

Reactions to the War on Terrorism: Origin- Group Differences in the 2007 Pew Poll of U.S. Muslims

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Abstract

This study explored opinions relating to the war on terrorism for seven groups of participants in the 2007 Pew poll of U.S Muslims: African-American Muslims and Muslims born in Iran, Pakistan, other South Asian countries, Arab countries, European countries, and sub-Saharan African countries. For all seven groups, half or more of respondents did not believe the US war on terrorism is sincere. Yet less than ten percent had favorable opinions of Al-Qaeda or justified suicide bombing in defense of Islam. Within these general similarities two groups stood out. Iran-born Muslims were on average less religious than other groups, had higher education and income, and reported least support for suicide bombing. African-American Muslims reported lower education and income than other groups and were most negative about the war on terrorism. These results indicate that US Muslims are not a homogenous community; understanding Muslim views of the war on terrorism will require study of origin-based subcultures.

Introduction

In the United States, different immigrant groups have brought with them different subcultures. Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants to New York City famously created neighborhoods and communities of their own; other US cities saw similar ethnic neighborhoods develop. Muslim immigrants to the US have done the same, including Iranians in Los Angeles, Somalis in Minneapolis, and Lebanese in Detroit. These immigrant communities reproduce to some extent their homeland traditions in language, religion, and politics as well as food and music preferences.

There is reason to believe that different Muslim communities in the US may also have different views of political issues. Such differences might arise initially from the political contexts that moved different groups to emigrate from their home lands. Many Iranians came to the US, for instance, when the Shah was toppled. Somalis came to the US when famine and violence made their homeland a dangerous place. But the experience of diasporas in their new homes must also play a role in determining immigrants' political and social attitudes. For example, some believe that the European experience of jihadist terrorism has been worse than the US experience because Europe is less accepting of immigrants. [1].

Recognizing that immigrant groups can differ markedly in their cultures and their political viewpoints suggests caution about general characterizations of "Muslims" in any Western country. In the US, Muslims from Arab countries, Iran, or South Asia are likely to differ in many important ways, possibly including their political opinions. In this article, we explore opinions

of different groups of US Muslims about issues relating to the war on terrorism. Using data from the 2007 Pew poll of US Muslims, we compare groups of US Muslims defined by country of birth, with special attention to converts to Islam.

Muslims in the US: Comparison by Origins

If “Muslims” in the US are in fact a congeries of distinct communities, how can we learn about their differences? The obvious approach is opinion polling but in practice it is difficult to get polling data that can adequately represent tiny fractions of a population. Muslims in the US constitute less than one percent of the population and different ethnic and diaspora groups of Muslims are correspondingly smaller percentages. Standard polling methods, such as random-digit dialing or address sampling, are impractical when the target group will comprise less than one percent of those sampled.

Nevertheless, there have been polls of US Muslims, using one or both of two approaches to getting the sample. The first approach is to accumulate Muslim respondents who turn up in national polls using standard probability sampling techniques. Over many national polls, many Muslims are identified and then these individuals can be contacted all at once in a poll targeting only Muslims. The second approach is to sample only from neighborhoods known to have a relatively high proportion of Muslim residents. The odds of calling a Muslim can thereby be raised, although Muslims living outside ‘Muslim neighborhoods’ will be undersampled in this approach.

Polls of US Muslims have typically used a combination of the two approaches, but the samples thus obtained have usually consisted of 500 or fewer individuals – too few to permit fractionating the sample to compare subgroups defined by homeland or ethnic origins. The 2007 Pew survey of US Muslims is an exception, with a sample size of 1050. Our study takes advantage of this larger sample to compare groups of US Muslims based on country of birth.

African-American Muslims

It is believed that there has been an African-American Muslim presence in the United States since the eighteenth century slave trade, though the bulk of population growth for African-American Muslims has occurred during the 20th and 21st centuries. Estimates of the African-American Muslim population have varied widely: Turner has estimated that 42% of Muslims in the United States (4-6 million, by his estimate) are African-American.[2] Pew, on the other hand, estimated that 2.35 million Americans are Muslim, and estimated that 20% of that number are African-American (suggesting approximately 470,000 African-American Muslims).[3] Pew further estimates that about half of all Muslims who were born in the United States are African-American, many of them converts.

African-American Muslims are typically members of one of several (typically Sunni) groups, including the American Society of Muslims (the descendent of the original Nation of Islam), the new Nation of Islam (now led by Louis Farrakhan), the Five Percenters, the Dar ul-Islam, the Islamic Mission of America, and other smaller organizations. We will refer to African-American

Muslims throughout this article. Though some use the term “Black Muslims,” historically this term has had specific connotations in relation to one group, the Nation of Islam, and thus may not take into account all of the groups of African-Americans practicing Islam in the United States.[4]

The longer history of African-American Muslims in the US suggests that they may be culturally and politically different from US Muslims with relatively recent origins in Muslim countries. Thus, rather than looking at all 273 Pew respondents born in the US, our analysis focused on the 135 native-born respondents who identified themselves as “Black” and reported that both parents were also born in the US. These 135 represent what we believe is the more culturally homogenous group of African-American Muslims; they are, as Pew estimated in 2007, about half (135/273) of all respondents born in the US.

Converts

Concerns have been raised that converts to Islam represent a particular security threat in Western countries. Converts to Islam have been singled out for special attention by security forces in Russia [5], Switzerland [6]], Germany [7], and the US [8]. The concerns expressed usually do not specify whether converts are particularly susceptible to radicalization or only difficult to guard against because their appearance and cultural background allows them to blend into their native country better than immigrants might.

It is possible that converts are more susceptible to radicalization because they are more zealous and fervent in their new religion than those born into that religion. This popular idea was tested in the US Religious Landscape Survey conducted by the Pew Forum in 2007. Reporting on the results of this survey, Pond and Smith show that converts to a religion are more fervent, but the differences between converts and born members are small.[9] For instance, 69% of converts and 62% of nonconverts say religion is very important to them; 52% of converts and 44% of nonconverts attend worship once a week. Such small differences in zeal are unlikely to be associated with big differences in political opinions. But these comparisons are averaged across Christian religions; Muslim converts and nonconverts were not compared. It is possible therefore that Muslim converts are much more zealous than born Muslims.

Of course being more zealous in a new religion, or being open to further life change after a religious life change, need not mean that converts are more likely to have radical political opinions. More zealous Muslims may know more about their religion and be less susceptible to the eccentric version of Islam that Al-Qaeda forwards. Also, being more open to life change may focus a convert on personal rather than political change. Given the uncertainties associated with the idea that Muslim converts are more susceptible to radical opinions, we use the Pew Survey of US Muslims to explore the political opinions of convert and nonconvert Muslims.

Overview of the study

We analyzed the 2007 Pew Survey of US Muslims to explore two questions. First, are there important differences in the political views of US Muslims as a function of what country they

were born in? Second, do converts to Islam have more radical political views than nonconverts?

We focus particularly on opinions relating to the war on terrorism. As discussed in Leuprecht et al., Al-Qaeda frames its appeal as follows: the West is conducting a war on Islam, Al-Qaeda is leading the Muslim resistance to the war on Islam, and suicide bombing and other attacks on civilians are legitimate because these are the only means open to Muslims against the power of the West.[10] Our analysis focuses therefore on three opinions relating to Al-Qaeda's frame: belief that the war on terrorism is not sincere, favorable opinion of Al-Qaeda, and justification for suicide bombing in defense of Islam.

Methods

2007 Pew Poll of US Muslims

Our study examined the 1017 respondents who were coded by Pew for country or region of origin: 28 respondents' data were missing place of birth information and 15 were born in countries coded by Pew as *other*. [11] Of the 273 respondents reporting they were born in the US, 135 were identified as African-American Muslims; the remaining 138 respondents do not appear in this report. Thus the total of respondents represented in this report is 869 (=1050-28-15-138).

Groups defined by birthplace

Seven origin groups were identified. Two countries had large enough numbers of emigrants for separate analysis: Pakistan (137) and Iran (87). South Asian countries excluding Pakistan (Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan) had 151 emigrants, Arab countries combined had 103 emigrants, European countries (including Bosnia and Herzegovina) had 59 emigrants, and sub-Saharan African countries excluding Egypt (Sudan, Somalia, Africa - unspecified) had 107 emigrants. In addition, we identified African-American Muslims as respondents who self-identified as Black and who reported being born in the United States with both father and mother born in the United States.

Missing data

Some items had non-negligible percentages of missing responses (*don't know* or *refused*) for some origin groups. In addition to ignorance and ambivalence, missing rates can reflect caution about responding to sensitive items, and items relating to the war on terrorism may be sensitive in this sense. In our tabled results, percentages are calculated without missing responses in the denominator, but we note percent missing in or after each table.

Results

Given the relatively small sample sizes for comparisons by origin (*ns* of seven origin groups ranging from 57 to 151), and the many possible comparisons across seven groups, reliance on statistical testing would likely inflate the number of significant results obtained. Rather than statistical significance, we use a criterion of substantive significance in which percentage

differences less than 15 percentage points are not interpreted. In addition, if one category of respondent is consistently different from others, we note this pattern for discussion.

Demographics

Table 1 shows the range of demographic reports across our seven origin groups. In general, demographics were similar for our seven groups except that African-American and Iran-born stood out from other groups.

African-Americans reported lower socio-economic status than the six immigrant groups: lowest education (22% reporting college degree or more vs. 44-74% for immigrant groups), lowest financial condition (38% reporting *excellent* or *good* vs. 42-71%), and lower family income (tied with Africa-born at 24% reporting \$75k or more vs. 35-64%). African-Americans were also less often married (37% vs. 63-82%) and much more often converts to Islam (72% vs. 0-9%).

Iran-born respondents reported highest education (74% college degree or more) and income (64% family income \$75k or more)

Table 1: Demographics by origin: 2007 Pew Survey of US Muslims

	AfAm	Pakistan	Iran	Arab	S.Asia	Europe	Africa
	135	137	87	193	151	59	107
Percent female	42	48	45	45	37	44	46
Percent college degree or more	22	62	74	53	67	44	49
Percent family income \$75k or more	24	44	64	34	37	35	24
Percent employed full time	48	49	58	43	62	59	56
Percent financial condition <i>excellent</i> or <i>good</i>	38	71	58	50	52	60	42
Percent married	37	82	77	81	82	63	64
Percent convert to Islam	72	0	2	2	2	9	3

Note. Percent missing (*don't know, refused*) was negligible for demographic questions, except ranging from 8% (Africa-born) to 23% (Iran-born) for income.

Religiosity

Table 2 shows the range of religiosity reports across our seven origin groups. African-American Muslims spent more time at the mosque than other Muslims: 56% reported that they take part in social or religious activities at the mosque beyond *salah* and *Jum'ah* prayer (Pakistan-born Muslims next highest at 38%). Seventy-nine percent of African-American Muslims endorsed the

idea that mosques should express their views on social/political questions (Muslims born in Arab countries next highest at 50%). Taken together, results on these two items indicate that African-American Muslims have more of their social and political life centered in the mosque than other US Muslims. This does not mean exceptional religiosity: African-American Muslims are not substantially different from other Muslims in attending mosque for prayer or in belief in the Koran.

Iran-born and Europe-born Muslims were lower than other groups in attending mosque for prayer (6% and 17% vs. 39-57%), importance of religion (*very important* 28% and 41% vs. 64-84%), seeing the Koran as the word of God (57% and 67% vs. 90-96%), and wearing the hijab in public (11% and 8% vs. 25-61% for others). In general these two groups, especially Iran-born Muslims, showed less religiosity than other US Muslims.

Table 2: Religiosity: Percent italicized responses by origin

	AfAm	Pakistan	Iran	Arab	S.Asia	Europe	Africa
	135	137	87	193	151	59	107
On average, how often do you attend the mosque or Islamic Center for <i>salah</i> and <i>Jum'ah</i> Prayer? <i>once a week or more</i>	57	53	6	41	39	17	51
And outside of <i>salah</i> and <i>Jum'ah</i> prayer, do you take part in any other social or religious activities at the mosque or Islamic Center? <i>yes</i>	56	38	10	27	19	19	29
How important is religion in your life? <i>very important</i>	83	64	28	73	76	41	84
<i>Koran is the word of God</i> (vs. written by men)	90	96	57	94	93	67	91
In your opinion, should mosques keep out of political matters – or should they express their views on day-to-day social and political questions? <i>should express views</i>	79	26	18	50	33	23	39
Do you think of yourself first as an American or first as a Muslim? <i>Muslim</i>	59	58	27	39	46	34	47
When you are out in public, how often do you wear the headcover or hijab? [females only] <i>all the time</i>	47	31	11	61	25	8	49

Do you think there is a natural conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society, or don't you think so? *yes, there is a conflict* 37 18 21 21 25 33 17

Note. Across seven origin groups and eight religion items, missing ranged from 0-10%, except "Muslim first" item with 18% percent missing for Iran-born and 15% missing for Europe-born.

Perceived discrimination

Table 3 shows that substantial minorities (17-39%) of every origin group reported being victims of discrimination as Muslims; over half of every group saw discrimination against Muslims in security surveillance (58-78%) and in press coverage of Islam and Muslims (55-74%).

African-American Muslims reported at a higher rate (42% vs. 10-24%) that others in the last month acted suspiciously towards them because of their faith. Also, African-Americans were most likely (39% vs. 17-24%) to report being victims of discrimination in the US.

Table 3: Perception of discrimination: Percent italicized responses by origin

	AfAm	Pakistan	Iran	Arab	S.Asia	Europe	Africa
	135	137	87	193	151	59	107
Are you very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not at all worried about not being hired for a job or promoted because of your religion? <i>very or somewhat worried</i>	40	38	37	46	41	24	51
In the past twelve months, have people acted as if they are suspicious of you because you are a Muslim, or not? <i>yes</i>	42	16	21	16	20	10	24
... have you been called offensive names because you are a Muslim, or not? <i>yes</i>	19	9	8	14	13	9	9
...have you been physically threatened or attacked because you are a Muslim, or not? <i>yes</i>	3	2	1	2	4	2	2
And thinking more generally, not just in the past twelve months, have you ever been the victim of discrimination as a Muslim living in the United States? <i>yes</i>	39	17	24	23	24	20	24
Do you think that the government's anti-terrorism policies single out Muslims in the US for increased surveillance and monitoring, or don't you think so? <i>singles out Muslims</i>	78	61	63	60	68	60	58

Do you think that coverage of Islam and Muslims by American news organizations is generally fair or unfair? <i>unfair</i>	74	61	69	73	59	55	64
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Note. Across seven origin groups and five personal discrimination items (the first five items in Table 3), missing ranged from 0-5%. The two group discrimination items had larger missing rates: 3-22% missing for the item asking about government surveillance of Muslims, and 3-14% missing for the item asking whether news coverage of Muslims is unfair. African-American respondents showed lowest missing rates: 3% missing on both items.

Government policies

Table 4 indicates that half or more of each origin group expressed dissatisfaction with “the way things are going” in the US (47-87%), with President George W. Bush (72-93%), and with use of military force in Iraq (81-90%). For every group, there was less disapproval of the use of military force in Afghanistan than military force in Iraq; nevertheless a substantial fraction of every origin group disapproved of using force in Afghanistan (32-77%).

African-American respondents were notably more negative than other groups on two items. They were more dissatisfied than other groups with how things are going in the US (87% dissatisfied versus next highest 58% for Europe-born and Africa-born). They were also more opposed to military force in Afghanistan (77 % versus next highest 56% for Arab-born).

Table 4 also shows that, across seven origin groups and four government items, missing responses ranged from 2 to 22 percent. It seems likely that items about US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq would be more threatening for respondents than the item about President Bush, but - perhaps surprisingly - missing rates are at least as high for the latter as for the former. We infer from this pattern that most of the missing responses reflect uncertainty or ambivalence in response to the question asked.

Table 4: Government policies: Percent italicized responses (percent missing) by origin

	AfAm	Pakistan	Iran	Arab	S.Asia	Europe	Africa
	135	137	87	193	151	59	107
Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today? <i>dissatisfied</i>	87 (4)	47 (7)	54 (6)	52 (11)	57 (7)	58 (12)	58 (9)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?	93	72	82	83	77	81	87
<i>disapprove</i>	(4)	(18)	(16)	(19)	(13)	(10)	(22)
Do you think the US made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan? <i>wrong decision</i>	77	47	43	56	41	32	47
	(7)	(7)	(5)	(20)	(12)	(20)	(18)
Do you think the US made the right decision in using military force against Iraq? <i>wrong decision</i>	89	83	81	88	90	82	90
	(2)	(12)	(8)	(17)	(9)	(14)	(16)

Opinions relating to the war on terrorism

Table 5 indicates that about half of US Muslims (42-73%) do not believe that the war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism, and that no more than ten percent of US Muslims justify suicide bombing in defense of Islam (2-10%) or have a positive view of Al-Qaeda (0-9%).

Again African-American Muslims stand out from the immigrant groups. Seventy-three percent of African-American Muslims reported that they did not consider the US war on terrorism to be a “sincere effort” to reduce terrorism. This is 17 percentage points higher than the next-highest group, Iran-born Muslims (56%). Iran-born Muslims are lowest in justifying suicide bombing (2% vs. 5-10% for other origin-groups).

Table 5 also shows that percentages of missing responses for the three terrorism-related items are 10-20 percent missing for the WOT item, 14-27 percent missing for the AQ item, and 3-11 percent missing for the Suicide Bombing item. These rates are only slightly higher than missing rates for the four government policy items in Table 4. One might suppose that the most threatening item in Table 5 is the item about justifying suicide bombing in defense of Islam. This item, however, has lower missing rates (2-11 percent) than the WOT item (10-20 percent missing) or the AQ item (14-27 percent missing). Thus, we are inclined to believe that the opinion percentages in Table 5 are only slightly conservative estimates of Muslim respondents’ acceptance of the jihadist framing of the war on terrorism.

Table 5: Opinions relating to the war on terrorism: Percent italicized responses (percent missing) by origin

	AfAm	Pakistan	Iran	Arab	S.Asia	Europe	Africa
	135	137	87	193	151	59	107
Do you think the US led war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism or don't you believe that? <i>don't believe that</i>	73 (10)	42 (12)	56 (15)	47 (20)	47 (19)	49 (14)	47 (18)
Overall do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Al-Qaeda? <i>very or somewhat favorable</i>	9 (27)	4 (21)	1 (14)	3 (26)	2 (17)	0 (24)	1 (23)
Some people think that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that this kind of violence is often justified to defend Islam, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified? <i>often or sometimes</i>	10 (3)	9 (4)	2 (6)	7 (11)	9 (7)	9 (7)	5 (6)

Correlates of opinions about WOT, AQ, and suicide bombing

We also looked for demographic characteristics and opinions that are correlated with the three terrorism-related items.[12] In particular we looked for relationships that can shed light on why some respondents see the war on terrorism (WOT) as insincere, or have a favorable opinion of Al-Qaeda (AQ), or justify violence against civilians in defense of Islam (Violence).

Intercorrelation of terrorism-related items. Across the seven categories of respondents, correlations of the WOT item with the AQ item and the Suicide Bombing item ranged from -.10 to .17 and correlations of the AQ item with the Suicide Bombing item ranged from .19 to .36. These correlations indicate that responses to the WOT item are not related to responses to the AQ or Violence items, which are consistently but only moderately related.

Converts. Are converts more extreme? Our three terrorism-related items, considered separately for each of six origin groups (no converts among Pakistan-born), produced 18 correlation coefficients (not tabled) linking conversion status with a terrorism-related item. Of the 18 “convert correlations,” only two are substantial. For Iran-born respondents, converts are more likely to justify violence in defense of Islam ($r=.29$). For Europe-born respondents, converts are *less* likely to see the war on terrorism as insincere ($r=-.26$). These two correlations offer little support for the idea that converts are generally more likely than born Muslims to hold extreme opinions about the war on terrorism.

Converts were also compared with nonconverts for each of the eight religiosity items in Table 2. Across six origin groups (no converts among Pakistan-born) and eight items, only four of 48 correlations were substantial. The four were scattered: Iran-born converts were more likely than nonconverts to wear the *hijab* (.47), Europe-born converts were more likely to say that mosques should express social and political opinions (.27), Africa-born converts were more likely to rate religion as important (.44) but, surprisingly, also less likely to say that the Koran is the word of God (-.28). It appears that converts are not generally more religious than nonconverts.

Correlates of terrorism-related items. For each origin-group, we correlated each of the three terrorism-related items appearing in Table 5 with each of the items in Tables 1-4 (six demographic items not including convert status, eight religiosity items, seven experience of discrimination items, and four items relating to government policies). Here we summarize briefly the pattern of correlations; full report of these correlations is available in an extended version of this report available at <http://www.brynmawr.edu/psychology/McCauley1.html>

For most origin groups, seeing the WOT as insincere was substantially correlated (.25 or greater) with two discrimination items (Muslims singled out, media unfair to Muslims) and with four national policy items (dissatisfied how things are going in the country, disapprove the president, wrong decision in Afghanistan, wrong decision in Iraq). African-American opinions of the WOT were not predicted by these items.

Again for most origin groups, favorable evaluation of Al-Qaeda was substantially correlated with two demographic items (lower education, lower family income), two religiosity items (thinking of self first as Muslim, often wear *hijab*), and one national policy item (wrong decision in Afghanistan). Again opinions of African-American respondents are not predicted by these items. Instead, for African-Americans, the highest correlate with favorable opinion of Al-Qaeda was worry about not being hired or promoted because of being Muslim ($r=.29$).

Surprisingly, justifying suicide bombing was not substantially correlated with any other item tested, for any origin group, except that Iran-born women are much more likely to justify suicide bombing if they often wear the *hijab* ($r=.61$).

In sum, the correlates of seeing WOT as insincere are perceptions of discrimination against Muslims and dissatisfaction with US leadership and US policies, whereas the correlates of sympathy for Al-Qaeda are lower socioeconomic status, higher commitment to Muslim identity, and greater opposition to US forces in Afghanistan. The only substantial correlate of justification of suicide bombing was wearing the *hijab*, and this only for Iran-born female respondents.

Discussion

In the Introduction we raised the general question of whether political opinions, in particular opinions related to the war on terrorism, might differ for different subcultures of Muslim Americans. To explore this question, we divided respondents to the 2007 Pew poll of US Muslims into seven groups based on origins: African-American (135), Pakistan (137) Iran (87),

Arab countries (193), S. Asia not including Pakistan (151), and African countries not including predominantly Arab countries (107). African-Americans were respondents self identifying as “Black” and reporting they were born in the US of parents who were also both born in the US. Then we identified three Pew questions in which opinions could be identified as running against the war on terrorism: seeing the war on terrorism as insincere, favorable opinion of Al-Qaeda, and justifying suicide bombing in defense of Islam. In addition, we identified nineteen Pew questions about issues that may be related to negative feelings about the war on terrorism: eight items about religiosity, seven items about perception of discrimination against Muslims, and four items evaluating satisfaction with government and government actions in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In broad terms, we compared opinions on these twenty-two items, as well as standard demographics, for each of the seven origin-groups. Then we looked for correlations of demographic items, religion items, discrimination items, and policy items with each of the three terrorism-related items for each of the seven groups.

Three opinions about terrorism

Perhaps our most surprising result is that the three terrorism-related items in the Pew poll are not strongly related. The correlation between positive opinion of Al-Qaeda and justifying suicide bombing is consistently positive, but across the seven origin-groups the correlations range from .19 to .36. This level of correlation suggests that opinions about Al-Qaeda and opinions about suicide bombing have importantly different origins, and success in changing one of these opinions may have little effect on the other.

Even more disconnected, seeing the war on terrorism as insincere is not at all related to opinions of Al-Qaeda or suicide bombing. Across the seven origin groups, the correlations range from .10 to .17 – consistently close to zero. Not surprisingly, seeing the war on terrorism as insincere has different correlates than favoring Al-Qaeda or justifying suicide bombing. Seeing the war on terrorism as insincere is correlated most with perceptions of discrimination against Muslims and disagreement with US policies in Iraq and Afghanistan, whereas positive evaluation of Al-Qaeda is correlated most with lower education, lower family income, thinking of self first as a Muslim, wearing the hijab, and opposing US forces in Afghanistan.

In sum, we began with what we thought were three items tapping opinions about the war on terrorism. Our results indicate that these three are largely separate opinions rather than three aspects of one general opinion about the war on terrorism.

General patterns of opinion among US Muslims

Across all seven Muslim origin-groups, there are some broad consistencies. Religiosity, as indexed by attending mosque frequently, high ratings of the importance of religion, and seeing the Koran as the word of God, is high - except for Iran-born and Europe-born. Between a quarter and a half of each origin-group sees itself as Muslim first and American second. About a quarter of each origin group reports having been a victim of discrimination against Muslims. More than half of each origin-group believes that Muslims in the US are singled out for increased

surveillance, and that coverage of Islam and Muslims by American news organizations is generally unfair. Half or more of each origin-group are dissatisfied with the way things are going in the US, disapprove of then-President George W. Bush, and believe that the US made the wrong decision in using military force in Iraq. About half of each origin-group does not believe that the war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism (73 percent for African-Americans).

These results from the most comprehensive available poll of US Muslims add up to a 2007 snapshot of political dissatisfaction in which most US Muslims oppose US policies relating to the war on terrorism and see Muslims as victims of discrimination. Given this level of dissatisfaction, it is perhaps surprising to find that favorable opinion of Al-Qaeda is rare: across origin-groups, zero to four percent of respondents are favorable toward Al-Qaeda (except 9 percent for African-Americans). Also rare is the opinion that suicide bombing against civilian targets is justified in defense of Islam: across origin groups, two percent to ten percent justify this kind of violence.

It is possible that these low percentages are conservative estimates, depressed by immigrant fears of expressing anti-American opinions. We believe, however, that such depression must be small to the extent that missing rates (*don't know* and *refused*) are only slightly higher for the Al-Qaeda item than for the item tapping disapproval of President George W. Bush. We assume that few would fear the consequences of expressing a negative view of the President.

African-American Muslims

Across both demographics and opinion items, African-Americans stand out. Compared with other origin-groups, African-Americans report lower education and income, are less often married, and are predominantly (72%) converts. They are more likely to report social or religious activities other than prayer at the mosque or Islamic Center and they are more likely to think that mosques should express opinions on day-to-day social and political questions. They are more likely to report that people have acted suspicious of them because they are Muslim, and more likely to report having been a victim of discrimination as a Muslim living in the US. They are more dissatisfied with the way things are going in the country and more likely to believe that the US made the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan. They are less likely to believe that the US war on terror is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism and tend to have a more favorable opinion of Al-Qaeda. These are highlights where the difference between African-American Muslims and other origin-groups is particularly large, but on many other items African-Americans are consistently among the most concerned about discrimination in the US and about US government policies.

One might suppose that the elements of African-American concerns at the level of group comparisons would be correlated at the individual level. For instance, given that African-American Muslims are most likely to believe that the war on terrorism is not sincere and most likely to believe that the US made the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan, one might suppose that it is African-American respondents who are against military force in

Afghanistan who are most likely to believe that the war on terrorism is not sincere. But the correlation between opinion about Afghanistan and opinion about the war on terrorism is in fact near zero (.03).

For most origin-groups, seeing the war on terrorism as insincere is associated with perceptions of discrimination, dissatisfaction with government, and opposition to US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. But for African-American respondents, these same items show no substantial correlations with opinion about the war on terrorism.

Similarly, more favorable evaluation of Al-Qaeda is generally associated with lower education and income, thinking of self first as Muslim, wearing the *hijab*, and opposition to US action in Afghanistan. But for African-American respondents these same items are unrelated to opinion of Al-Qaeda.

The challenge then is to explain how African-American Muslims report the most negative or among the most negative opinions about the war on terrorism, but their negative opinions are not predicted by their perceptions of discrimination, the US government, or government actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Here we can offer only the most tentative suggestion.

We note that, for African-American respondents, the highest correlates of seeing the war on terrorism as insincere are items tapping general political dissatisfaction: with the way things are going in the country ($r=.20$) and with President George W. Bush ($r=.24$). For African-American respondents (but for no other origin-group) the highest correlate of a favorable view of Al-Qaeda is worry about not being hired or not being promoted because of being a Muslim ($r=.29$). This pattern suggests that for African-Americans, opinions about the war on terrorism and about Al-Qaeda are derived from opinions about domestic issues, including distrust of government and problems getting a job. In their views of terrorism, African-Americans appear to pay less attention than other origin-groups to US foreign policy, including military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. In brief, it may be that African-American opinions about the war on terrorism have little to do with the war on terrorism and more to do with dissatisfaction with politics and employment in the US. However, this suggestion cannot be evaluated without additional research.

Iran-born Muslims

Iran-born Muslims report more education and higher family income than any other origin-group. They are also lowest in religiosity, with lowest mosque attendance (6% attending weekly or more), lowest mosque activities (10% once a week or more), fewest rating religion very important in their lives (28%), fewest seeing the Koran as the word of God (57%), and fewest seeing themselves as Muslim first rather than American first (27%). Iran-born respondents were lowest in justifying suicide terrorism (2%), although the difference from other origin groups (5-10% justifying) was not great.

Correlational results also show something unusual about Iran-born Muslims: wearing the *hijab* is correlated .61 with justifying suicide bombing. Although this correlation represents only the

female respondents in the Iran-born group, it is large in relation to other groups for the same item (next highest correlation between wearing the *hijab* and justifying suicide terrorism is .26 for females in the Africa-born group).

What might explain the ways in which Iran-born Muslims stand out from other origin-groups? One possibility is a difference in religious sect. Ninety percent of Iran-born Muslims report themselves as Shi'a, whereas the other six origin-groups report themselves mostly Sunni with percentages of Shi'a ranging from 4 to 17 percent. Outside the US, however, there is no evidence we are aware of that suggests that Shi'a are less religious than Sunni.

We are left with a conundrum. Sect, religiosity, socioeconomic status, and wearing the *hijab* as predictor of justifying suicide bombing—all point to something different about Iran-born US Muslims, but we have so far little help in explaining how these differences may be related.

Converts vs. nonconverts

Are converts more religious and more politically extreme? Perhaps the most direct test of the idea that converts are more religious are the correlations of convert status with rated importance of religion in the respondent's life. Comparison of converts with non-converts for six origin-groups (Pakistan-born included no converts) found no differences for five of these groups; only for Africa-born Muslims did converts rate the importance of religion higher than born Muslims. Given that converts are not generally more religious, it is no surprise that converts are not more extreme. Across three terrorism-related items and six origin-groups (no converts among Pakistan-born), converts differed substantially from non-converts on only four items spread across three origin-groups. These scattered differences do not support the idea that Muslim converts are generally more politically extreme than born Muslims.

Our findings with regard to converts are subject to two limitations. Converts were rare (0-9 percent) in all origin-groups except African-Americans (72 percent). Comparisons of converts and nonconverts thus depend on data from only 2-5 converts in each origin group, except for African-Americans. Thus it is only for African-American Muslims that we can be confident in saying that converts do not differ from nonconverts in response to the three terrorism-related items or the eight religion items. For African-American Muslims our results should count strongly against the idea that converts to Islam are more religious or more politically extreme.

Conclusion

We analyzed the 2007 Pew Survey of US Muslims to explore whether opinions relating to the war on terrorism differ for groups defined by the country or region in which respondents were born. Briefly our answer is that differences across origin groups are relatively small, except for two groups. African-Americans generally reported more discrimination and less support for US military action in Afghanistan. Iran-born Muslims are highest in education and income, lowest in religiosity, and lowest in justifying suicide bombing in defense of Islam. We also raised the question of whether converts to Islam might be more religious and perhaps more politically extreme. Our answer is that they are neither more religious nor more politically extreme,

although this answer can be asserted with confidence only for African-Americans because other origin-groups included few converts.

Most generally, our results indicate that US Muslims are not a homogenous group. African-American Muslims and Iran-born Muslims appear to be different in important ways from other origin groups, despite the fact that differences are not easy to establish in groups as small as we examine here (origin-group size ranging from 59 to 193). We have only the most tentative suggestions for understanding the pattern of results for African-American and Iran-born Muslims, but this should not be surprising. The 2007 Pew poll of US Muslims aimed to represent the population of US Muslims but the items in the poll were not designed to learn about group differences among US Muslims. In this sense we have pushed the Pew poll beyond its design limitations and our results must be seen as only the first step in learning about group differences among US Muslims. Nevertheless we believe that the pattern of results that distinguishes African-American and Iran-born Muslims is clear enough to make a general point. Research to learn more about the sociology and politics of different communities will be more useful than attempts to generalize about "US Muslims."

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Notes

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[11] According to the 2007 Pew report, *Muslim Americans: Middle class and mostly mainstream*, nearly 60,000 respondents were interviewed to find a representative sample of Muslims. Interviews were conducted by telephone between January 24 and April 30, 2007, by the research firm of Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. (SRBI).

[12] Correlational analyses relating to these three items were carried out after recoding missing responses (*DK* or *refused*) as neutral values. We used a criterion of substantive significance rather than statistical significance. Statistical tests would make the same size correlation significant or not depending on sample size (here ranging from 59 Europe-born respondents to 194 Arab-born respondents). For our smallest sample, European origin respondents, correlations of about .25 are significant at $p < .05$ two tailed, and correlations less than this value are unlikely to have practical significance. Thus we attend only to correlations of magnitude .25 or larger.