attention. As Justin Gest (2010) shares in his qualitative study of Muslim youths in East London and South Madrid, the correlates of such personal decisions are complex and can vary from complete disengagement to civic engagement and even militancy outside the scope of the political system. For Muslims who decide to engage in political activism, we still do not know what motivates the adoption of a specific approach, such as choosing between joining Muslim organizations, ethnic associations or broad civil rights groups; voting for and otherwise supporting marginal parties or established ones; and the type and purpose of alliances Muslims are comfortable with on both the individual and organizational levels. Most importantly, we do not know what guides these decisions and groupthink, from across the aisle, where even unreasonable assumptions go unchallenged, is frequent in human history. The case of American Muslims, however, provides a particularly interesting opportunity to research its cultural, financial, political, power, religious, and ideological mechanisms. The same applies to European countries, such as the Netherlands and Denmark, where assumptions about Muslims (e.g. they are inherently homophobic or traditional) also often go unchallenged.
how to explain variation across countries, organizations and individuals. These research questions are not only useful to increase our understanding of Muslim minorities but also to better theorize the effect of duress on the political choices individuals make to balance between retrenchment and engagement (type of organization); principles and pragmatism (type of party); group interest and personal interests (wealthy Muslims who would have voted Republican if it weren’t for the party’s hostility towards the faith); domestic and international concerns (alliances with Jewish or Hindu groups within the country when these are possible); and theological imperatives and pragmatic priorities (alliances with gay groups because of common minority interests where these are possible).

Qualitative field work will remain necessary and valuable to identify different patterns within and across communities and to understand what quantitative studies cannot reveal: strategic choices, the effect of socialization, local contingencies, and whatever the quantitative analyst does not know of and therefore cannot theorize. Sociologists and anthropologists in particular have been doing particularly informative ethnographic and other field work on the political and civic activism of Western Muslims and its institutional contexts. In the United States, a critical mass of such scholarship focuses on few geographic areas where the Muslim population (and Arab one with which it overlaps) has a substantial presence—Greater Detroit, Los Angeles, the Bay Area, Chicago and New York. These studies produce a complex image of a group of people with a generally consolidating sense of Muslim identity, who are defining what this identity means in many ways, who are quickly making the intellectual and organizational transitions from immigrants (or marginalized minority in the case of African American Muslims) to engaged American citizens, and who are figuring out how to deal with the hostility targeting them. Some, such as more established Muslims of Michigan and wealthy ones in the liberal Bay Area, do better than others in their civic and political engagement. Still the acceleration of Muslim American organization in the US since 9/11 on both local and national levels has been quite impressive, even if its effectiveness has been hampered by general public and political hostility. American Muslim political expression has also taken many forms, including engagement with broader civil rights organizations, lobbying, and even comedy (Bilici 2012).

In Europe, the shift from diaspora mentality to engaged citizenship has been much slower than in the United States and Canada, in part because several European countries continue to encourage ties between Muslim citizens and residents with their countries of origin (Klausen 2009b). Other reasons include the lower level of education and wealth among European Muslims; the
ethnic and sectarian fragmentation of Muslims (Warner and Wenner 2006); the institutionalized rules of representation (Soper and Fetzer 2005, Kuru 2009); and lower state tolerance of claims-making in some countries. This situation is changing fast, however, because of some European states’ increased engagement with their Muslim minorities (Laurence 2011) and a politicized awakening in some West European cities such as Brussels where Muslim artists and activists have been analogizing their civil rights struggle with that of Blacks in the United States. Of course, levels of political engagement are quite uneven across Western European countries, with British Muslims being much more engaged, organized and active than French Muslims, for example.

These rapid changes open up new research agendas. They include comparative studies of the effect of local political institutions on Muslim activism; the effect of generational change and gender on civic and political activism; the effect of religiosity, ethnicity and sect on political engagement; and the ability of Muslims to engage in alliances with other political interest groups; the effect of Muslims’ engagement on non-Muslims’ attitudes towards them; and the role of transnational, trans-group and trans-regional learning on the minority’s activism.

Quantitative data on the political attitudes of Western Muslims are scarce because it is costly to conduct surveys of small and diffuse populations and because of the high likelihood that members of a generally mistreated population would refuse to self-identify as such to a pollster on the phone. It takes roughly 60,000 calls, for example, to connect with a sample of some 1,000 Muslims that is reasonably representative of the US Muslim population. So far, only organizations with tremendous resources such as the Pew Foundation and Gallup have conducted such surveys of rigorously-selected representative samples. It is even costlier to conduct experiments embedded in surveys on national samples because of the large number of questions they normally involve and because large polling organizations favor simpler queries that can be reported in a more straightforward way to a broad audience. One way to reduce the high cost of such surveys and survey-embedded experiments is to focus on sub-populations with high concentrations of Muslims or sample their largest three or four areas of higher concentration. For example, identifying a sample of 500 Muslims in Brussels, Charleroi and Antwerp, where most Belgian Muslims are concentrated and make some 20% of the population, would require some 2,500 calls if respondents do not dissimulate their Muslim identity, while locating a similar-size sample on the national level would require 10,000 calls because Muslims make roughly 5% of the Belgian population. One method to avoid is to survey mosque members and leaders, the way Bagby et al. (2001) did, because Community leaders tend
to grossly overstate membership and the self-selected respondents to such surveys tend to have personality traits that make them unrepresentative of the general target population.

As of now, high quality comparative datasets on Western Muslims are produced by Gallup and the Pew Foundation, as well as by the European Union’s Agency for Fundamental Rights (AFR), executed by Gallup. The Gallup datasets are very costly for social scientists to acquire but the Pew and AFR datasets are made available on their respective websites after an embargo period.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, there is data available from country or region-specific surveys. Examples from the U.S. include two (2000 and 2004) of American Muslims commissioned by Georgetown University’s Project MAPS and executed by Zogby International, the 2003 Detroit Arab American Study (DAAS), and a 2007-08 survey of Muslims in ten American cities by Matt Barreto and Karam Dana.\textsuperscript{15} In Europe, some national surveys have been conducted by social scientists (e.g. Brouard and Tiberj 2011), government agencies such as the British Home Office’s recurrent citizen surveys that oversample minorities, and newspapers in partnership with national survey organizations (e.g. the French Catholic La Croix’s recurrent use of Ifop to track French Muslim political attitudes and religious practices).

The findings from these surveys are too complex to adequately summarize here but they reveal better socio-economic integration, fulfillment, and economic attainment among American Muslims than among European Muslims, with American Muslims either exceeding or equaling in educational and professional accomplishment other Americans; an astonishingly high level of feelings of discrimination, hostility and isolation among European Muslims; high levels of trust in government among Western Muslims, often even higher than among their own non-Muslim compatriots (Maxwell 2009); general disagreement with the use of violence against civilians; similar levels of political engagement between Muslim men and women in the US (Read 2007) but not in Europe; a generally strong sense of identification with the country and acceptance of differences (except for sexual orientation) across countries; and a positive correlation between religiosity and civic engagement among US Muslims.

**Muslim Political Representation**

Muslim minority representation in elected office is important because it encourages institutional and legislative solutions to problems that could otherwise fester and because it reduces groupthink towards marginalized minorities within legislative bodies. Of course, this is only possible if elected officials choose, or are permitted, to represent minority interests along with
those of their party or district.\textsuperscript{16} Other advantages include increasing the sense of belonging within the Muslim minority at large and acceptance of it by the general public.

Muslims are generally underrepresented in elected and appointed office in the West, but there is great variation in their rates of representation (the ratio of Muslims in elected or appointed office over their proportion in the population). They are heavily underrepresented, for example, in the U.S., France, Spain, Italy and Switzerland but much better represented in the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands. As per my last count for 2010, there are 68 Muslim members of Western national parliaments and the European Parliament, a ratio of some 0.75\% or a fourth of their estimated proportion among the publics of these countries. And there are substantial differences within regions and across levels of government—while British Muslims are still underrepresented in the House of Commons as of 2012, for example, they do approach parity in London’s local councils (Dancygier 2011). In some areas, like Metro Detroit, they are underrepresented in elected office but much less so in appointed positions (Sinno and Tatari 2011). The reasons for underrepresentation differ from one context to another but include differences in electoral systems, district size, and Muslim minority concentration within single-member districts, party dynamics, rates of citizenship within the minority, isolationism within a part of the Muslim community, poor organization and understanding of political institutions, fragmentation within the Muslim community, good relations with non-Muslim elected officials, turnout rates, intersectionality in the identity of the candidate, and hostility within parties or publics (Sinno 2009, Sinno and Tatari 2011).

In addition to understanding the correlates of rates of representation, researchers may be interested in understanding whether and why these elected officials behave as representatives of a minority as well as representatives of their district or party, the component of their minority identity they identify with (Islam, sect, ethnicity, age group or gender), and how effective they are in their advocacy on behalf of their minority.

One of the major hurdles facing Muslim candidates for elected office in the United States, and quite possibly in other Western countries, even though we lack accurate data to quantify the bias outside the U.S., is that some voters would not vote for them because they are Muslim. A small number of articles have been published to quantify voters’ anti-Muslim bias and identify its correlates but they leave room for further innovation and refinement. Most are based on data from a Pew Research Center survey that asks American respondents whether they are more or less likely, or just as likely, to vote for a candidate for the presidency if the candidate has specific traits. Of the twenty-
three traits that respondents were prompted about, “is Muslim” tied with “is homosexual” as the third-worse one (46% less likely to vote for candidate, 1-2% more likely to vote), with only “never held elected office” (56% less likely, 7% more likely) and “doesn’t believe in God” (63% less likely, 3% more likely) producing more negative responses (Republicans Lag in Engagement and Enthusiasm for Candidates 2007: 12-13).

Another way to gauge bias is to conduct a simple experiment embedded in a survey where respondents are asked about whether they would support a candidate described in a vignette. The experimental treatment consists of varying the candidate’s identity in the vignette for different representative subsets of the sample. Comparing the means for the different groups of respondents with the baseline group (no specified identity) allows the quantification of bias against candidates with specified identities.17

Even though a very high proportion of voters are ready to divulge their anti-Muslim bias to a stranger, it could be that others dissimulate similar attitudes to avoid appearing bigoted. The best method currently available to gauge sincere preferences is the list experiment developed by Ted Carmines and Paul Sniderman (1999) to study attitudes towards Blacks. The experimental treatment consists of asking respondents in different representative samples to answer how many items on a list make them uncomfortable or they would refuse to do, while giving each group of respondents other than the baseline group an additional list item that is the focus of the research project. Respondents can answer in ways that may be racist or bigoted without worrying about being identified as such because it is impossible for the researcher to discern on an individual basis (absent ceiling and floor effects) which specific items on the list the respondent dislikes. Calculating mean differences among groups produces a more accurate estimate of bias than a straightforward survey question but does not permit the multivariate analysis of the individual correlates of bias the way survey questions do. Benson et al. (2011) conducted such an experiment in 2008 and found that 58% of their sample of the American public would answer “I could not support a qualified Muslim for President” if not concerned about being recognized as biased, a 12% increase over the albeit differently-worded question in the Pew survey. Carmines, Easter, and Sinno (2012) used data from a similar experiment from 2008 as well and found that the probability that a randomly picked American voter would disclose that it bothers her that “a Muslim be elected as president” is 70% when she feels that her privacy is protected, as opposed to 49% when a statistical model of voters’ attitudes the authors developed is applied to the data from the Pew survey. We still do not know how attitudes change if respondents are prompted about types of elected office other
than the presidency, whether intersectionality matters, whether attitudes towards hypothetical versus real candidates differ, and of course how these attitudes will change over time.

It is also still not completely clear what exactly motivates voters to be weary of Muslim candidates. One way to research motivation is to use attribution in an experimental setup (Braman and Sinno 2009). Respondents, for example, are asked to read a vignette about candidates defending controversial positions, with half the respondents reading a version of the vignette in which the candidate is described as Muslim and the other half a version where the candidate’s faith cannot be recognized. Respondents are then asked a list of theoretically motivated questions about why they feel the candidate behaved this way. Comparing the answers of the two groups reveals how respondents believe the motivations of Muslim candidates differ from those of non-Muslim ones and, consequently, why they may be more uncomfortable with Muslims in elected office.

The net effect of bias on representation is also difficult to measure by holding all other factors constant. There are currently two ways of measuring the effect of bias on representation, both with considerable disadvantages. The first is to simply count the number of representatives from the minority and to compare their ratio within the elected body with the proportion of the minority population within the district (Sinno 2009). This approach is vulnerable to measurement errors such as the misidentification of legislators who do not advertise their faith (particularly in European countries), depends on sometimes inaccurate demographic statistics in countries where censuses do not ask about religion, and is only meaningful in the presence of rarely available data on citizenship rates. Even more problematically, it does not identify where bias resides (parties or electorate) or isolate its effect from other possible explanations such as minority political culture. A second and much more sophisticated approach, best applied by Rafaela Dancygier (2011) in a study of British local elections, consists of using a differences-in-differences statistical set up to measure the effect of bias in elections when natural experiments such as changes in election rules take place. The biggest limitations of this approach are the scarcity of the data necessary to implement it in a convincing way and the rarity of the requisite natural experiments.

Much of what is important and interesting about Muslim (and other) minority representation can only be learned from long stints of field research. These include, for example, the dynamics of recruitment, selection, discrimination, and mentorship within parties; the roles elected officials of Muslim background choose, or are allowed, to play in regards to minority rights advocacy; the way they connect with minority and native constituencies; and the strategies Muslim candidates adopt to reduce their identity-based disadvantages. Often
these matters are much more complicated than the researcher anticipates and require elaborate qualitative research designs that join the rigor of the social sciences with the flair of good journalism.

Minority political representation is most visible in elected office, but it also plays an important role within party institutions and bureaucracies where the presence of minority appointees can reduce institutional biases and discrimination and partly remedy underrepresentation in elected office (Sinno and Tatari 2011). Research in this area is almost non-existent because the complexity and opacity of institutions such as parties and bureaucracies sometimes deter research when easier publications can be produced at the early stages of growth in an emergent field. Still, this is an important area of research because political parties and bureaucratic institutions have much power to discriminate, help, empower and redistribute and they affect the lives and livelihoods of minorities, including Western Muslims, and the quality of social relations in society.

Conclusion
While the amount of research on the politics of Western Muslims—as agents, tools and targets—is increasing, it has yet to reflect the importance of the topic in the politics of Western states. The recent development of advanced statistical, survey, content analysis and experimental methods, along with ways to integrate them synergistically, now allows the exploration of attitudes and political behavior towards vulnerable and marginalized minorities, and within them, in ways that were not available before. Muslims today happen to be among the most targeted of minorities in the West where this research infrastructure can be best deployed and informed by qualitative research facilitated by easy access to the minority. This convergence of methodological developments, availability of research infrastructure, access, and contentious politics provides an opportunity not only to learn more about the dynamics of the politics of Western Muslims, but also more generally about human political behavior in the context of fear, hate, tokenization and discrimination. It may also help produce better policies and outcomes for Western societies by exposing the sources of Islamophobia, reduce harm against members of a marginalized minority, and limit the risky potential for radicalization among its aggrieved members.

Works Cited


Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. 2007. Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream.


End Notes

1“CNN debunks false report about Obama,” available online at http://articles.cnn.com/2007-01-22/politics/obama.madrassa_1_islamic-school-madrassa-muslim-school?_s=PM:POLITICS. For numbers of Americans who falsely believe that Obama is a Muslim, see the report from the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “Growing Number of Americans Say Obama is a Muslim,” available online at http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1701/poll-obama-muslim-christian-church-out-of-politics-political-leaders-religious.

2Such strategies sometimes fail when targeted constituencies are not amenable to them. This was the case when the opponent of Keith Ellison, the first Muslim to be elected to Congress, mocked his Muslim background and analogized him to Hitler in the very liberal Fifth District of Minnesota. Ellison won by a landslide (Sinno 2009). For more on civil rights, see Arianne Chebel d’Appollonia’s contribution above.

3See in particular the campaign advertisement of Renee Ellmers (featured in an AC360 segment on CNN, available online in http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfAqarG8lew) and the speeches on the issue made by Newt Gingrich (example available online at http://www.humanevents.com/2010/07/28/no-mosque-at-ground-zero/). The two politicians’ claims are fallacious on whether the Park 51 mosque is comparable to mosques built by conquering empires centuries earlier (the Sufi leader of the Park 51 mosque does not share Usama bin Laden’s understanding of the faith; the mosque was to be built two blocks away from the destroyed World Trade Center buildings, not supplant them; and Muslims have not conquered New York), the symbolism of Cordoba (a space for coexistence, not a symbol of victory), and by failing to realize that supplanting houses of worships with others used to be done by conquering empires.
of all faiths in the middle ages and is now a defunct practice. Work by Elisabeth Ivarsflaten (2008) provides an interesting argument for the European context that may hold traction in the US as well—populist parties promote xenophobia (particularly Islamophobia) so they can get votes from both ends of the economic policy continuum.

Another way Western Muslims are used to achieve political goals is in the area of propaganda to promote foreign policy. The State Department under the Bush Administration, for example, paid for the broadcast of advertisements on TV stations in large Muslim countries to improve the image of the United States. These advertisements featured successful American Muslims like Representative Keith Ellison and then NIH Director Elias Zerhouni but of course failed to mention transgressions on American Muslim civil rights and civil liberties.

A 2011 survey by Nisbet et al. (2011) also finds the percentage of Americans who agree that “profiling individuals as potential terrorists based solely on being Muslim is wrong” at 63%; disagreement with “Muslims in the United States should register their whereabouts with the US government” and “law enforcement agencies should closely monitor all Islamic mosques for terrorism” at 52% and 41% of respondents, respectively; and that opposition to a nationwide ban on mosque construction in the United States is at 57%.

We know for example that the older, more conservative, less educated, Protestants (particularly Evangelicals), Catholics and Republicans are more likely to support such measures (Nisbet, Ostman, and Shanahan 2009; Jamal 2009).


The relevant clip from Collin Powell’s interview with NBC’s Meet the Press is online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYELqbZAQ4M.

Some of the studies on Muslim mobilization include Jamal (2005) and Ayers and Hofstetter (2008) on the US context. Timothy Peace (2012) writes about how leftists and Muslims cooperated after the Iraq War started to form the Respect Party that elected several officials. Fareen Parvez (2012) provides an example of political retrenchment as a reaction to marginalization among the Muslims of Lyon.

For an example of the large-scale use of extended interviews and focus groups, see the Open Societies Foundations’ A Home in Europe project (2011), accessible online at http://www.soros.org/initiatives/home.

See, notably, recent work by Baker et al. (2009), Abraham, Howell and Shryock (2011), Bakalian and Bozogmehr (2009), and Bilici (2012).

For more on the challenges of sampling the Muslim American population and on technical solutions, see the methodological sections of the important reports by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (2007, 2011). The Pew Foundation and Gallup have many advantages, including databases of respondents who previously self-identified as Muslims to re-contact, which are not available to most researchers and institutions.

Researchers generally contract out the fielding of surveys and experiments they design to professional survey organizations. The most frequently used ones are the Internet-based YouGov and Knowledge Networks. Some scholars, however, use more expensive ad hoc telephone-based polling centers at their universities or commission Gallup, ifop or Zogby International for their surveys. Several grant-funded organizations allow scholars to submit proposals in a competitive process to include their survey or experimental questions in omnibus survey instruments. They include, for example, Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS) and the British Election Study (BES). One example of a localized study on a group that overlaps with
Muslim-Americans is the 2003 Detroit Arab American Study (DAAS), available online at http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/04413.


The MAPS datasets are available from UCONN’s Roper Center’s public opinion archive at http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/. Information on Barreto and Dana’s Muslim American Public Opinion Survey (MAPOS) is available at http://faculty.washington.edu/mbarreto/research/islam.html but the data is not shared.

There is a rich literature about the representation of other minorities to inform research on the dynamics of Western Muslim minority representation. Much of this literature is on US “race” minorities. The literatures on the representation of US Blacks and Latinos, and women generally, are too large to describe here. The religious identity of candidates in the US recently started to gain scholarly attention (Campbell, Green, and Layman 2011; Benson, Merolla, and Geer 2011). Research on the representation of women and gays also provides methodological tools, concepts, and perspectives to better understand some aspects of the representation of Muslims. For broad comparative collections that provide good introductions to recent developments in the field, see Benbassa (2011) and Bird, Saalfeld, and Wüst (2011).

See, for example, Brouard and Tiberj (2010) who conducted such an experiment in France.


One example of the synergistic use of methods is to conduct experiments where respondents are queried, in addition to the question being researched, about the newspapers they read and to compare each newspaper’s readers’ attitudes with those of others who have similar attitudinal and demographic characteristics except for newspaper readership to isolate the effect of reading a particular newspaper on attitudes. The experiment can be accompanied with an analysis of the content of the newspapers’ coverage of the topic in the period preceding its fielding to understand how coverage shapes opinion (Sinno et al. 2011).