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Introduction

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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).² 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.³ Western Muslim thinkers, theologians, 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 West.⁴ 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 deemphasizing 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. ✂

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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 Hirsi-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).



The Politics of Western Muslims

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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.² 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.³ 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 *niqab* worn by a tiny minority of European Muslim women) as existential threats for similar electoral reasons.⁴

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).⁵ 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.⁶ 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.⁷ 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.⁸ Very rarely does anyone other than Muslim organizations respond to the many attacks on the minority and Muslim organizations receive little media coverage. Such

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.

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.⁹ Most importantly, we do not know what guides these decisions and

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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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.¹³ 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.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.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.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.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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. ✕

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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=SfAqarG8l6w>) 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 worship 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.

⁴Another 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.

⁵A 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%.

⁶We 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).

⁷For a non-experimental analysis of the role of Christian and Conservative media in the US See Nisbet, Ostman, and Shanahan (2009).

⁸The relevant clip from Collin Powell’s interview with NBC’s Meet the Press is online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYELqbZAQ4M>.

⁹Some 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.

¹⁰For 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>.

¹¹See, notably, recent work by Baker et al. (2009), Abraham, Howell and Shryock (2011), Bakalian and Bozogmehr (2009), and Bilici (2012).

¹²For 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.

¹³Researchers 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>.

¹⁴The Pew Foundation conducted extensive surveys of Muslim Americans in 2007 (“Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream,” dataset accessible online at <http://www.people-press.org/2007/05/22/2007-muslim-american-survey/>) and 2011 (Muslim Americans, online at <http://www.people-press.org/2011/08/30/muslim-americans-no-signs-of-growth-in-alienation-or-support-for-extremism/>) and of European Muslims in 2006 (part of their 15-Nation Survey, online at <http://www.pewglobal.org/2006/05/14/spring-2006-survey-data/>). Gallup produced two reports on American Muslims based on data collected in 2008 and 2010 (“Muslim Americans: Faith, Freedom, and the Future,” report online at <http://www.gallup.com/se/148805/Muslim-Americans-Faith-Freedom-Future.aspx>) and one on European Muslims, with the Coexist Foundation, in 2009 (“The Gallup Coexist Index 2009: A Global Study of Interfaith Relations,” online at <http://www.euro-islam.info/2009/05/15/the-gallup-coexist-index-2009-a-global-study-of-interfaith-relations/>). The 2009 report by the EUFRA is available online at http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/eu-midis/index_en.htm and the dataset should be made public after the agency publishes all its reports. The 2008 European Values Study (<http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>) surveys a sample of 70,000 Europeans, including a number of Muslim respondents, from forty-nine countries or regions on their attitudes and its data is accessible from the website.

¹⁵The 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.

¹⁶There 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).

¹⁷See, for example, Brouard and Tiberj (2010) who conducted such an experiment in France.

¹⁸For examples of involved qualitative and mixed-methods studies see Eren Tatari (2010) on elected Muslim officials in London, Fatima Zibouh (2010) on Muslim elected officials in Brussels, Jytte Klausen (2005) on European Muslim elites, and Sinno and Tatari (2009) on elected officials at all levels in the UK. On the quality of representation, see Sinno (2011).

¹⁹One 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).