The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies
University of California, San Diego

CCIS

Living Islam in Non-Muslim Spaces: How Religiosity of Muslim Immigrant Women Affect Their Cultural and Civic Integration in Western Host Societies

Saba Senses Ozyurt
University of California, Irvine

Working Paper 179
June 2009

Abstract

Research on Muslim immigrants in Europe show that they often remain separated and marginalized within their respective societies. Empirical research further indicates that Muslim immigrant women in Europe perform more poorly than Muslim immigrant men and Christian immigrant women on key indicators of integration. In this paper I explore whether identifying as 'Muslim' and/or having strong religious beliefs and practices slows down the cultural and civic/political integration processes for Muslim immigrant women in the United States. The findings indicate that high levels of religiosity may indeed slow down the cultural integration of Muslim women in the U.S., however in terms of their political and civic integration, religiosity can be a facilitating factor.

Correspondence should be directed to Saba Senses Ozyurt at sozyurt@uci.edu.

Introduction

The primary goal of this paper is to determine the effect of religiosity on the cultural/psychological and political/civic integration of Muslim immigrant women in the United States. I use the term 'religiosity' to indicate the strength of attachment to religious identity, belief and practices. Cultural and psychological integration measures the degree to which an individual immigrant interacts with the larger society, accommodates the norms, rules and practices of her own culture with the culture of the host society, and negotiates her multiple identities without feeling psychological conflict or alienation. Political and civic integration deals with the level of participation of immigrants into the civic and political institutions and activities of the host society. Specifically I ask, does adhering to Islamic principles and identifying primarily as Muslim prevent these women from identifying as American, from interacting with the non-Muslim community or from participating to the social, cultural and the political institutions of the United States? Even though a limited number of research on the political and civic participation of Muslim immigrants in the United States exist (Jamal 2005a, 2005b; Read, 2007), no study to date has engaged in an empirical assessment of the relationship between religiosity of Muslim immigrants and their cultural and identificational integration in the United States, making this research a significant theoretical contribution to the literature. Furthermore, by focusing on two significant dimensions of immigrant integration, namely the cultural and political integration domains, this research provides a comprehensive assessment of the complex ways in

which religion and religious affiliations of immigrants can impact integration outcomes in different domains.

The evidence for this research is collected from mosques. Thus the unit of analysis of this project is mosque-going Muslim women. It is important to point out that there is great variation among immigrant Muslim women in the United States in terms of their religiosity levels, the meaning they attribute to Islam and the ways in which they utilize Islamic resources in their daily lives. Thus, the conclusions of this research pertain to this specific "mosqued" group of women and may not necessarily reflect how religion impacts the integration of more secular, non-practicing immigrant women from Muslim majority countries. Given the central question examined in this project, it is important that the religiously observant Muslim women are included in the sample to assess whether and how religiosity influences cultural and civic integration of immigrant Muslim women. That said, the descriptive analysis of the samples studied in this research indicate that there is considerable variation between the research participants in terms of religious participation and religious identifications that the results of this research are representative of the attitudes and behaviors of Muslim women of various religiosity levels. To be exact, approximately 45 percent of women who were sampled for this study said they don't attend mosque prayers and/or don't participate in mosque activities on a regular basis. Approximately 45 percent of the respondents reported not wearing a hijab (Muslim women's headscarf) and about 30 percent chose ethnic or American identity as their primary identity over their religious identity.

This research engages a growing literature on Muslim immigrants in Europe. Being one of the major migrant populations, Muslim immigrants and their integration

process have long been in the research agenda of academics and government agencies in Europe. The findings of these studies refer to the problems Muslim immigrants face within their host societies and their social and cultural segregation from the rest of the society. Comparing Muslim and Christian immigrants and their integration patterns in Germany, Constant et al. (2006) reports that Muslims are less likely to integrate and more often remain separated and marginalized within the German society. Similarly Bisin et al (2007) documents how Muslims in Britain integrate more slowly than non-Muslims, and follow a different pattern of integration than other ethnic and religious minorities. Whereas higher SES levels decrease the religious affiliation of most other religious groups, Bisin et al found that for Muslims in Britain higher SES levels were linked to higher religious identification. A report published in 2003 by the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office and the Institute for Social Research (see Keuzenkamp and Merens, 2006) revealed that Muslim immigrant women perform more poorly on key indicators of integration such as labor participation, educational attainment, gender roles and leisure activities compared to Muslim men and Christian immigrant women.

In comparison to the vast literature on Muslims in Europe, we know relatively little about the Muslim community and their religious affiliations, cultural adaptation and political participation patterns in the United States. This is largely due to the fact that Muslim immigrants have been, by and large, overlooked by U.S. researchers for three main reasons: First, the U.S. census data does not provide information on the basis of religion. Thus, identifying Muslim immigrants –even knowing their exact numbers- have been a major challenge. Second, unlike Europe where studies on immigration are coupled with studies of culture and religion, immigration research in the United States has been

tightly connected with race and ethnicity questions. Aristide R. Zolberg and Long Litt Woon (1999) have pointed out that debates surrounding immigration in the United States in the 1990s have focused largely on the role of language and race as a boundary marker, whereas debates surrounding incorporation of immigrants in Europe focused on religion. Because Muslims are not a uniform racial or ethnic group (and most Muslims identify as white in the race question[1]), they did not draw the attention of immigration researchers in the United States. Finally, the relatively small size of Muslims has resulted in their being overlooked by American researchers. Although their exact number is unknown, researchers has estimated that there are about 4-5 million Muslims in the United States, which constitute roughly 1.5 percent of the overall U.S. population.

The events of September 11, 2001 changed researchers' indifferent attitudes towards this group and there has been a plethora of publications on American Muslims since then. Most of this work, however, remains to be descriptive rather than empirical. A handful of empirical work that primarily focused on the political and civic integration of Muslims in the United States (Jamal, 2005; Read, 2007) provided contradictory findings on the effects of mosque participation on Muslim women's civic participation. Whereas Amaney Jamal's work (2005a) indicated that Muslim Arab women in the Detroit area had high mosque participation rates and high political activism, Jennan Ghazal-Read's (2007) analysis of a nationally representative data on Arab Americans revealed a negative relationship between mosque participation and political activism. Although limited in its scope geographically, this research adds to this growing literature and contributes to our

[1] The Census Bureau defines "white" race as "a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa." This distinction dates back to court decisions from 1913 to 1917 on the "whiteness" of Syrian and Palestinian immigrants. See Kayyali, 2006.

understanding of how Islam and Islamic institutions impact Muslim immigrant women's cultural and political activities in the United States.

Religion and Integration of Immigrants

Evidence suggests that immigrants become more religious in their new country than they were back home (Williams, 1996). The disorientation and stress caused by migration process can be a theologizing experience (Smith, 1978). It was Will Herberg (1960) who first called attention to the role of religion in the process of assimilation in his seminal work *Protestant, Catholic and Jew*. As one of the primary social identities, he argued religion has the potential of replacing ethnic and national allegiances and forging social solidarities. Early immigrants at the turn of the century hold fast to their parent's faith even as they forgot their parent's language. Speaking Yiddish marked one as un-American but observing the Passover did not (Prothero, 2006). It was through his religion that the immigrants crafted an American identity (Herberg, ibid).

Various explanations have been provided regarding why religious identities and practices become more salient post-migration and how the religious affiliations of immigrant communities impact their integration. Religious rituals may represent temporal continuity between life in home country and life in host country, thus making it easier to find commonalities between the old and the new. Prayers, ceremonies and rituals recur as they have always done and provide one with a familiar cyclical rhythm (Tiilikainen, 2003). In addition to meeting spiritual needs, religious communities can provide material, psychological and social benefits for newcomers, help them find jobs and housing. Religious affiliation can help immigrants overcome social isolation. As immigrants

define themselves in religious terms, their ethnic, national and racial differences become less problematic and diverse communities are brought together through shared worship (Kwon, 2000; Sullivan, 2000; Peek, 2005). On the other hand, religious identities can also serve as group markers, promoting social distinctiveness and individual self-awareness (Williams, 1988). From the perspective of the host state, religion can serve as a mediating factor between the immigrant groups and the state institutions. Religious identification in a multi-ethnic society might be a key factor that enables newcomers to embrace the host country, because religion is not strongly bound to a particular place or country of origin (Elkholy, 1966, Smith, 1978; Kurien 2001, Constant, Gataullina and Zimmerman, 2006). Furthermore, religious institutions can be important socialization venues where migrants learn civic and social skills to survive in the new environment, as well as preserve their own cultural and religious practices and values. According to Ebaugh and Chaftez, "religious institutions are the physical and social spaces where the changes required by the new social milieu and the continuities desired by immigrant members can be achieved" (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 1999). Others have argued that involvement in religious organizations can lead to greater participation in other types of community organizations (Ramakrishnan and Viramontes. 2006, p.26) and increase involvement in social movements (Sherkat, 2005).

Contrary to the evidence we have on the potential positive impact of religious identification, there are also studies that document the potential negative consequences of heightened religiosity and religious identification on the integration and adaptation processes of immigrants. In their research on minority ethnic groups and their cultural adaptation to the German society, Constant et al (2006) reported that non-religious

individuals performed better on integration domains than religious individuals because religious identification prevented or slowed down the integration process by raising consciousness about ethnic identity. Research also indicates that high level religiosity might be particularly limiting for immigrant women. Ramakrishnan and Viramontes (ibid) argued that religious beliefs regarding gender roles might actually discourage women from participating in activities outside of home. For example, the Catholic faith's teachings about women's primary role as moms and caregivers might prevent them from being active in the public sphere and in non-family oriented tasks and activities. Similarly Jennan Ghazal-Read (2004) found that strong religious identification among both Muslim and Christian Arab American women had a restrictive impact on their employment. Respondents who adhered to Koranic or biblical scriptures and received consistent religious socialization over the life course were more likely to remain out of the labor force than those who did not.

Data and Method

The data for this research is based on two original surveys that were collected in various mosques in Southern California: The *Muslim Immigrant Women Cultural Integration Survey* (Muslim Cultural Integration Survey or MCIS hereafter), which I have developed to evaluate the religious, cultural, identificational and psychological attitudes, behaviors and perceptions of Muslim immigrant women living in non-Muslim western societies. I have administered this survey at three Islamic Centers (IC) in Southern California between 2006 and 2007; the IC of Los Angeles, the IC of San Diego and the IC of Irvine. These three ICs were chosen due to their multi-ethnic composition, high participation rates and the multitude of religious, social and political activities they offer

to their congregation. A total of 165 female congregants were surveyed. The second original dataset that I analyze in this paper is the *Muslim-American Political Integration Survey* (Muslim Political Integration Survey or MPIS hereafter), which measures the civic and political integration of Muslim immigrants. This survey was developed in collaboration with other researchers and administrated at various mosques across United States[2]. To be consistent with the MCIS survey design in terms of location and gender, this paper will only analyze the responses of women congregants from four Southern California mosques[3], which brings down the N to 120.

Table 1 compares the demographic characteristics of the women participating in the Muslim Cultural Integration Survey (MCIS) and the Muslim Political Integration Survey (MPIS). As can be seen from this table, the two samples are quite similar in terms of their background characteristics, such as age, education levels and generational composition. A slightly higher percentage of women in the MPIS study reported wearing hijab on a regular basis, and identifying primarily as Muslim compared to the women in the MCIS sample. The demographics of the Muslim women sampled in the MCIS and MPIS studies also match closely to women surveyed in a national study, the 2007 Pew Study of Muslim Americans.

[2] This survey was originally administered in the following six cities during the Eid services in 2006 and 2007: Seattle, WA, Dearborn, MI, San Diego, CA, Irvine, CA, Riverside, CA, and Raleigh-Durham, NC. Additional data was collected by the author in Los Angeles, CA in 2008. In developing and administering this survey I have collaborated with Matt Barreto and Karam Dana at the University of Washington, Dino Bonzonelos at the University of California, Riverside, Mohamad Ozeir at Wayne State University and Natalie Mousoka at Duke University.

[3] In Southern California the following Islamic Centers (IC) were surveyed for this project: IC of San Diego, IC of Irvine, IC of Los Angeles, and IC of Riverside.

Table 1. ***Sample Characteristics*** (***in percentages***)

	Cultural Integration Survey (N:165)	***Political Integration Survey (N: 120)***	***Pew Study, 2007 (N: 504)***
Age			
<30	37	47	32
30-45	40	43	38
45 and above	23	10	30
Generation			
First	69	59	65
Second	31	26	35
Third	----	15	----
Education			
High school or <	23	20	48
(Some) College	55	60	40
Master or >	17	20	12
Income			
< 60K	40	59	47
60K-100K	24	26	20
100K >	36	15	10
Hijab			
No	47	40	47
Yes	52	60	53
Citizenship			
No	26	15	36
Yes	74	85	59
Primary ID			
Muslim	65	71	50
Ethnic	15	19	----
American	15	9	23
Mosque Attendance			
Weekly	56	58	40

Assessing Group Differences:

Before moving on to multivariate analysis, let's look at how various groups within the two samples answered some key questions in the surveys, and how they compare to one another in their religiosity and integration patterns. Table 2 presents the frequency distributions and group differences for hijabi and non-hijabi Muslim women,

and for first and second-generation Muslim women. Hijab (Muslim women's headscarf) has become one of the most talked about aspects of Islam. For the western public, the hijab symbolizes Muslim women's attachment to a "backward, primitive and sexist culture that represses women" (Mendel, 1989) and relegates them to the confinement of the private domain. From the perspective of the host society, hijab also symbolizes Muslim immigrant women's unwillingness or inability to assimilate, participate and belong to the western culture. Muslim women, on the other hand, perceive hijab as an identifier in a non-Muslim space where social interactions are less familiar. It not only signals others her identity as a Muslim, it also gives cues as to how to engage her, what is permissible and what is not during social interactions. As one of my interviewees put it, "as a Muslim woman I am responsible for my actions. I represent not only myself but all Muslim women when I wear the hijab". The Islamic feminism literature informs us that many Muslim women perceive the hijab as a symbol of freedom, dignity and power against discrimination, colonialism and oppression. Hijab has also been strategically utilized as a tool to increase Muslim women's social mobility and participation[4]. Twenty years ago anthropologist Hanna Papanek, who studied Muslim women in Pakistan, pointed out how Muslim women saw the hijab and similar coverings as a liberal invention because they enabled women to move into the public space without feeling violated (Papanek cited in Abu-Lughod, 2002). Although hijab carries so many different connotations for so many different people and has become a benchmark in evaluating Muslim women's position, no empirical study, to my knowledge, has examined its impact to verify or disconfirm the existing truth claims on hijab.

[4] See the writings of Hanna Papanek, Margot Badran, Fatima Mernissi, Valentine Moghadham, and Lila Abu-Lughad,

Table 2. Frequency distributions and group differences (in percentages)

	Hijabi	*Non-hijabi*	*1st generation*	*2nd generation*
Religiosity				
High	98	43***	73	61
Medium	2	37	17	30
Low	0	20	10	9
Religious practices				
Involved in mosque activities++	85	60*	65	87**
Follow Quran and hadith++	78	28*	57	58
Pray regularly	88	32***	67	36*
Wear the hijab	100	0***	52	65
Primary Identification++				
Muslim	82	54**	63	88**
Ethnic	10	36**	29	8**
American	8	10**	8	4**
Relation w/ other Muslims				
Close friends mostly Muslim++	46	25*	32	52
Feel most comfortable among Muslims	41	9***	48	50
Children must marry Muslims	80	49**	70	55
Relation w/ the American society				
Doesn't socialize with non-Muslims	48	37	44	35*
Opinions differ from non-Muslims	18	18	19	18
Doesn't fit in the American society	30	18	28	17
Opinions on Islam in the West				
Islam compatible w/ US pol. system++	57	76	61	56
Islam can coexist w/ Western culture	39	44	38	48
Political Engagement++				
Community Meetings	47	38	47	48
Protests and Rallies	62	30**	32	76**
Campaign Donations	10	30*	17	19
Vote in 2006 elections	43	46	35	57

++ *Questions taken from the Muslim Political Integration Survey*
Group difference significances are determined by T-Test.
***p<0.01 **p<0.05 *p<0.1 level

The responses of hijabi versus non-hijabi women to the survey questions show that hijab is indeed a good indicator of religiosity and attachment to Islamic principles and way of life. Hijabi women identified as 'Muslim' in higher percentages than did non-hijabi

women. They also reported more interaction with and attachment to their in-group members. In terms of integration outcomes, however, there were no major differences between hijabi versus non-hijabi women. For example, hijab did not affect how the respondents perceive or interact with the larger American society, neither did it affect women's views about Islam's compatibility with the Western culture. Hijabi women were as active as their non-hijabi counterparts in almost all the political domains that I looked at, and they were more active in attending protests and rallies. Although preliminary in its nature, this crosstabs analysis indicate that the negative emphasis given to hijab in the Western public discourse might be an inaccurate representation of it and the women who chose to wear it.

A comparison between the first and second-generation Muslim women yielded some interesting results as well. First of all, even though there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups in terms of their religiosity levels, there were significant qualitative differences between how each group interpreted and practiced Islam. The second-generation women are more involved in mosque activities and identify mosque involvement as their primary mode of religious practice. In contrast, for first generation Muslim women in this study, the main mode of religious involvement entails praying. Even though both of these items show one's propensity towards religiosity, the two items get at qualitatively different kinds of religious activities. Being involved in mosque activities is, what we might call, a "public domain" religious activity, whereas the act of praying, for Muslim women in particular, is by and large delegated to the

"private domain"[5]. One significant aspect of this finding is that it points to the changing nature of Islam and Islamic practices in the US as the new generation of Muslim women participates in mosques and public religious activities voluntarily and in higher numbers than did their predecessors. The second-generation Muslim women also choose the category 'Muslim' as their primary identification, and wear the hijab in higher rates than do their first generation counterparts. These finding confirm existing literature on Muslim youth's increasing identification with Islam in the post 9/11 era (See for example, Karakasoglu, 2003; Phalet, 2005; Naber, 2006).

Operationalization of Variables

Before moving on to the multivariate analysis of the data, I want to discuss how the variables included in the models are conceptualized and operationalized. The dependent variables in this study are the cultural/psychological and political/civic integration outcomes of the subjects. To measure these concepts, I have created two integration scales. The cultural/psychological integration scale is derived using the questions in the Muslim Cultural Integration Survey (MCIS). It measures the perceptions of the respondents towards the host society and its culture by combining their responses to the following seven questions (all responses are on a 5 point likert scale ranging from highly disagree to highly agree): 1) Most of my closest friends are Muslim, 2) I socialize with non-Muslims on a regular basis 3) I feel most comfortable among members of my own religious group, 4) I would like my children to marry other Muslims, 5) I feel at home in the US, 6) My opinions on important issues differ from the non-Muslim

[5] Despite the fact that Prophet Muhammed encouraged men to allow their wives to go to mosque for Friday prayers, it is not incumbent upon women to pray in the mosque. Actually there are hadiths that suggest a woman who prays at home receives twice as much good deeds than if she were to pray in a mosque.

American population and 7) I feel like an outsider in non-Muslim settings. These particular questions were included in the index because they reflect respondents' cultural and psychological attitudes towards the host society and towards the Muslim community, thus revealing how similar or different they feel in relation to either group and how well they balance their social interactions in a multi-cultural environment. The cultural/psychological integration index has a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha: 0.732), which indicates that all the items included in this index actually measure the same construct (in this case cultural and psychological dimensions of integration). The cultural/psychological integration scale has a mean score of 20.02 (SD: 4.49). Possible scores for this scale range from 7 to 35, lower scores indicating lower integration and higher scores indicating higher integration on this domain. The scale was then recoded into an ordinal scale; scores 26 and above were recoded as 'high integration', 16-25 as "medium integration" and scores lower than 16 were recoded as "low integration". The cut-off points for the recoding was determined by equally dividing the range of possible scores. 48 percent of the sample fell in the "low cultural integration" category, 36 percent to the "middle cultural integration" category, and 16 percent to "high cultural integration" category.

The political/civic integration scale is derived from the Muslim Political Integration Survey. It is based on six items that measure the civic and political activities of respondents[6]: 1) Do you have a US citizenship, 2) Do you attend community meetings, 3) Do you attend rallies and protests, 4) Do you write letters to public officials, 5) Do you make donations to political candidates and 6) Have you voted in the 2006 elections. The

[6] The items included in the political integration index are based on what Verba et. al. (1995) have indicated to be measures of political participation.

index ranges from 0 to 6, the latter indicating higher political/civic engagement. The mean is 2.29 (SD: 1.79). The index was then recoded as low integration (scores 0, 1 and 2), medium integration (scores 3 and 4), and high integration (scores 5 and 6). 49 percent of the Muslim women sampled in the MPIS survey fell in the "low", 32 percent to "medium" and 19 percent to "high" political/civic integration categories.

The independent variable is the 'religiosity' of respondents. I have constructed a religiosity index for each dataset. The Cultural Integration Survey uses a four-item scale that gauges the frequency of religious participation and the importance of Islamic scriptures. Specifically the index includes the following questions: 1) How frequently do you attend mosque, 2) How frequently do you pray, 3) How important is the teachings of the mosque in your life 4) How important is Islam in your life. The responses to these items are based on a four point Likert scale, and the index ranges from 4 to 16 with a mean of 13.66 (SD: 3.12). The internal validity of this religiosity index is quite high, indicating that the items are all good representation of the religiosity construct being created (Chroanbach's alpha: 0.888). For the Political Integration Survey, I combined four items to construct the religiosity index variable: 1) How frequently do you attend mosque for prayer, 2) How much do you follow the Qu'ran and hadiths in your daily life 3) Do you give sadakah to individuals or organizations, and 4) Excluding prayers, are you involved in mosque activities. The responses to the first two questions were based on a four-scale response ranging from "never" to "regularly". These two items were recoded so higher values indicated higher religious participation and higher religious practices. The last two items were originally coded as yes (1) and no (0). To make their effects comparable to that of the first two questions, I recoded them as 1 (indicating no) and 4

(indicating yes). Thus the index score ranges from 4 to 16 and has a mean of 11.84 (SD: 3.46). This religiosity item has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.705.

In addition to the well-established socio-economic and demographic variables such as education, age, income, length of stay, and generation, three variables that measure the subject's religious identification, ethnic identification, and their position on hijab are also included in the analysis. Understanding the respondents' religious and ethnic identifications and position on hijab are of particular interest here. The underlying assumptions behind the academic and public discourses in the West present an inherent dichotomy between having a strong Muslim/Middle Eastern identity and developing an American/European identity. In other words, the possibility of merging these two identities in a syncretic or hybrid manner is put into question as they are considered to be inherently incompatible. During the 2008 presidential election in the United States, the then presidential nominee Barack Hussain Obama's Muslim middle name was used to discredit him as "unpatriotic". The right-wing media expressed concerns about his possible connection to Islam. In France, women's headscarves have become one of the major issues of contention between the Muslim immigrant community and the French state. Even the academic research wittingly or unwittingly makes similar assumptions. One of the findings of the 2007 Pew Study on American Muslims was that only 47 percent of Muslims in the US identify primarily as Muslim, compared to 81 percent of Muslims in Britain and 66 percent of Muslims in Germany. This indicates, the study concluded, Muslims in the United States are better integrated into the mainstream American society than their counterparts in Europe. As a response to these findings some Muslim American organizations, such as CAIR, argued that to assume that identifying as

Muslim is an indication that one is not American or is not part of the mainstream society contradicts the pluralist essence of the American society and values"[7]

In the logistic models, the variables that had more than two categories were recoded into a binary scale to make interpretation of the regression results less complicated. The religious identification variable was recoded as Muslim and other, ethnic identification was recoded as ethnic and other, education was recoded as "college or higher" and other, age was recoded as "30 years or younger" and other, income was recoded as "high income" and other. In the ordinal logit models, category "other" was used as the reference category for these dummy variables. The variables 'generation' and 'wear the hijab' were originally coded as dummy variables. 'Second generation' and 'those who don't wear the hijab' were used as the reference categories in the models.

Multivariate Analysis

To analyze the effects of religiosity on the cultural and political integration of Muslim immigrant women in the United States, I test four ordinal logit regression models. Unlike multiple regression coefficients, which give the direction and the magnitude of the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable, in ordinal logit models, the value of the estimate doesn't tell us the magnitude of the impact of that parameter. Rather, it is the direction of the estimate that matters; a positive parameter estimate for a covariate means that as the values of the covariate increase, so does the likelihood of higher scores on the ordinal dependent variable. Table 3 summarizes the results of these four models.

[7] www.cairchicago.org/thescoop.php?file=sc_pew.

Model 1 examines the effect of the main independent variable, the religiosity index, on cultural integration. The results indicate that high religiosity levels have a negative effect on the cultural integration of Muslim women sampled in Southern California. This means, respondents who score high on the religiosity index have a lower likelihood of scoring high on the cultural integration index. As interesting as this finding is, it doesn't tell us what it is about religiosity that hinders cultural integration. To get a better understanding, in Model 2, the religiosity index is replaced with the individual items that measure religiosity. These individual items ranged from those that measure public or institutionalized aspects of religiosity, such as attendance to mosque and involvement with mosque activities, to those that gauge more private or subjective (spiritual) aspects of it, such as importance of Islam in one's life. Interestingly, my results showed that it is the public or institutionalized aspects of religiosity, rather than more private or spiritual aspects of it that have a negative effect on respondents' cultural integration outcomes. This conclusion is quite important as it urges us to pay attention to the qualitatively different understandings and practices of religion and religiosity and their impact on migrants' cultural and psychological attitudes.

Table 3. ***Summary of Ordinal Logistic Regression Estimates for Cultural and Civic Integration of Muslim Women in the United States***

	Cultural - Psychological Integration		***Political – Civic Integration***	
	Model 1	***Model 2***	***Model 3***	***Model 4***
Primary id (Muslim)	-.374	-1.057	-1.084	-.635
Primary id (Ethnic)	-826	-345	.066	.523
Education (College or higher)	-.431	-.574	.213	.409
Age (30 or younger)	-2.961**	-1.400**	1.411	2.719
Income (High)	-.549	-.541	-.165	-.024
Length of Stay (> 10 years)	-.188	.185	.474	.096
Generation (First)	-2.938**	-2.724**	-.661*	-1.063*
Hijab	.140	.378	.346	.224
Membership to ethnic organiz.	1.390**	1.478**		
Religiosity Index	-.789***		.301**	
Weekly mosque attendance		-1.788**		
Praying 5 times a day		-2.176**		
Islam important in my life		-2.478		
Follow Quran- hadith				.607
Involved in mosque activities				2.360**
Give sadakah (almsgiving)				.455

***p<0.01 **p<0.05 *p<0.1 level

Model 1 also shows two additional variables having a significant impact on cultural integration outcomes; being first generation, and being 30 years of age or younger, both of which decreased one's likelihood of receiving high scores on the cultural integration scale. The finding on the effect of age -that younger respondents are

less likely have high scores on cultural integration index- was counter-intuitive, because younger participants are more likely to be of second-generation and thus are expected to be better integrated. This contradictory finding might be due to the fact that in the post-9/11 era, the second-generation Muslim youth is more aware of the discrimination against their community and are more vocal about it. Thus, it is highly possible that young Muslim women are over-representing their cultural differences and the cultural conflict they experience to make a political statement. Interestingly, neither having a strong Muslim or ethnic identity, nor wearing hijab had a statistically significant effect on the cultural integration index, putting into question the attention given to them as barriers to integration by government officials and academics.

Even though SES-driven models seem to successfully explain the integration outcomes and participation rates of various immigrant and minority groups in the United States (Verba and Nie, 1972; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; DeSipio 1996; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Haagendoorn, 2003), in the case of Muslim women variables such as education and income didn't have a significant effect on their cultural integration. I attribute this non-finding to the relative homogeneity of the Muslim community in terms of its socio-economic status. This finding is suggestive rather than conclusive due to the relatively small number of my sample and due to the fact that men were left out from the analysis. Also, the data used in this analysis has been collected in Southern California, where SES levels are much more higher and probably even more homogenous compared to the rest of the country. Research carried out in other parts of the United States might give us a better sense of the true relationship between socio-economic determinants and cultural integration of Muslim immigrants. Finally, the

result of my analysis draws attention to the effects of membership to ethnic organizations. Contrary to the assumptions of the assimilation theory, which claims that involvement in national or ethnic organizations indicates a lack of integration to the host society, my analysis show that membership to ethnic organizations had a positive and significant effect on cultural integration; meaning Muslim women who are members of ethnic organizations in fact have a higher likelihood of having high scores on the cultural integration index. This finding is similar to the research findings on the effects of Muslim ethnic and religious organizations in Europe (See Fennema and Tillie, 1999; Van Heelsum, 2000, Berger, Galonska and Koopmans, 2004) and confirms the assumptions of the social capital theory (Putnam, 1993).

Models 3 and 4 examine the determinants of civic/political integration for Muslim American women. Model 3 includes the religiosity index as the primary predictor variable, which has a positive and significant effect on political/civic integration. This means, Muslim women who score high on the religiosity scale have a higher likelihood of ranking high on the political/civic integration scale. This is not surprising given what we know about the heightened political consciousness and political involvement of the Muslim community in the post 9/11 era. In model 4, I broke down the religiosity index to its two dimensions (public and private religiosity) to assess their individual effects. The results indicate that only 'involvement in mosque activities' has reached a statistical significance. Thus, we can comfortably state that institutionalized and public religious activities rather than private and spiritual domains of religiosity, contribute to higher civic and political consciousness and participation for Muslim women. This finding confirms previous research, which suggested that mosques are important sites for

political and civic knowledge dissemination and for political mobilization (See Jamal, 2005a). My findings goes beyond the findings of these earlier studies, which focused solely on the civic and political domains, suggesting that the teachings and resources of mosques are also influential in the social and cultural integration of Muslim women, albeit the effect seems to be in opposite direction. Finally, neither identifying as Muslim nor wearing hijab had a significant impact on the civic and political integration of Muslim women in the United States. Thus, overall my analyses in this paper did not support the negative perception that hijab is the symbol of oppression and traditionalism, and wearing it hinders the cultural and civic participation of Muslim women in non-Muslim societies. Nor there was any confirmation in my findings that identifying strongly as Muslim prevents one from identifying as American or participating in the social and political processes of the U.S society.

Discussion

The findings of this paper indicate that religiosity has a significant impact on the cultural and political integration of Muslim immigrant women. The impact however was not uniform. For cultural integration higher levels of religiosity hindered the integration process, whereas for political/civic integration higher religiosity levels facilitated it. The puzzle before us then is, what explains the variation we see in the interaction between religiosity and different integration domains? Here I will refer to three plausible explanations that need further investigation. The first possible explanation is that Muslim women (and families) in the United States are engaging in a *selective integration* process. Selective integration refer to the fact that Muslim immigrant women are engaging in an

integration model that cannot be explained with an "all or non" model of integration. Rather, these women are picking and choosing between what is desirable and what is not about the societies they live in and their value systems to protect the integrity of their religious group, while becoming part of the American society. In-depth interviews with women congregants across the United States is needed to confirm this proposition and flesh out the mechanisms through which this selective integration process is taking place.

Another plausible explanation is that these findings are the product of the specific events of 9/11 and demonstrate the *reactionary integration* of the Muslim community in the post-9/11 era. Muslims in the west have been marginalized and discriminated against in the last decade, which led them to become politically and socially more conscious and active to change their negative image. Recent public opinion data indicate that a majority of Muslim Americans believes life has become more difficult for Muslims in the US following 9/11, and many worry about government surveillance, job discrimination and being harassed (Pew Study on Muslim Americans, 2007). According to various studies and reports released after 9/11 also show that backlash against Muslims and Arabs increased by 1600 percent[8], and about one third of Muslim Americans have experienced discrimination because of their faith (Pew Study on Muslim Americans, 2007). This shared experience and perception of discrimination has brought the Muslim community closer, helped overcome ethnic and cultural differences, fostered group consciousness, increased political awareness and facilitated collective action.

A final explanation, not an alternative one necessarily but rather a complementary one to the previous two explanations, is that the resources of religious institutions and the teachings of religious leaders affect the ways in which Muslim Americans are integrated

[8] FBI 2003 statistics cited by Sireen Sawaf, representative of MPAC during an interview with the author.

into the American society and polity. The results of my multivariate analysis on the relationship between religiosity and integration of Muslim immigrants indicate that it is the public or institutionalized religious practices of subjects, rather than their spiritual/private religious beliefs that have a more significant impact on their integration outcomes. That necessitates a closer look at the ways in which religious institutions and religious leadership is defining the direction and degree of social and political commitment of the Muslim community into their host societies. Religious leaders in general, and imams of the mosques in particular, have a strong influence on their congregation. Bagby et al's 2001 study on mosques showed that there is a high correlation between imams' views towards the American society and their congregations' involvement in and attitudes toward American social and political life (Bagby, 2006). In my own study I also found significant differences between different mosques in terms of their cultures towards women, the ideologies of leaders towards integration and the degree of social and cultural involvement of their respective congregants into the American society and culture (these analyses are not presented in this paper)

Contrary to the findings of the 2007 Pew Study, identifying as Muslim didn't have a predictive power on integration outcomes, nor did wearing the hijab. These non-findings are important to notice and follow up on because they stand in contrast to the findings in Europe. It is worth exploring further through in-depth interviews –as I do in another paper- to explicate how different women interpret Islam and the meaning of hijab to thoroughly understand the impact of Islam on Muslim women's social and political actions. Finally, the results from this study indicate that we may need to differentiate between more public or institutionalized aspects of Islam and more private or spiritual

aspects of it. Religious beliefs seem to effect integration outcomes differently than religious practices.

A final note about the sample; even though we, researchers, who study the Muslim community justify our collecting data at the mosques, we need to be cognizant of the fact that there is a large Muslim community who identify with Islam but not with the institutions (i.e Muslim women who don't go to mosques because they think the mosque is male dominated and the designation of women into secondary prayer halls is not dignifying). We need to reach out to those communities as well as to the more secular Muslims in order to understand the true nature of Islam and Muslims and their integration patterns in the US.

References

Abu-Lughod , Lila. 2002 "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving" American Anthropologisa, 104 (3): 783-790.

Bagby, Ihsan, 2006. "Isolate, Insulate, Assimilate: Attitudes of Mosque Leaders Toward America" A Nation of Religions (eds). Stephen Prothero

Berger, Galonska and Koopmans 2004. "Political Integration by Detour? Ethnic Communities and Social Capital of Migrants in Berlin", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Vol.30, No. 3, pp.491-507

Bisin, A., E. Pattacchini, T. Verdier and Y. Zenou. 2007. "Are Muslim Immigrants Different in Terms of Cultural Integration?" IZA Discussion Paper # 3006 . www.voxeu.com (Downloaded December 2007)

Constant, A., L. Gataullina, K. F. Zimmermann, and L. Zimmermann. 2006. "Clash of Cultures: Muslims and Christians in the Ethnosizing Process". IZA Discussion Paper No 2350.

DeSipio, Louis. 1996. Counting on the Latino Vote: Latinos as a New Electorate. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.

Ebaugh, H. R and J. S. Chafetz. 1999. "Agents for Cultural Reproduction and Structural Change: The Ironic Role of Women in Immigrant Religious Institutions" Social Forces, Vol. 78, no.2, (Dec. 1999), pp.585-612.

Ebaugh, H. R. and J. S. Chafetz. 2000. *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Elkholy, Abdo. 1966. The Arab Moslems in the United States: religion and assimilation. New Haven: College and University Press.

Fennema, M. and J. Tillie. 1999. "Political Participation and Political Trust in Amsterdam: Civic Communities and Ethnic Networks", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Vol. 25, (4): 703-726

Hagendoorn, Veenman and Vollebergh, 2003. Integrating Immigrants in the Netherlands: Cultural versus Socio-Economic Integration

Herberg, Will. 1955, 1960. Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay on American Religious Sociology. Garden City, NY: Anchor

Jamal, Amaney. 2005a. "The Political Participation and Engagement of Muslim Americans: Mosque Involvement and Group Consciousness" American Political Research, Vol.33, no. 4, 521-544.

_____. 2005b. "Mosques, Collective Identity, and Gender Differences among Arab-American Muslims" Journal of Middle East Women's Studies.

Karakasoglu, Yasemin, 2003. "Custom Tailored Islam? Second Genration Female Students of Turko-Muslim Origin in Germany and their concept of modernity and education". In (eds.) Sackmann, Rosemarie, Bernhard Peters, Thomas Faist. Identity and integration: Migrants in Western Europe

Kayyali, Randa. 2006. "The People Perceived as a Threat to Security: Arab Americans Since September 11" Migration Policy Institute

Keuzenkamp, S. and A. Merens. 2006. "The Social Atlas of Women From Ethnic Minorities" Report published by the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office (www.scp.nl/english/publications/summaries/9037702694.html)

Kurien, Prema. 2001 "Religion, ethnicity and politics: Hindu and Muslim Indian immigrants in the United States", Ethnic and Racial Studies, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 263-93.

Mendel, Ruth. 1989 "The Turkish Headscarves and the "Foreigner Problem": Constructing Difference Through Emblems of Identity" New German Critique

Naber, Nadine. 2005. "Muslim First, Arab Second" Muslim World. Volume 95, No.4, pp.479-97

Peek, Lori. 2005. "Becoming Muslim: The Development of a Religious Identity". Sociology of Religion

Prothero, Stephen. 2006. A Nation of Religions: The Politics of Pluralism in Multireligious America

Putnam, Robert. 1993. Making Democracy Work

Ramakrishnan, Karthick and Celia Viramontes. 2006. Civic Inequalities: Immigrants Volunteerism and Community Organizations in California. Public Policy Institute of California

Read, Jennan Ghazal. 2007. "More of a Bridge than a Gap: Gender Differences in Arab-American Political Engagement". Social Science Quarterly Vol. 88 (5), 1072-91

_____ 2004. "Cultural Influences on Immigrant Women's Labor Force Participation: The Arab-American Case. International Migration Review, Vol.38 (1), 52-77, (p.70)

Sherkat, Darren E. 2005. "Politics and Social Movements" Handbook of Religion and Social Institutions, (eds.) H. R. Ebaugh.

Tiilikainen, Marja. 2003. "Somali Women and Daily Islam in the Diaspora" Social Compass 50(1), pp. 59-69

van Heelsum, Anja. 2000. "Political Participation of Immigrants in the Netherlands" Paper presented at the Metropolis Conference 13-20 November 2000 in Vancouver

Verba, Sidney and Norman Nie, 1972. Participation in America: Political democracy and social equality. New York: Harper and Row.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press.

Williams, Raymond B. 1988. Religions of Immigrants from India and Pakistan: New Threads in the American Tapestry

Zolberg, Aristide R. and Long Litt Woon. 1999. "Why Islam is like Spanish: Cultural Incorporation in Europe and the United States" Politics and Society Vol. 27 (1)