
**THE POLITICAL INCORPORATION OF MUSLIMS IN AMERICA:
THE ROLE OF RELIGIOSITY IN ISLAM**

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ABSTRACT

Previous scholars have argued that Islam as a religion and a culture is incompatible with liberal, democratic American values. Not only is Islam inconsistent with the West, but it poses a direct conflict according to some scholars. This viewpoint has been popularized in American and European media and by government officials who declare fundamentalist Muslims as enemies of freedom and democracy. However, there is no evidence that the grounds of conflict are based on religious ideology. Are the most devout Muslims really opposed to political incorporation in the U.S., or are other traditional non-religious factors such as socioeconomic status and acculturation more important in understanding political alienation? To date, nearly every study of Islam and Western values has been qualitative, anecdotal or philosophical in nature, leaving most questions unanswered, at least empirically. Using a unique national survey of Muslim Americans, we find that more religiously devout Muslims are significantly more likely to support political participation in America – in contrast to prevailing wisdom. We conclude that there is nothing inconsistent with Islam and American democracy, and in fact, religiosity fosters support for American democratic values.

Keywords: Muslim American; Democracy; Religion and Politics; Participation; Race and Ethnicity; Public Opinion

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Unlike any other religious or racial identity, being Muslim in the 21st Century brings questions into whether Islam conflicts with being a “good” citizen in Western societies. As a religion that transcends color, race, national origin, and language, studying Islam becomes more challenging than studying members of a racial or ethnic group in a Western society. Without a common race, culture, and heritage to unify all Muslims in the West, studying the political incorporation of this population becomes more challenging than studying a minority group whose individuals are better defined than Muslims.

Religion has long been a defining ideological and institutional partner of good democratic citizenship in America. Tocqueville paid considerable attention to the role of the church and the value system of Christianity in fostering American civic engagement and democracy. Today, scholars continue to emphasize this important connection; however their emphasis is on the Protestant tradition rooted in America (Elshtain 2001). Throughout history non-Protestant religious groups have seen their “Americanness” called into question. Today, no group has faced more religious and nationalist persecution than Muslim Americans, yet very little scholarship has informed the debate.

Are there specific cultural and religious values that make Muslims unable to live and be “good” citizens in Western societies? Do the values and teachings of Islam contradict American democratic norms? Or, as with many other religious groups, do religiosity and the place of worship provide a locus for civic engagement in America? To answer these questions, we examine the political behavior of Muslims living in the United States utilizing survey research. We measure their level of support for political engagement, and assess whether being Muslim inhibits a person’s level of political participation in U.S. politics.

While the debate over Muslim political behavior is different in different Western societies, we focus on Muslims in the United States. As a group, Muslims are the fastest growing religious group in the U.S. and number more than 7 million. Since the events of 2001, Muslims face challenging questions

about their loyalties to the United States vis-à-vis their own religion. Given the inherent difficulty in studying a non-homogenous group, how do we study a religious minority group, whose value systems are being challenged and brought repeatedly into question on a regular basis? At the same time, a small handful of individuals who are both Muslim and American have been involved in attacks or plots against America. Where does the boundary of being a Muslim end and being an American begin?

We argue that it is not such a simple dichotomy and that as an institution and a belief structure, Islam is not meant to challenge American democratic values. In fact, the teachings of Islam may provide an opportunity for consensus building (March 2007), and individuals who are more religious may in fact be more supportive of civic engagement and political incorporation in America. To date, nearly every study of Islam and Western values has been qualitative, anecdotal or philosophical in nature, leaving most questions unanswered, at least empirically (but see Jamal 2005, Jalalzai 2009). In many ways, one of the most interesting, and also one of the most crucial political questions today remains, are Islamic principles compatible with the American political system?

To answer these questions, we fielded a self-administered public opinion survey of Muslim Americans to ask whether or not the teachings of Islam were compatible with participation in American democracy. In contrast to prevailing judgments, we find that more ‘fundamentalist’ or religiously devout Muslims are significantly *more likely* to support political participation in America. We argue there is nothing inconsistent with Islam and liberal democracy, and to the contrary, the most religiously devoted Muslims are the most likely to support Western democratic and participatory values because of their knowledge of and adherence to the teachings of Islam. This idea, that Islam teaches compatibility with liberal democratic values has been established theoretically by Abdul Rauf (2004), Swaine (2001; 2003), and March (2006; 2007), however it has never been tested empirically. This article offers the first empirical test, of arguably the most important cultural debate in the twenty-first century.

Most political science research on racial and ethnic minorities in the United States tends to focus on African Americans and Latinos and to a lesser extent Asian Americans. Further, most studies of Muslims typically look at democratization and political participation in the Middle East and Asia.

Relatively few efforts have been made to understand the patterns of social, civic, and political participation among Muslims in the United States, despite great increases in their population, citizenship, and civic participation over recent decades. In this article, we bring together scholarship on the politics of race and ethnicity with literature on Islam and the West, to offer a new theoretical perspective to understand the political position of Muslim Americans. This theory has two principle components: (1) culturally and religiously, we argue that at its heart, the social contract of Islam encourages participation in democratic societies, so long as the participation does not prohibit the private expression of faith; (2) as a largely immigrant-based population in the United States, Muslim Americans can be understood through the lens of immigrant acculturation in which longer time/generations in the U.S. greatly increases political incorporation.

We begin with a review the relevant arguments and research findings on social and political compatibility between Islam and the West. Next, we examine literature on ethnic minorities in the United States, and recast Muslim Americans as an ethnic minority group to determine what parallels exist between the political isolation and incorporation of Muslims and other minority groups in the U.S.. After an overview of our dataset and methodology, we present the results of our data analysis and offer a discussion of the political and social relevance, and highlight opportunities for future research.

The Competing Views of Islam and the West

I. The Clash of Civilizations

One of the most hotly debated topics on Sunday morning news programs is the perceived growth in “homegrown terrorists,” yet only anecdotal evidence is presented by pundits. The reason is that little to no scholarly data and research exists to determine the path to political incorporation and efficacy on the one hand, and political alienation and isolation on the other among Muslim Americans. Despite the lack of reliable data, the media have regularly described homegrown terrorists as an evolution of al Qaeda “plotting to kill large numbers of their fellow citizens for reasons of religious zeal,” (Kirby and Brimley 2006). Arrests in Buffalo, Toronto, and London of homegrown “Islamic

terrorist cells” have called into question the allegiance of American, Canadian, and British citizens who practice Islam. In 2003, the U.S. Senate heard testimony stating, “the rise of militant Islamic leadership in the United States requires particular attention if we are to succeed in the War on Terror,” (Epstein 2003). And of course most recently, the attacks at Fort Hood, Texas by Nidal Hassan, have served to re-ignite the debate about the compatibility of Islam and America.

In the United States, Muslims have faced various forms of discrimination especially after the events of September 11, 2001. Questions related to Muslims’ loyalty to the US are repeatedly raised, and the idea of being a Muslim American is often considered to be somewhat contradictory. The debate has existed for a few decades and depicts the United States as a liberal, modern, western civilization, and the envy of developing countries. In contrast, Islam is viewed as a traditional, conservative, and aggressive religious ideology whose roots are often described diametrically to all characteristics of western civilization.

This idea of a cultural divide between the western tradition and Islamic thought was made obvious in political science in the early 1990s, though the cultural and religious debate is more than a century old¹. Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilization* (1993; 1996) set the stage for an argument that envisions conflict in the new world order based purely on cultural grounds. Huntington argues that the world will no longer witness conflicts around ideological and economic differences, but rather around cultural “fault lines,” most notably Islam versus the West. In fact, Huntington advocates that Western nations such as the United States need to “strengthen and unify their own civilization against possible internal or external challenges to core values and interest,” (Skidmore 1998). More recently, Huntington has reinforced the notion of incompatibility by stressing the Anglo-Protestant core American values which are under attack by non-English speaking, non-Protestant cultures growing in numbers in America (2004). While Huntington is correct to point out that the cultures are different, he does not provide a compelling evidentiary basis to conclude that they are actually incompatible with one another. In fact, the

¹ For example, see Abdel Nour, Antoine. 1982. *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine de la Syrie ottomane (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)*. Publications de l'Université libanaise, Section des études historiques, 25. Beyrouth: Université libanaise.

United States has a long tradition of immigrant incorporation and religious diversity. Despite his reliance on anecdotal evidence, in the years following his work, Islam and western traditions were increasingly perceived to be at odds with one another, manifested with the 9/11 attacks on America.

Long before Huntington, Daniel Lerner wrote: "... the top policy problem, for three generations of Middle Eastern leaders, has been whether one must choose between 'Mecca or Mechanization,' or whether one can make them compatible," (1958). Lerner's contention of an inherent incompatibility between Islam and industrialization has been prevalent, especially with the emergence of scholars studying the Middle East and Islamic history. Though his argument is based more on political institutions and leadership styles in selected Middle Eastern nations, Lerner advances the position that Islam as a religion requires theocratic states which oppose social and political modernization. Within Islam, secular Muslims are often described as the least worrisome while the most devout have been characterized as the main threat. This is best exemplified in the academy, in an article David Zeidan published just after 9/11: "most fundamentalist movements are united in these goals of Islamizing the total social and political system of their societies and of establishing a revived authentic world-wide Islamic state based on *Sharia* (the all-encompassing law ordained by God for humans and based on Quran and Hadith)," (2001). To bolster his claims, Zeidan picks and chooses selected quotes from the Qu'ran that match his thesis, ignoring any claims to the contrary which often appear in adjacent paragraphs.

The underlying argument of Huntington and Lerner focuses on the religious tenets of Islam. Both authors suggest that the true and full interpretation of Islam calls for the expansion of Islamic ideology and the rejection of any non-Islamic worldviews that naturally hamper Islam's growth. The implication is that close followers of the religion are the greatest cause for concern. Indeed, many sociological studies of religion find fundamentalism (in Christianity) positively correlated with authoritarianism (Duck and Hunsberger 1999), prejudice (Batson et. al. 1993), and in-group favoritism (Burris and Jackson 1999), though none of these studies are referenced in Huntington's volume, let alone replicated among Muslims. In fact, in a study of Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosnians, Kunovich and

Hodson find no evidence that religiosity is a motivator of intolerance, nor is it a motivator of ethnic conflict for Muslims (1999).

If Huntington has provided one anchor of the incompatibility thesis, historian Bernard Lewis has provided the second, and more recent anchor. Lewis, influential in intensifying the debate between Islam and modernity, makes the argument that Muslims as both individuals and communities are incapable of modernization, a process that is inherently western and non-Islamic (2002a; 2002b). While Lewis provides no clear definition of modernity in his book *What Went Wrong* (2002a) he did offer a definition in an earlier article: “in every era of human history, modernity...has meant the ways, norms, and standards of the dominant and expanding civilization,” (1997). These ways, norms and standards are quite general and elusive, especially when making an argument that would define an incompatibility between Islam as a religion that does not have cultural and national boundaries, to a western civilization that also transcends national boundaries and is now a mosaic of varying ethnic backgrounds and traditions. Further, Lewis uses broad generalizations when identifying problems in the “Islamic world.” His theory clearly implies that all persons of Islamic faith, regardless of national origin, income or education are part of “what went wrong” – always in contrast to the West. For example, the opening sentence of his article in *Atlantic Monthly* previewing his book, is: “In the course of the twentieth century it became abundantly clear that things had gone badly wrong in the Middle East – and, indeed, in all lands of Islam,” (2002b). Part of the challenge according to Lewis is that Muslims are not capable of divorcing their religious practices from their political beliefs and political participation because “all problems are so to speak ultimately religious, and all final answers are therefore religious,” (2002a). According to Lewis’ perspective, throughout history, “Muslims developed no secularist movement of their own,” leaving them with no option but to join religion and politics (2002a). Though Lewis’ account of Islam and the West is quite comprehensive from a historical perspective, fellow historian Juan Cole concludes that “Lewis creates a problematic West/Islam dichotomy virtually everywhere,” (2003). Despite criticism in academic circles, Lewis’ views on Islam have been quite influential in the White

House. In November 2006 he received the National Humanities Medal from President Bush recognized as one of the “greatest authorities” on Islam and the Middle East.

Beyond historical differences and challenges, Lewis argues that the true religious practice of Islam today disallows the coexistence of Islamic and non-Islamic cultures. Referencing a few passages from the Qu’ran, Lewis summarizes the direct conflict facing Muslims in America in his own words: “for misbelievers to rule over true believers is blasphemous and unnatural, since it leads to the corruption of religion and morality in society, and to the flouting or even abrogation of God’s law,” (2004). Thus from Lewis’ perspective, the natural inclination of devout Muslims is to reject non-Islamic governments.

The argument that the practice of Islam is incompatible with western democratic values has received considerable attention among policy analysts and policy makers alike. In 2003, the United States Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security heard testimony that linked religiously-minded Muslim Americans to terrorist. Matthew Epstein testified that “with deep pocketbooks, and religious conviction, the Saudi Wahhabists have bankrolled a series of Islamic institutions in the United States that actively seek to undermine U.S. counterterrorism policy at home and abroad,” and argued that Islamic religious leaders in the U.S. instruct their followers to not cooperate with federal agents, posing a significant threat to national security (2003). Likewise, the McClanahan report for the Army War College concludes that “America is in an ideological war with Islamism,” (2002).

While President Bush routinely states that the United States “respects the vibrant faith of Islam” (2002) and that Islam is a “religion of peace” (2006), many prominent Pentagon officials have declared just the opposite. During a 2002 speech, then Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz dismissed the viewpoint that poverty or other social factors were behind anti-Western sentiments, arguing instead religion is the underlying source, stating there is something “substantially Islamic about the form of terrorism that we’re confronting today.” Thus, the clash of civilizations argument and theory holds that significant religious ideological differences exist between Western Christian societies and Eastern Muslim

peoples. If this theory is correct, we would expect to observe in the data, the highest opposition to liberal democracy from the most religious Muslims.

II. The Convergence of Civilizations

How accurate is the representation of Huntington, Lewis and other scholars about the incompatibility between Islam and democracy or liberalism? This question is central, especially when reflecting upon the idea of a “collective identity” that Muslims seem to share, according to these scholars. Dale Eickelman argues that “buzzwords such as ‘fundamentalism,’ and catchy phrases such as Samuel Huntington’s rhyming ‘West versus Rest’ and Daniel Lerner’s alliterative ‘Mecca or mechanization,’ are of little use in understanding this reformation. Indeed, they obscure or even distort the immense spiritual and intellectual ferment that is taking place today among the world’s nearly one billion Muslims, reducing it in most cases to a fanatical rejection of everything modern, liberal, or progressive,” (1998: 83). Rather than a source of opposition, the alternative viewpoint suggests that Islam is compatible with the core democratic values of the West. A more holistic, or in-depth understanding of the Qu’ran, Hadith and Islam provides for a convergence of civilizations, not a conflict.

First, the continued description of anti-American viewpoints as part of fundamentalist Islam inappropriately emphasizes religiosity as problematic. Fundamentalist Islam is often interchanged with ‘radical Islam,’ ‘militant Islam,’ and depicted as an ultra-religious viewpoint within Islam. This is a mistake. According to Robinson, “the term *fundamentalist* has been extensively misused by the media to refer to terrorists who happen to be Muslim, or who are anti-American Muslims. This is not accurate. Fundamentalist Islam is simply the conservative wing of Islam, just as fundamentalist Christianity is the conservative wing of Christianity. The vast majority of Muslim fundamentalists are pious individuals who strictly follow the teachings of Mohammed, promote regular attendance at mosques, and promote the reading of the Qur’an,” (2004). Scholars who promote the incompatibility thesis have cast a misguided wide net over the sum of religious Muslims, without actually investigating the practices, theories and belief systems of religious Muslims.

Those with a high sense of religiosity, also called *tadayyun* (Steenbrink 1990) are likely to have a close and personal connection to Islam. *Tadayyun*, an Arabic word meaning religiosity, is often equated with the degree of devoutness and practice of Islam. Those with a high sense of *tadayyun* are likely to be the most familiar with Hadith, most often read the Qu’ran, regularly attend prayer services at the mosque, and have a strong sense of shared community with other Muslims. Nothing in Islam equates *tadayyun* with *jihad*. In contrast, we argue that religiosity and Islamic faith are linked with a sense of respect for the codes and values of non-Muslim societies. Why? Because the Qu’ran, Hadith, and the Prophet Mohammad ask Muslims to uphold the social contracts of non-Muslim societies, so long as they are free to practice their religion. In the United States, a country with little to no prohibitions on religious expression or practice, Islam suggests political incorporation is an acceptable, if not desirable outcome. Our argument builds heavily on recent research by March (2005; 2006; 2007), and extends his theory more directly to political participation.

March acknowledges that a cursory review of Islamic texts will reveal “prohibitions on submitting to the authority of non-Muslims states, serving in their armies, contributing to their strength or welfare, participating in their political systems,” (2007: 236). However, such a conclusion would not be based on a comprehensive review of Islamic doctrines, nor would it be based on an in-depth understanding of how Islam is interpreted and practiced by the most devout. In contrast, March argues that “even premodern Islamic legal discourses affirm a certain set of values and principles... chief among these is the insistence within Islamic jurisprudence on the inviolability of contracts,” (236), and he provides the example of the American social contract.

Many Muslim jurists and texts clearly state that it is reasonable for Muslims to reside in non-Muslims societies so long as the non-Muslim society does not prevent the manifesting of Islam. Through an extensive review of Islamic texts, March concludes that “not only is it permitted to reside in a non-Muslim polity, but also it is permitted to do so *while being subject to and obeying non-Muslim law*,” (2007: 243). This obligation is rooted in a religious following of the spirit and letter of Islam. Among Muslims

living in the U.S., we should expect then, the most religiously devout, those with a high degree of *tadayyun*, to support and affirm the American social contract.

We offer a significant challenge to conventional wisdom – religiosity may encourage Muslims to support the political system in America. The value and support for contracts is not a cultural but rather a religious notion rooted in many Islamic texts, Qur’anic verses, and *fatawa*. Tariq Ramadan explains that “contracts determine our status, fix our duties and rights and direct the nature and scope of our actions. Once agreed, the terms of a covenant should be respected and if there is a point which seems to work against Muslim rights—or even their conscience as Believers—this has to be discussed and negotiated because Muslims are, unilaterally, not allowed to breach a treaty” (Ramadan 1999, 162). As a religious minority, Muslims greatly benefit by the guarantee of religious rights and freedoms in the United States and therefore quiesce.

Feisal Abdul Rauf, a noted Imam and advocate of Muslim advancement in the United States argues that America is an ideal state to practice Islam. This may sound surprising if not absurd to many Americans, and Muslims outside America, but it is founded on the argument that the “American Constitution and system of governance uphold the core principles of Islamic Law,” (2004). Writing as an Imam with expert knowledge of Islamic teachings and practices, Abdul Rauf argues that the principles of equality and the free exercise of religion, embedded in American legal and political history, provide Muslims with an open environment to practice their religion, and that in fact the Prophet Mohammad instructed his followers to uphold the laws and practices of their host society, if they should find themselves in a majority non-Muslim state.

Returning to March, our theory gains strength in his argument that “once a Muslim has accepted the security of a non-Muslim state he is bound to follow all of its laws, including paying taxes that contribute to general social welfare. Crucially, for most scholars this is a moral duty grounded in religion, and not a mere quietest exhortation to avoid punishment or other negative consequences for the Muslim community,” (2007: 244). March points to two significant Qur’anic verses (Q. 16:91 and Q. 17:34) which spell this out quite clearly.

Therefore, our argument rests on the notion that the Muslim more knowledgeable of Islam, the Muslim who reads the Qu'ran, the Muslim who knows the stories of the Prophets, is more likely to challenge the conflict hypothesis because conflict-based theories pick and choose sensational components of Islam, ignoring the full context, or full picture so to speak of Islam. In an earlier article, March (2005) argues that those with an in-depth knowledge, belief in, and understanding of Islam will frequently cite the story of Prophet Yusuf who served as an appointed minister to the non-Muslim Pharaoh of Egypt as support for compatibility. March cites a statement by al-Shanqiti as evidence, "there is nothing prohibited in Muslims' participating in elections run in non-Muslim countries, especially when such participation accrues benefits to Muslims or wards off harm," (2006). More than not prohibiting political incorporation, some argue that the more religious Muslims would understand they have a duty to support the political system in America, and to participate themselves in order to show care for others, as well as to help improve the position of Muslims in society (Ali 2004; Shanqiti 2006).

Does one's Islamic way of life (or identity) conflict with being an American living in a largely non-Muslim society? Even though Bernard Lewis says that there is a conflict, he does not provide quantitative data that would support his claims. In contrast, March concludes that "culturally authentic Islamic values exist which can ground Islamically a social contract between Muslims and a non-Muslim liberal democracy," (251). Neither of these competing viewpoints has been empirically tested among Muslims in America. We offer the following hypothesis as our principle tenet:

H1: Muslims are more likely to support and engage in political participation in the United States as their level of religiosity (or *tadayyun*) increases.

Muslims as an Ethnic Minority: Race, Ethnicity and Political Incorporation

Islam is a religion, and therefore Muslims are considered a religious group. However this is not the entirety of their social identification. In addition to sharing a common religion, Muslim Americans can be viewed as an ethnic minority group which has much more in common than just religion. In fact,

a recent empirical study of Muslim political participation in America by Jalalzai (2009) focused exclusively on racial/ethnic demographic variables as predictors of participation, suggesting strongly that variables such as nativity and race do matter. Similar arguments were made about Jewish and Catholic Americans in the early 1900s (Goldstein and Goldscheider 1968; Gordon 1964;). Jews and Catholics were at the same time, immigrants, minorities, and a religious group (Herberg 1955). Today, the same can be said for Muslim Americans. In addition to outlining the relevance of religiosity to Muslim political incorporation, it is equally important to analyze Muslims as a minority group and through the lens of racial and ethnic politics literature.

Nadine Naber (2000) explains that the migration of Arabs and Middle Easterners shifted from predominantly Christian Arabs in the late 19th century to mainly Muslims, especially in the 1960s, and created many questions about the “racial” status of Arabs and Muslims in the United States. She writes, “the shift from predominantly Christian to predominantly Muslim immigrants is one of many factors that render the historical question of whether Arab Americans should be considered white/Caucasian or a non-white minority still unresolved.” Naber argues that Arab and Muslim Americans are racialized through their religious association as Muslims, and that traditional classifications of race and ethnicity render Arab Americans “invisible.” In fact, the Census Bureau continues to classify Arabs, and most Muslims as racially White. Nonetheless, Naber does argue that Arab and Muslim Americans are an ethnic minority group in the United States.

Do Muslim Americans follow a path of political incorporation similar to African Americans based on race and discrimination, or do they follow a path similar to Latinos based on the immigrant experience and generational assimilation? Given the central role of religion in defining their social group, the answer is likely that Muslim Americans follow a somewhat different path, with similarities to other minority groups, but one that is more complex. Issues of religiosity, foreign policy, discrimination, immigration, socio-economic status, and efficacy should all be considered when sorting out the political incorporation or isolation of Muslim Americans.

Like other minority groups, the Muslim population in the United States is growing rapidly, and is a comparatively new population. While a vast majority of the population has come to (or was born in) the United States after World War II, Muslim Americans have a rich history dating back to the 1850s. While some evidence records that Muslim Moors lived in South Carolina and Florida as early as 1790, stronger evidence shows that the United States Cavalry hired a Muslim camel trainer from the Arabian peninsula named Hajj Ali (also known as Hi Jolly) to experiment raising camels in Arizona and California the 1850s.² Interestingly, most of the early waves of Arab immigrants were Christians from greater Syria and settled on the East Coast of the U.S. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a second wave of predominantly Muslim immigrants came to the U.S. after World War I. Small Arab and Muslim communities were established along the East Coast and by 1940 Dearborn, Michigan was noted as a center of Muslim Americans. Still, the vast majority of the Muslim American population is more recent immigrant or second generation. Between 1960 and 1980 more than one million Muslims and Arabs immigrated to the United States specifically from Palestine, Lebanon, Iran and Pakistan. Today, the Muslim American population is very diverse, tracing its national origin to more than 30 countries.

As a minority group, we argue that the American Muslim community faces two issues that significantly impact their political incorporation: immigration and discrimination. First, as a largely immigrant-based community, scholars should take account of the generational status of Muslims. We expect that over successive generations or years in the United States, the social and political incorporation among Muslims will greatly increase. Generational assimilation is among the most well established theories in immigrant politics and research demonstrates that each wave of immigrants are eventually integrated into American society (Dahl 1962; Gordon 1964; Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Portes and Zhou 1993; Jones-Correa 1998; Ramakrishnan 2005). This does not mean there are not bumps along the way, in fact there are often roadblocks. Even as second and third generation Americans assimilate, strident anti-immigrant attitudes continue to confront many immigrant families. However, we believe that Muslims choose to assimilate to the social and political norms of America overtime and

² Nu'man, Fareed H., *The Muslim Population in the United States: a brief statement.*, page 51.

generation. Instead of viewing Muslims as a monolithic religious group that is culturally opposed to Western values, the generational incorporation thesis argues that Muslims, like other immigrant groups, do become part of the American mainstream overtime. It is important to note that movement into the mainstream does not mean a rejection of Islam, either religiously or culturally. Studies of immigrant incorporation find that second generation, U.S. born Latinos and Asians identify as both American and with their ethnic group (Wong 2006; Zhou 1997; Portes 1996). With regard to Arab Americans, Lin and Jamal (1997) lend support to the generational assimilation viewpoint, noting that American-born Arabs were much more acculturated than immigrants. Likewise, Naff (1985) and Naber (2000) also provide some evidence that second and third generation Arab Americans become much more “Americanized” even as they continue to attend cultural events with their immigrant parents or grandparents. Consistent with research on Latinos (Wrinkle et. al 2006; Barreto and Muñoz 2003), we examine political incorporation across four generational groups of Muslim Americans: foreign-born non-citizens; foreign-born citizens; second generation; third generation and test the following hypothesis:

H2: Muslims are more likely to support and engage in political participation, over successive generations in the United States.

With respect to discrimination, extant literature on African Americans suggests perceptions and experiences of discrimination greatly effect Black political and social incorporation. On the one hand, scholars have found Blacks who perceive high degrees of racism in society to be more withdrawn and isolated from the dominant White social and political system (REF). On the other hand, research also demonstrates that discrimination can lead African Americans to become politically active, especially through protest, and in some cases through the ballot (REF). Especially since the events of 9/11, the Muslim American community has faced considerable discrimination, both at the individual and community-wide level. Undoubtedly, perceptions of anti-Muslim discrimination will color how Muslims view the social and political processes in America, and ultimately, whether or not they support or oppose political incorporation. If Muslim families face significant discrimination by society, the media, or worse, by government agencies, it is unlikely that they will view American political systems as just or open

(Naber 2000; Goodstein 1998; Maksoud 1998). The more racism or prejudice Muslims experience, the more likely they are to reject the egalitarian principles in America, because from their perspective, all men are not equal. Adding to these pressures are the few, but often loud voices that vilify the West as an anti-Muslim society.

H3: Muslims are less likely to support and engage in political participation if they perceive anti-Muslim discrimination in the United States.

Data and Methodological Approach

To address the issue of compatibility between Islam and political participation in America, we implemented a unique public opinion survey of Muslim Americans. Scholars familiar with the study of Muslim Americans as well as racial and ethnic politics know well that very little empirical data exists regarding Muslims in America. Among the few MAPS/Zogby polls that do exist, none contain the precise questions we are interested in analyzing. Thus, we fielded an original survey of Muslims Americans across eleven cities: Seattle, WA, Dearborn, MI, San Diego, CA, Irvine, CA, Riverside, CA, Los Angeles, CA and Raleigh-Durham, NC, Chicago, IL, Dallas, TX, Houston, TX, Washington D.C., and Oklahoma City, OK. The sample represents an incredibly diverse cross-section of American cities and the Muslim population, including interview sites in the East, West, and Midwest, as well as the major Muslim population centers in the U.S. Our sample includes large numbers of Arab, Asian, and (U.S. born) African American Muslim respondents, making it quite representative of the overall U.S. Muslim population.

The survey was recruited face-to-face, and subjects then self-administered the survey whereby research assistants³ handed out clipboards to participants who completed the survey in their own privacy. Participants were selected using a traditional skip pattern to randomize recruitment and could chose to answer the survey in English, Arabic, or Farsi. Naturally, drawing a sample of Muslims in the

³ Research assistants were themselves Muslim, predominantly second generation, most fluent in a second language (Arabic or Urdu) and were balanced between men and women. All research assistants attending two training sessions, and participated in a pilot survey to ensure consistency and professionalism.

United States is not easy or efficient given their relatively small population. To address this concern, the survey was implemented at 22 randomly selected mosques and Islamic centers across eleven locales. In addition, we gathered a large number of interviews outside the prayer services during Eid al Adha and Eid al Fitr⁴. In total, 1,410 surveys were completed across the eleven locations, and the demographics of our sample closely match those reported in a recent Pew survey of Muslim Americans⁵ (see appendix, table 2 for sample characteristics). Finally, due to the high propensity for social desirability among Muslim Americans, a self-administered survey offers a considerable advantage over a telephone survey. Considerable research has demonstrated that attitudes on sensitive topics are more truthfully given in private self-administered surveys (Krysan 1998), and that minorities are likely to moderate their attitudes when being interviewed by non-whites, the typical method in telephone surveys (Krysan and Couper 2003; Davis 1997)

Given that our sample is drawn from religious centers and places of worship, the reader may question if there is any inherent bias. However, we are confident in our sample selection for two specific reasons. First, we are actually interested in the more religious Muslim population, given the nature of our research question: is Islam compatible with participation in American democracy? Scholars, pundits, and journalists who state that it is not compatible often point to the ultra religious segment of the Islamic population as the source of tension. As we illustrate above, the potential for conflict between Islam and the West is consistently explained by religious dogmatic differences. Thus, it is important that we sample the Muslim population in America that continues to actively practice their religion, as opposed to a sample that is predominantly secularized and assimilated. Second, our sample still demonstrates a nice range of religious diversity. While attending the mosque and the prayer of Eid are descriptively religious practices, they are also cultural and social practices, just as attending Sunday church services or Easter Mass are both religious and cultural events for Christian and Catholic

⁴ Our survey was in the field from December 30, 2006 to December 9, 2008. Of the 1,410 completed interviews, 373 were collected during Eid al Adha prayers, 726 during Eid al Fitr prayers, and 311 were collected regular Jum'ah prayers.

⁵ The Pew survey was conducted by telephone, and went into the field at roughly the same time as our survey, however its data is not yet publicly available.

Americans. In response to a question about the importance of religion in their daily life, 50% stated religion was very important, 38% stated it was somewhat important, and 12% stated not too important. Likewise, when asked how involved they were with their local mosque, 26% said very active, 40% said somewhat, 20% said not much, and 13% said not at all active. Overall, we are quite confident that our sample provides the appropriate mix of religiously oriented Muslims, and at the same time providing a spectrum of religiosity that ranges from very low to very high.

Variable construction

To assess political incorporation among Muslim Americans we examine both theoretical and applied measures. The first dependent variable related to compatibility between Islam and the West, asked respondents, “As a Muslim living in the U.S., do you think Islamic teachings are compatible with participation in the American political system?” and the possible answer choices were: yes, very much / yes, somewhat / only a little / not at all. Overall, 34% answered very much, 32% somewhat, 21% only a little, and 13% not at all. In addition to asking whether they think Islam is compatible, we also asked whether they had actually engaged in any forms of political participation: “During 2006, did you participate in any of these activities? Community meeting / Rally or protest / Write letter to public official / Donation to political candidate or campaign / Vote in November 2006 election.” Based on their yes/no answer to these questions we created an index of political participation. About one-fourth of our sample stated they were not citizens, so we excluded voting, resulting in a four-item index that ranged from 0 – 4⁶. The index has a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .7117.

The key independent variables that we are interested in revolve around the practice of Islam and the degree of religiosity among our Muslim respondents. There are four specific variables that we focus on to test the relationship between religiosity and support for American democratic values. The first variable, *Muslim commonality*, measures how much a respondent thinks they have in common with our Muslims living in the United States, and ranges from nothing (a value of 1) to a great deal (a value of 4).

⁶ The distribution of political participation was 38% had engaged in 0 acts, 21% in just one act, 19% in two acts, 13% in three acts, and 9% in all four acts.

Given the great diversity within the Muslim population, this variable puts emphasis on the religious-community connection that Muslims do or don't have with one another. The second variable in this series is mosque attendance, and we introduce two dummy variables for the upper and lower bounds of mosque attendance, *very involved* and *not at all involved*, leaving two middle categories of somewhat and not too much as the omitted comparison groups. We wanted to introduce these two dummy variables to capture the potential non-linearity of the relationship between mosque involvement and attitudes towards political incorporation. For example, it might be that Muslims who are extremely involved and active within the mosque embrace political participation, or they could reject it as too secular. At the same time, those who never attend the mosque except for an occasional prayer service, might be more 'Americanized' and be inclined to participate. In order to test for both of these possible effects we include mosque attendance as two dummy variables in the compatibility model. However, in the political participation model we include mosque attendance as a single categorical variable in line with research by Jamal (2005) which specifically examined the impact of mosque attendance on political engagement. In order to compare our results with hers, it is necessary to keep the variable consistent (for which the question wording is identical).

The next religious-based independent variable, which we call *religious guidance*, is based on the question, "How much do you follow the Qu'ran and Hadith in your daily life? Very much / Somewhat / Only a little / Not at all." This variable is important because it assesses the degree to which Muslims bring Islam into their personal, and daily lives, as opposed to a once a week experience for Friday prayers in the mosque. The subpopulation that stated 'very much' is of particular interest, because they are the source of conflicting opinions on Muslims and incorporation into the West. On the one hand, Huntington and Lewis clearly state religiously devout Muslims reject the rule of misbelievers. On the other hand, March and Abdul Rauf argue that obedient practitioners of the Qu'ran and Hadith would be quick to support the ideals of a democratic society.

Finally, we include a variable called *follow Islam*, which measures the knowledge and actual practice of Islamic teachings. This variable is constructed based on the following two questions in the

survey: “Which is not a month in the Islamic calendar?” and “During 2006 did you provide *Sadakab* to a Muslim individual or organization?” The first question about the Islamic calendar presented four possible options, and respondents were re-coded as simply correct or incorrect. Among our sample, 79% knew which month was not in the Islamic calendar. The second question about *Sadakab* determines practice. *Sadakab* (or sometimes *zakat*), means voluntary charity and is one of the pillars of Islam. According to the Qu’ran Muslims are required to give *Sadakab* every year. In our sample, two-thirds of respondents practiced *Sadakab*. Thus in combination, the variable *follow Islam* is a measure of how closely the respondent knows and follows the pillars of the religion.

While our main focus is on these four religious Islamic variables, we also include many standard demographic and expected control variables. As we noted above, experiences with discrimination are particularly relevant to formulating positive or negative attitudes about political participation among racial and ethnic minority groups. As such, we include a variable, *airport discrimination*, for whether or not respondents believe airport security measures are targeted at Muslims (1), or to all American equally (0). Next we include a series of demographic dummy variables for whether the respondent is Black or Asian (Arab is the comparison group), Sunni Muslim, foreign born, a U.S. citizen, and if they speak mostly English at home. Finally, we include many standard predictors of political participation such as age, income, education, gender, news consumption, and tenure in the community. Full details on how each of our independent variables are coded can be found in the appendix.

The Findings

In table 1 we present results for our first regression predicting support for the idea that Islamic teachings are compatible with participation in American democracy. In addition to the probit coefficients and standard errors, we report changes in predicted probability to better assess the impact that each independent variable has on compatibility. The results make clear that religiosity leads Muslims to believe that Islamic and American foundations are compatible. For all four of our Islamic-based variables, we find a positive and statistically significant relationship between being more religious and believing Islamic teachings are very much compatible with participation in American democracy. For the

first time, these findings provide individual level empirical evidence to reject the controversial and influential theories espoused by Huntington and Lewis. By the same token, our data affirm the premises of March and Abdul Rauf who argue that the teachings of Islam *should* promote compatibility, however neither offered an empirical test. In one of the only previous empirical tests, Tamney (1980) found that a high degree of religiosity among Muslims in Indonesia can coexist with support for modernity and liberalism.

[Table 1 about here]

A more in-depth review of table 1 reveals additional insights into the contribution of each variable. For example, Muslims who feel they have very much in common with other Muslims were 29.9% more likely to strongly support the compatibility thesis than those who thought Muslims had nothing in common with one another. This finding demonstrates that in addition to religious practice, Islam provides a common community for Muslims which translates into support for American ideals. Further, being very involved in the activities of the mosque, which the FBI has admitted it uses as part of a formula to monitor potential terror suspects (Abdeljabbar 2004; Brill 2002), makes Muslims 12.6% *more likely* to believe in participation in American politics. The positive role of mosque involvement that we find in Seattle and Dearborn is consistent with Jamal's findings in New York City (2005). While other scholars have argued that mosque's may serve to mobilize radical and anti-American sentiment among Muslims, the evidence points to the contrary. Just as Christian churches have helped promote political participation among White and Black Americans (Harris 1994; Rozell and Wilcox 1997), and the Catholic church for Latinos (Lee and Pachon 2007), the mosque helps promote incorporation, and support for political participation among Muslims.

In addition to mosque attendance, a community-based form of involvement in Islam, we also included an individual level, and more private measure of the role of Islam. We found that Muslim Americans with a high degree of religious guidance in their personal lives to be significantly more likely to view the teachings of Islam as compatible with participation in American democracy. In fact, Muslims who stated that they follow the Qu'ran and Hadith "very much" in their daily lives were 20.5% more

likely to support political participation in America than Muslims who stated religion plays no role in their daily life. A related variable, *follow Islam*, also had a statistically significant effect on attitudes towards compatibility. Muslims who were more knowledgeable about the practices and customs of Islam, and more, those who actually followed the Islamic calendar and Islamic teachings such as *Sadakab* (alms giving) were 11.5% more likely to believe Islamic teachings were very compatible with participation in the American political system. Thus, a clear pattern emerges with respect to religiosity. Muslims who are more devout, who are more religious, and who are involved with their mosque are consistently more likely to believe the teachings of Islam are compatible with American participatory democracy. In contrast, Muslims who reject incorporation and participation in American politics are among the least religious. Rather than viewing Islam, imams, and the Qu’ran as sources of anti-American mobilization, these foundations of the Muslim community should be viewed as bridges to political incorporation in American democracy.

While each of these independent variables has an effect on their own, in reality they do not operate in a vacuum. That is to say, a respondent in our survey that is very involved in the mosque, is likely to also state religion plays a very important role in their daily life. Using post-estimation analysis to generate predicted probabilities for the dependent variable, we create a sliding scale of religiosity to account for all four Islam-based variables at the same time, which can be found in figure 1. We begin by estimating the likelihood that a respondent thinks the teachings of Islam are very much compatible with political participation in America, assuming the most religious response to each of the four Islam questions. We then shift the respondent down by one unit until they reach the lowest possible value on each of the four religious-based variables. For clarification, someone with a “very high” degree of *tadayyun* feels they have a great deal in common with other Muslims, is very involved in activities at the mosque, follows the Qu’ran very much in their daily life, knows the Islamic calendar and gave *Sadakab* (both part of the follow Islam variable). As evident in figure 1, degree of *tadayyun*, or religiosity is directly related to support for political participation in America. Almost 60% of Muslims with the highest level

of religiosity agree that the teachings of Islam are very much compatible with American democratic values⁷ – support which falls to only 2% among Muslims with the lowest level of religiosity.

[Figure 1 about here]

In addition to the role of Islam, we also hypothesized that Muslim Americans would follow similar paths to political incorporation of other immigrant and minority groups. Table 1 shows a clear pattern of immigrant incorporation among Muslim Americans. Compared to foreign-born non-citizens (the omitted category), naturalized citizens, and third generation U.S. born citizens are significantly more likely to support the compatibility of Islam and political participation in America. This suggests that as an immigrant-based community, Muslims in the United States incorporate into the political system over successive generations, similar to the trends noted for Irish and Italian immigrants during the 1960s (Dahl 1962; Wolfinger 1964), and for Latino and Asian immigrants in the 1990s (de la Garza et. al. 1993; de la Garza et. al. 1996; Ong and Nakanishi 1996). Foreign-born citizens are 11% more likely to believe Islam is compatible with the U.S. as compared to foreign-born non-citizens, while third generation Muslim Americans (whose grandparents were immigrants) are 22.2% more likely to believe Islam is compatible with American politics. Even as ethnic-ties continue to thrive, immigrants to the United States have consistently shown the ability and desire to incorporate into American political institutions. To the extent that they fail to incorporate, anti-immigrant attitudes by the dominant society have usually been to blame. Again, we find the same trend with respect to Muslims in America. Those who view airport security measures as targeted specifically towards Muslims, and hence view American institutions with a tinge of anti-Muslim sentiment, are significantly less likely to support the compatibility thesis. Finally, we find that Black Muslims are less likely to support compatibility, and that women are less likely to see Islam and political participation as compatible. The findings for Blacks are complicated because the category includes both U.S. born African Americans, as well as African immigrants who self-identified as “Black.” One possibility for the negative relationship could be due to the reasons for

⁷ In contrast, only 9% of the most religious group stated Islam and participation in America were “not at all” compatible, while nearly 50% in the least religious group stated “not at all” compatible.

conversion into Islam within the African American community, as a defiant mechanism toward the Judeo-Christian culture. In the eyes of African-American Muslim leaders, Islam was both the true religion of many Africans, but also an escape from the dominant culture that vilified the African-American community, often reiterated in the words of Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan. For women, the negative effect might be a result of gendered roles in Islam. Women in Islam have occupied a secondary role to the man in the household, in the mosque, and in business, and thus politics is of concern to only the head of household – men in most Muslim societies. Therefore, Muslim women might have slightly lower levels of support for incorporation into the political system in liberal democracy, if they perceive political incorporation to be outside their sphere of interest.

Measuring Actual Political Participation

The results presented in table 1 are important because they examine the extent to which Muslims support the ideals of both Islam and political participation in America. However, the dependent variable did not measure actual political participation. To complement the analysis above, and to provide a more complete picture the relationship between religiosity and political incorporation we next turn to the results for our political participation model. As many scholars of immigrant politics have concluded, the notable non-citizen population make analyses of voting less interesting among Asian Americans (Lien et. al. 2004) and Latinos (Barreto and Muñoz 2003; Garcia 2003). Likewise, in her study of Muslim political engagement in New York City, Jamal (2005) notes that due to a large foreign born and non-citizen population, voting is not the best measure of Muslim political participation. Similar to Jamal⁸, we limit our political participation variable to four acts: during 2006 did you attend a community meeting; rally or protest; write letter to public official; and donation to political candidate or campaign. This measure has

⁸ Jamal includes membership in a political party instead of attend community meeting. However, non-citizens are significantly less likely to be affiliated with political parties, given that they can not vote. Thus, we use three of the same measures here, but substitute ‘attend community meeting’ which Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) consider in their non-electoral participation index.

good variation for both foreign and native born Muslims⁹. We created a count variable ranging from 0 – 4 and rely on poisson regression to estimate the event-count model (Cameron and Trivedi 1998).

Turning to the regression results, there is considerable consistency between table 1 and table, with one notable exception, religious guidance. First, among the four Islam-based variables, we find that three exert a positive and significant influence on political participation. The variables Muslim commonality, mosque involvement, and follow Islam are all positively associated with political participation. Our finding for mosque involvement mirror those of Jamal’s New York City study, and are part of a larger trend suggesting the importance of religiosity to Muslim political participation. Muslims who are very involved in their mosque are about 36.4% more likely to participate in all four acts compared to those who are not at all involved. With respect to Muslim commonality, we find those who think Muslims have a great deal in common with each other to be 51.5% more likely to participate in all four acts, a finding similar to Latino participation and group identity by Sanchez (2006). Moreover, those who know and practice Islam are substantially more likely to participate in American politics – by 65.3% – in contrast to Muslims who do not practice *Sadakab* or know the months of the Islamic calendar. However, not all of our religiosity variables have a positive relationship with political participation. Interestingly, religious guidance, which had positive and significant effect on believing Islam to be compatible with participation in the United States, has a negative and significant effect on actual political participation in the United States. What explains such a discrepancy? A more thorough review of Islam suggests this apparent inconsistency is actually consistent with the beliefs and practices of some very devout Muslims. As suggested by March and Abdul Rauf, the teachings of Islam and the prophet Mohammad instruct Muslims to respect and uphold the customs and laws when they find themselves in non-Muslim societies.

Regarding the inconsistency between the religious guidance findings in tables 1 and 2, March’s work is quite relevant. He argues that Islamic doctrine can accommodate the liberal democratic doctrine,

⁹ Among U.S. born respondents, 63% had participated in at least one act, while among foreign-born respondents, 61% had participated in at least one act.

and that it is desirable for Muslims to participate in a non-Muslim political system, especially if by political participation Muslims can influence the overall political system and attempt to improve their position (in the same way that any citizen would). March explains that the Islamic attempt to satisfy the 'good' is not incompatible with civic involvement in a liberal democracy: "Although a citizen need not consider political participation as part of her conception of the good in order to be regarded as holding a doctrine of citizenship, she should at least regard it as *permissible* in relation to her conception of the good," (2006). Thus, some devout Muslims may support the ideals of political participation and compatibility even if they themselves are not actively participating.

The findings in table 1 suggest that Muslims who make the Qu'ran and Hadith a very significant part of their daily life, are considerably more likely to support the notion that Islam is compatible with political participation in America. However, this support or respect of the civic culture in America, does not necessarily translate into civic engagement in the Tocquevillian sense of active participation. Instead, such Muslims may be described as having a very personal and devout relationship with Islam, in which their spirituality provides sustenance. Although getting involved in political affairs in the U.S. would not conflict with Islam, political participation would not add to their individual practice of Hadith. Thus they choose to remain as spectators, perhaps even cheering fans (as table 1 implies), but they do not take the field and participate. Further, the positive and significant relationship between religiosity and support for the American political system in table 1 is more symptomatic of political acculturation. In his review of Mexican American acculturation, Lamare concludes that "acceptance of the United States political institutions, extant patterns of authority, political participation and political freedoms signals political acculturation," (1982).

[Table 2 about here]

What's interesting is that only the religious guidance variable is negative. Looking at the other three religiosity variables, we can still conclude that religiosity among Muslims leads to greater political participation in America. Especially in light of the findings in table 1, the data strongly suggest that factors such as Muslim community identity, mosque involvement, and knowledge/practice of Islam

result in greater political incorporation and participation by Muslim Americans. From the perspective of Huntington or Lewis, the negative findings for religious guidance in table 2 affirm the clash of civilizations thesis. However, in light of the results in table 1, whereby the most religiously devout Muslims are found to be the strongest supporters of compatibility between Islam and the West, it is safe to reject the culture clash argument among the American Muslim population.

As we did with model 1, we can assess the combined influence of the religiosity variables by using post-estimation analysis techniques. Holding all other values constant, we set vary the values of Muslim commonality, mosque involvement, and follow Islam to determine the pooled effect of religiosity on political participation. In figure 2 we display estimates for the total number of political acts, based on degree of religiosity. Muslims with a very high degree of religiosity would be expected to engage in two acts – a rate of participation that steadily declines as religiosity declines. Using an eight-item index of participation (twice as many as here), Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995: 232) report that the mean number of political acts for White Americans is 2.2, about the same level of political engagement as the most religious Muslim American in our study. Further, we estimate the probability that a Muslim American will participate in either zero acts or two or more (see figure 2). This allows us to assess the impact of religiosity on political isolation versus activism. Consistent with figure 1, the pattern in figure 2 clearly shows the mobilizing effect of religiosity on Muslim American political participation. Among those with a very high degree of religiosity, there is a 57% likelihood of participating in two or more acts, and just a 14% likelihood of participating in zero acts. When the religiosity scale is set to its lowest value, there is a 62% likelihood of participating in zero acts, and just an 8% likelihood of two or more acts.

[Figures 2 and 3 about here]

Next, looking at the immigrant-based variables, we find additional support for the immigrant incorporation hypothesis. As compared to foreign-born non-citizens, foreign-born naturalized citizens are significantly more likely to engage in political participation in the United States. Further, second and third generation U.S. born Muslims are even more likely to participate, providing robust support for the

generational assimilation theory¹⁰. Returning to Dahl's (1962) analysis of Italian and Irish immigrant groups, we find considerable consistency for Muslim Americans. Just as Dahl found political incorporation and participation to increase for second and third generation European immigrants, our data affirm the same pattern of incorporation among the American Muslim community. Even as second and third generation Muslims continue to practice their religion and observe Islamic customs, they are actively incorporating into the U.S. political system, measured by multiple acts of political participation. Holding all other values constant, second generation Muslims are 106% more likely (i.e. twice as likely) to participate, and third generation respondents are 55% more likely to participate in American politics.

A second interesting discrepancy between tables 1 and 2 relates to perceptions of discrimination. In table 1 we found that perceptions of discrimination lead to lower rates of support for the compatibility thesis. However, in table 2 perceptions of discrimination have no statistically significant impact on participation (although the coefficient is positive). Thus, while a respondent might see airport security measures as anti-Muslim and be less likely to believe that American politics is compatible with Islam (our findings in table 1), their experiences or observations of discrimination might lead them to get involved in various forms of political participation, such as writing a letter to a public official complaining about airport security measures, or attended a rally or protest. The potential mobilizing source of perceived discrimination is consistent with findings for African Americans (Verba and Nie 1972; Chong and Rogers 2005) and for Latinos (Barreto and Woods 2005; Sanchez 2006). However, this may be a delicate balance. If Muslims continually perceive policies within the United States as being anti-Muslim, they may choose to withdraw from the political system, a finding that has also been substantiated with respect to African Americans and Latinos.

With regard to demographic and control variables, household income has a positive and significant effect on participation as we would expect (age and education is positive, but not statistically

¹⁰ The findings for immigrant generation are consistent with Jamal (2005) although she included only a dummy variable for foreign born, which she found to be negative. Here, we have greatly expanded the variable to include four immigrant groups: foreign non-citizen; foreign-citizen, U.S. born second, U.S. born third generation, a mode of analysis more consistent with Latino and Asian politics research on generational effects.

significant). Not surprising, interest in politics, measured by how closely respondents followed news about the elections, resulted in a greater likelihood of participating in politics. As compared to Arabs (the omitted comparison category) Black and Asian Muslims were statistically less likely to participate. As the largest population of the Muslim American community, Arab Americans may be the focus of more civic engagement and mobilization drives, and therefore more likely to participate than other Muslims.

Conclusion

This article is the first to systematically test the relationship between Islam and the West, using individual level public opinion data. In contrast to previous scholarship which has debated the degree of conflict between Islam and democracy through meta-historical analysis, case study, or through theoretical claims, this study offered an empirical test of the relationship between Islamic and democratic values. Specifically, we examined the political attitudes and behavior of Muslim Americans towards political participation in the United States. Contrary to the expectations of some leading scholars, we found that religiosity is positively associated with support for, and active participation in the American political system. Data analysis clearly demonstrate that Muslims with a high degree of *tadayyun*, or religiosity, are significantly more likely to believe Islamic teachings are compatible with political participation in America, and further, they are significantly more likely to report engaging in multiple acts of political participation in America. In contrast, Muslims with the lowest measure of religiosity were much more isolated from the American political system. Thus, we can conclude that Islam, as a religion and as a culture, is not in conflict with the core values of American participatory democracy. Rather, the most devout and serious followers of Islam believe it is congruent with American political participation.

Further, we have argued and demonstrated with data that Muslims follow a pattern of political incorporation similar to other immigrant-based minority groups. With each successive generation in the United States, Muslim Americans exhibit closer ties to the American political system by their endorsement of the democratic process. Beginning with foreign-born citizens, as Muslims gain admittance into the political apparatus of the United States, they appear to embrace democratic values, a

trend that continues for second and third generation Muslims in America. To the extent that Muslims are politically and socially isolated in America, our findings show that perceptions of discrimination may be in part to blame. Respondents who perceive airport security measures to be targeted against Muslims are considerably less likely to think Islam is compatible with participation in America. Further, we should view the Muslim community and the mosque as two sources of political incorporation. Muslims who think they have very little in common with other Muslims, and not well integrated into the local or national Muslim community are consistently more skeptical about political participation. Similarly, those who are not at all involved in their mosque are among the least likely to participate.

As the Muslim American population continues to grow, many will question the degree to which Muslims are incorporated into the social and political structures in the U.S. Especially as the global war on terrorism expands, voices here in America will remain doubtful about the ability of persons of Muslims faith to support American values. Our findings suggest that Islam is a source of integration into American political participation. However, very little empirical evidence exists on the Muslim American community. Instead of relying on conjecture, anecdote and straw men, scholars, and more so, pundits, would be well served to develop more accurate and well rounded datasets on the Muslim American population.

Table 1:
Is Islam compatible with participation in American democracy?
Probit regression results and changes in predicted probability

Independent vars	Coef.	S.E.		Chg Prob.
Muslim commonality	0.327	(0.087)	***	29.9%
Mosque: very active	0.336	(0.129)	**	12.6%
Mosque: not active	0.307	(0.183)	†	11.6%
Religious Guidance	0.208	(0.090)	*	20.5%
Follow Islam	0.167	(0.093)	†	11.5%
Foreign citizen	0.301	(0.151)	*	11.0%
Second generation	-0.107	(0.193)		-3.8%
Third generation	0.578	(0.226)	**	22.2%
English at home	0.178	(0.131)		6.5%
Airport discrimination	-0.131	(0.068)	*	-9.8%
Black	-0.428	(0.207)	*	-14.2%
Asian	0.089	(0.136)		3.3%
Secular Muslim	-0.031	(0.156)		-1.1%
Shi'a	-0.001	(0.209)		0.0%
Female	-0.427	(0.115)	***	-14.9%
Age	-0.122	(0.085)		-12.6%
Income	0.032	(0.036)		5.9%
College	0.176	(0.119)		6.3%
News	0.173	(0.063)	**	17.9%
Washington	0.030	(0.209)		1.1%
California	0.098	(0.211)		3.6%
Carolina	0.212	(0.211)		7.9%
Length	0.111	(0.060)	†	16.4%
Constant	-3.298	(0.469)	***	
N	1,285			
Chi ²	129.71			
% pred correctly	70%			
Prop reduction error	13.4%			

† p < .100 * p < .050 ** p < .010 *** p < .001

Dependent variable: agree with the statement, “Islamic teachings are compatible with participation in the American political system”

Table 2:
Religiosity and Muslim American Political Participation
Poisson regression results and changes in predicted probability

Independent vars	Coef.	S.E.		Ch Prob.
Muslim commonality	0.164	(0.056)	**	51.5%
Mosque: very active	0.285	(0.079)	***	36.4%
Mosque: not active	0.017	(0.119)		2.1%
Religious Guidance	-0.160	(0.055)	**	-65.0%
Follow Islam	0.321	(0.062)	***	65.3%
Foreign citizen	0.260	(0.106)	*	31.5%
Second generation	0.524	(0.123)	***	73.5%
Third generation	0.376	(0.151)	*	51.6%
English at home	-0.064	(0.082)		-7.5%
Airport discrimination	0.071	(0.047)		16.2%
Black	-0.242	(0.134)	†	-26.2%
Asian	-0.239	(0.090)	**	-26.8%
Secular Muslim	0.225	(0.092)	*	28.7%
Shi'a	0.002	(0.121)		0.2%
Female	0.053	(0.071)		6.3%
Age	0.056	(0.053)		20.6%
Income	0.035	(0.021)	†	20.9%
College	0.099	(0.072)		11.6%
News	0.252	(0.042)	***	81.9%
Washington	0.019	(0.121)		2.2%
California	-0.091	(0.121)		-10.5%
Carolina	-0.310	(0.132)	*	-34.1%
Length	0.046	(0.037)		22.4%
Constant	-1.773	(0.300)	***	
N	1,284			
Chi ²	245.28			
Max likelihood R ²	.324			
Cragg and Uhler R ²	.334			

† p < .100 * p < .050 ** p < .010 *** p < .001

Dependent variable is an event count of number of acts of political participation:
 “During 2006, did you participate in any of these activities: (1) community meeting; (2) rally or protest;
 (3) write letter to public official; (4) donation to political candidate/campaign”

Figure 1

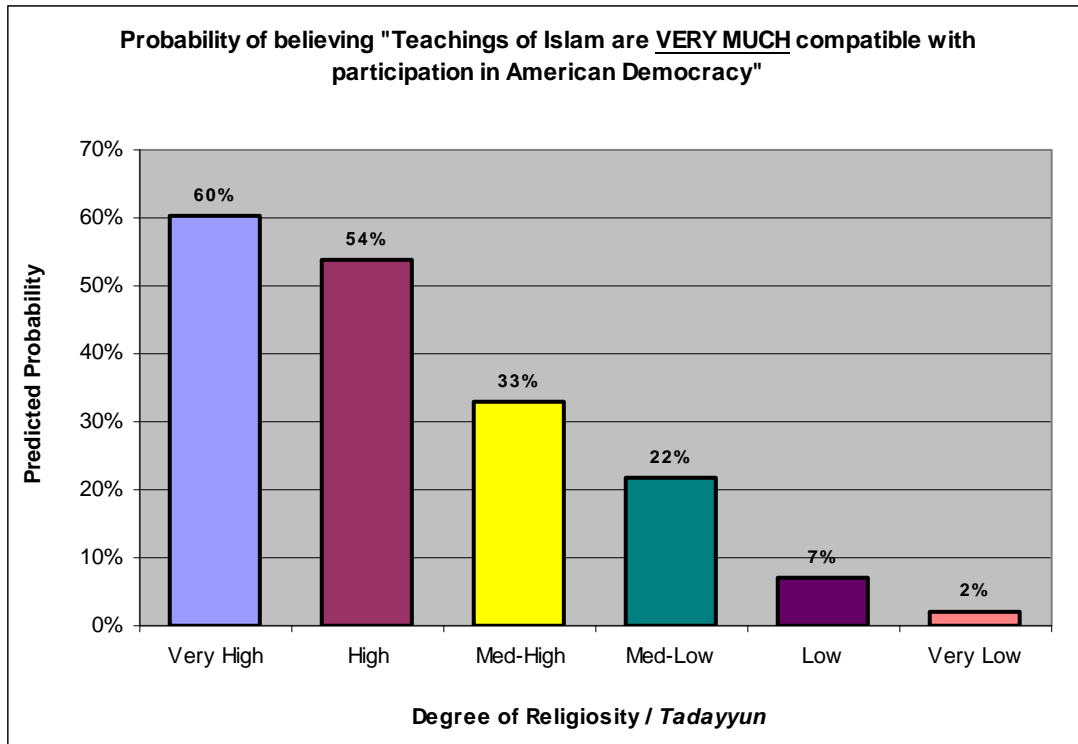


Figure 2

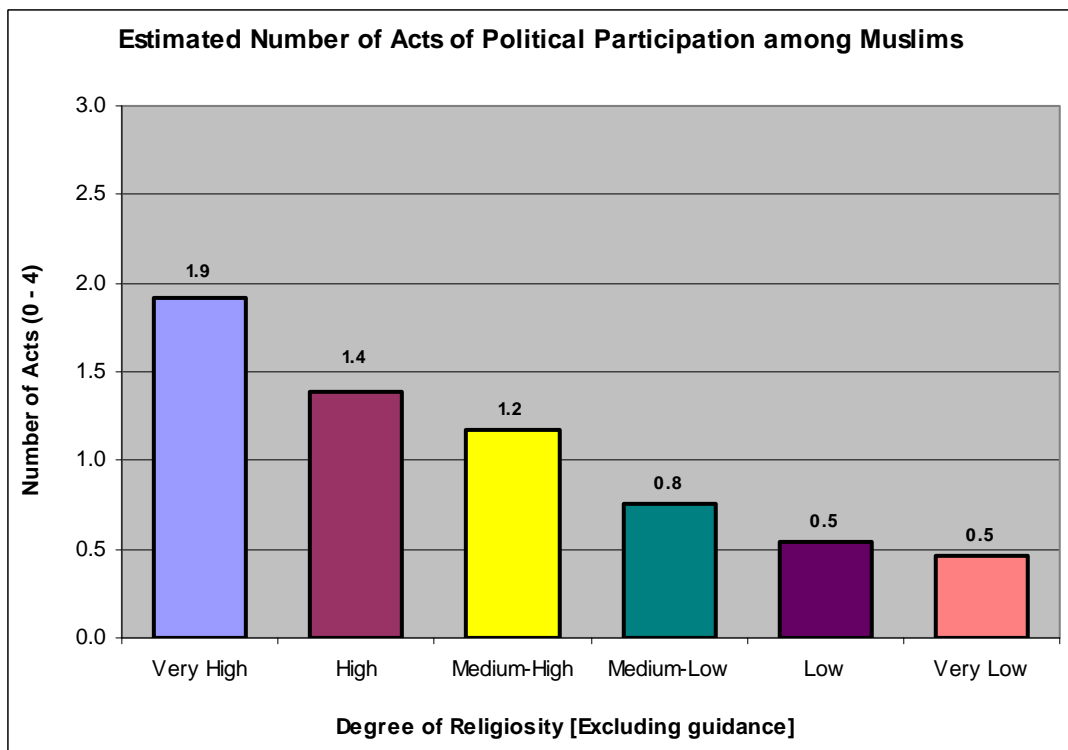
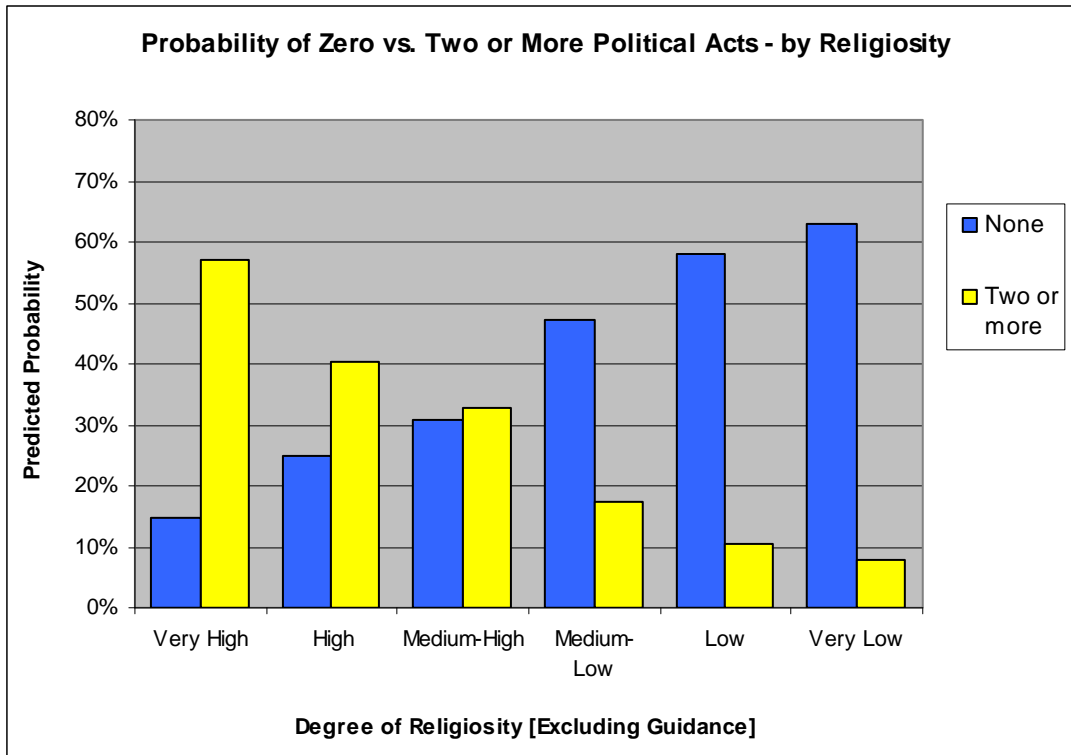


Figure 3



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Appendix:

Table 1: Construction of independent variables in analysis

Muslim commonality	1=nothing; 2=only a little; 3=a fair amount; 4=a great deal
Mosque: very active	dummy variable, 1=very involved in mosque activities
Mosque: not active	dummy variable, 1=not at all involved in mosque activities
Mosque involvement*	1=not at all involved; 2=not too involved; 3=somewhat involved; 4=very involved
Religious guidance	1=not at all; 2=only a little; 3=somewhat; 4=very much (follow Qu'ran/Hadith in daily life)
Follow Islam	0=not at all; 1= one of two; 2= two of two (based on combination of two questions, knowledge of the months of the Islamic calendar, yes/no; and did you give Sadakah to a Muslim individual/organization, yes/no)
Airport discrimination	0=security measures target all Americans equally; 1=targeted at Muslims
Black	dummy variable, 1=Black
Asian	dummy variable, 1=Asian
Sunni	dummy variable, 1=Sunni
Foreign citizen	dummy variable, 1=Foreign born, naturalized citizen
Second generation	dummy variable, 1=Second generation (born in US with parents foreign born)
Third generation	dummy variable, 1=Third generation (born in US with parents also US born)
English at home	dummy variable, 1=speak mostly English at home
Female	dummy variable, 1=Female
Age	1=18 to 29; 2=30 to 44; 3=45 to 65; 4=over 65
Income	1=less than \$20K; 2=\$20-39K; 3=\$40-59K; 4=\$60-79K; 5=\$80-100K; 6=Over \$100K
College degree	dummy variable, 1=college degree or more
Follow political news	1=not at all; 2=not too closely; 3=somewhat closely; 4=very closely (about 2006 election)
Years in community	1=less than 5 years; 2=5 to 10; 3=11 to 20; 4=20 to 40; 5=more than 40 years

* Mosque involvement is used in model 2, political participation only

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Muslim American Survey

	Our Study	Pew Study
U.S. Born	38%	35%
Foreign Born	62%	65%
Non-citizen	28%	23%
Arab	51%	40%
Asian	22%	20%
Black	11%	26%
White	8%	11%
Sunni	61%	50%
Shi'a	18%	16%
N	1,410	1,050