



Origin-group differences in the 2007 and 2011 Pew Polls of U.S. Muslims: Reactions to the War on Terrorism

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About This Report

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The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is supported in part by the Science and Technology Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through a Center of Excellence program led by the University of Maryland. START uses state-of-the-art theories, methods and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins, dynamics and social and psychological impacts of terrorism. For more information, contact START at infostart@start.umd.edu or visit www.start.umd.edu.

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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Comparing origin groups in Pew polls of U.S. Muslims | 1 |
| Identifying African-American Muslims | 2 |
| Converts | 2 |
| Methods..... | 3 |
| Overview of respondents in the 2007 and 2011 Pew Polls of U.S. Muslims..... | 3 |
| Groups defined by birthplace | 4 |
| Missing data..... | 4 |
| Weighted vs unweighted data | 4 |
| Results | 5 |
| Demographics | 5 |
| Religiosity | 6 |
| Perceived discrimination..... | 6 |
| Government policies..... | 9 |
| Opinions relating to the war on terrorism | 9 |
| Predicting Opinions Relating to the War on Terrorism..... | 11 |
| Discussion | 12 |
| Stability and Change over Time | 13 |
| Predicting Terrorism-related Opinions | 14 |
| Group Differences..... | 14 |
| Conclusions..... | 16 |
| Appendix 1 | 17 |
| Appendix 2 | 18 |
| References..... | 20 |

Executive Summary

This study compared opinions relating to the war on terrorism for six origin-groups in the 2007 and 2011 Pew polls of U.S Muslims (each poll ~1000 participants). Origin-groups included Muslims born in Iran, Pakistan, other South Asian countries, Arab countries, and sub-Saharan African countries, as well as African-American Muslims. Opinions changed little from 2007 to 2011 except for a massive increase in presidential approval (Obama vs. Bush). In each origin-group, nearly half of respondents continued to believe the U.S. war on terrorism is not a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism, but approval of al-Qaida and suicide bombing in defense of Islam was less than ten percent. Within these general similarities two groups stood out. Iran-born were older and less religious than other groups but had opinions similar to other U.S. Muslims. African-American Muslims reported lower education and income than other groups and were generally most negative about living as Muslims in the United States. Experience of discrimination did not predict opinion of al-Qaida or suicide bombing, nor were converts more extreme. Discussion emphasizes the need to understand why many U.S. Muslims are negative toward the war on terrorism and why a very few persist in radical opinions approving al-Qaida and suicide bombing.

Introduction

Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants to the U.S. famously created neighborhoods and communities of their own. Muslim immigrants to the United States have done the same, notably including Iranians in Los Angeles, Somalis in Minneapolis, and Lebanese in Detroit. These immigrant communities reproduce to some extent their homeland traditions in language, religion, food and music.

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

Recognizing that immigrant groups can differ markedly in their cultures and their political viewpoints, McCauley and Scheckter used the 2007 Pew poll of U.S. Muslims to compare seven origin groups defined by country of birth: Pakistanis, Iranians, South Asians, Arabs, sub-Saharan Africans, Europeans, and African-Americans. Results indeed indicated substantial group differences, with Iranian-born and African-Americans standing out from other groups in their political opinions. Converts were not consistently more extreme in their opinions.^[ii]

In the study reported here we conduct the same kind of group comparisons for the 2011 Pew poll of U.S. Muslims, with special attention to possible opinion change between 2007 and 2011. In particular we are interested in opinions relating to jihadist terrorism (opinions of the war on terrorism, of al-Qaida, and of suicide bombing in defense of Islam) and whether converts have more extreme opinions.

Comparing origin groups in Pew polls of U.S. Muslims

Muslims in the United States constitute less than one percent of the population and different ethnic and origin subgroups of U.S. Muslims are correspondingly smaller percentages. Standard polling methods, such as random-digit dialing or address sampling, are impractical when the target group will comprise less than one percent of those sampled.

Nevertheless, there have been polls of U.S. Muslims using one or both of two approaches to getting the sample.^[iii] The first approach is to accumulate Muslim respondents who turn up in national polls using standard probability sampling techniques. Over many U.S. national polls, a polling company identifies a number of Muslims; these individuals can then be contacted all at once in a poll targeting only Muslims. The second approach is to sample randomly from neighborhoods known to have a relatively high

proportion of Muslim residents. The odds of calling a Muslim can thereby be raised, although Muslims living outside 'Muslim neighborhoods' will likely be under represented in this approach.

Polls of U.S. Muslims have typically used a combination of the two approaches, but the samples thus obtained have usually consisted of 500 or fewer individuals – too few to permit fractionating the sample to compare subgroups defined by birthplace. The 2007 and 2011 Pew surveys of U.S. Muslims are exceptional in the size of the sample obtained: each Pew poll had over a thousand respondents.^[iv] Our study takes advantage of these larger samples to compare groups of U.S. Muslims based on country of birth, and to look for change in the pattern of group results between 2007 and 2011.

Identifying African-American Muslims

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

African-American Muslims are typically members of one of several (typically Sunni) groups, including the American Society of Muslims (the descendent of the original Nation of Islam), the new Nation of Islam (now led by Louis Farrakhan), the Five Percenters, the Dar al-Islam, the Islamic Mission of America, and other smaller organizations. We will refer to African-American Muslims throughout this article. Though some use the term "Black Muslims," historically this term has had specific connotations in relation to one group, the Nation of Islam, and thus may not take into account all of the groups of African-Americans practicing Islam in the United States.^[vii]

The longer history of African-American Muslims in the United States suggests that they may be culturally and politically different from U.S. Muslims with relatively recent origins in predominantly Muslim countries. Unfortunately the 2007 and 2011 Pew polls did not explicitly ask whether respondents were African-American. Thus, rather than looking at all Pew respondents born in the United States, our analysis focused on African-American Muslims as defined by three criteria: born in the United States, identified themselves as "Black," and reported that both parents were also born in the United States.

Converts

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

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

Of course being more zealous in a new religion, or being open to further life change after a religious life change, need not mean that converts are more likely to have radical political opinions. More zealous Muslims may know more about their religion and be thus less susceptible to the eccentric versions of Islam forwarded by al-Qaida and Islamic State. Also, being more open to life change may focus a convert on personal rather than political change. Given the uncertainties associated with the idea that Muslim converts are more susceptible to radical opinions, we use the 2007 and 2011 Pew Surveys of U.S. Muslims to compare the political opinions of converts and non-convert Muslims. Convert status was determined by response to this Pew question: *Have you always been a Muslim, or not?*

In sum, our study compares origin groups in both the 2007 and 2011 Pew Polls of U.S. Muslims, with special attention to African-American Muslims and converts in both polls. We will focus on three questions tapping radical ideas: opinion of the war on terrorism, opinion of al-Qaida, and opinion of suicide bombing in defense of Islam.

Methods

In this section we describe the number of respondents in each origin group for the 2007 and 2011 Pew polls of U.S. Muslims, the treatment of missing data, and the use of unweighted data in our analyses.

Overview of respondents in the 2007 and 2011 Pew Polls of U.S. Muslims

The 2007 Pew Poll had 1050 respondents, including 28 coded *missing* for place of birth and 15 born in countries coded as *other*. There were 273 respondents reporting they were born in the United States; 135 were identified as African-American Muslims (see below) and the remaining 138 respondents do not appear in this report. The total of 2007 respondents represented in this report is thus 869 (1050-28-15-138). The 2011 Pew Poll had 1033 respondents, including 19 missing place of birth and 95 born in countries coded by Pew as *other*. There were 289 respondents reporting they were born in the United States; 110 were identified as African-American Muslims and the remaining 179 do not appear in this report. The total of 2011 respondents represented in this report is thus 740 (1033-19-95-179).

Groups defined by birthplace

This report follows the procedures of the analysis of Pew's 2007 poll of U.S. Muslims conducted by McCauley and Scheckter to identify six origin groups among respondents of Pew's 2011 Poll.^[xiii] In 2011 as in 2007, two countries had large enough numbers of emigrants to form separate groups: Pakistan (158) and Iran (58). South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka) had 125 emigrants, Arab countries had 219 emigrants, and Sub-Saharan Africa had 70 emigrants. In addition, we identified African-American Muslims as those who self-identified as Black and who reported being born in the United States with both father and mother also born in the U.S.

In their analysis of the 2007 poll, McCauley and Scheckter identified a seventh origin group: emigrants from European countries (59 respondents).^[xiv] In 2011, however, there were only about 4% of foreign-born U.S. Muslims coming from a European country, and Pew coded such respondents in 2011 as *other*. European emigrants were thus not included in our comparison of 2007 and 2011 results.

Missing data

In this report tabled percentages are calculated without missing responses (*don't know* or *refused*) in the denominator. Because some items have non-negligible percentage of missing responses, percent missing is noted beneath each table.

Weighted vs unweighted data

In their analysis of the 2007 Pew poll of U.S. Muslims, McCauley and Scheckter used unweighted data.^[xv] In the present study, we compared results using both weighted and unweighted data for both 2007 and 2011. Results were generally similar but there were some anomalous results using weighting. Pew recommends using weighted data to correct for sampling biases so as to give results more representative of the population sampled. In the achieved samples of U.S. Muslims in both 2007 and 2011, younger individuals with more education were over-represented and older individuals with less education were under-represented (compare unweighted demographics in Table 1 with weighted demographics in Appendix 1). Higher weights are thus given to older respondents with less education. One such individual from South Asia reported himself as over fifty years of age, with a high school education, and a convert to Islam. His responses were weighted by six times, and he was alone responsible for a change in the percent of South Asian converts from two percent with unweighted data to eight percent with weighted data. He also had a big influence on the South Asian correlation of convert status with approval of al-Qaida: the correlation was negligible with unweighted data but .89 with weighted data.

Although weighting may be useful when results are aggregated across a thousand respondents, weighted data can produce misleading results for analysis of a hundred respondents in a particular origin group. In this paper we report results using unweighted data.

Results

Given the relatively small sample sizes for comparisons by origin (*ns* of six origin groups ranging from 58 to 219), and the many possible comparisons across six groups, reliance on statistical testing would likely inflate the number of significant results obtained. Rather than statistical significance, we use a criterion of substantive significance in which percentage differences less than 20 percentage points are not interpreted. In addition, if one origin group is consistently different from others, we note this pattern for discussion.

Demographics

As might be expected in parallel samples from the same polling house, demographic characteristics showed little change from 2007 to 2011. Across eight demographic characteristics and six groups, the mean difference (2011-2007) is -2.6 percentage points (standard deviation of differences 6.7). The mean difference is slightly negative because five of six origin groups show a decline in family income from 2007 to 2011, likely a result of the economic depression that began in the U.S. in 2008.

It is worth mentioning that weighted data show consistently lower education and lower age than unweighted data across all six origin groups (Appendix 1, data not presented here), indicating that both 2007 and 2011 respondents are more educated and younger than the U.S. Muslim population Pew seeks to represent.

Comparing across origin groups, Table 1 shows that two groups stand out in both 2007 and 2011.

Table 1. Demographics by origin for Pew Polls of U.S. Muslims in 2007 and 2011

| | AfAm | | Pakistan | | Iran | | Arab | | S.Asia | | Africa | |
|--|------|------|----------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 |
| N | 135 | 110 | 137 | 158 | 87 | 58 | 193 | 219 | 151 | 125 | 107 | 70 |
| Percent age group 18-39 | 48 | 40 | 39 | 38 | 22 | 10 | 44 | 48 | 41 | 42 | 50 | 54 |
| Percent female | 42 | 36 | 48 | 35 | 45 | 55 | 45 | 48 | 37 | 39 | 46 | 33 |
| Percent college degree or more | 22 | 25 | 62 | 72 | 74 | 66 | 53 | 51 | 67 | 70 | 49 | 36 |
| Percent family income \$50k or more | 41 | 37 | 59 | 57 | 72 | 56 | 45 | 37 | 60 | 60 | 38 | 30 |
| Percent employed full time | 48 | 46 | 49 | 58 | 58 | 52 | 43 | 42 | 62 | 52 | 56 | 55 |
| Percent financial condition <i>excellent or good</i> | 38 | 32 | 71 | 58 | 58 | 40 | 50 | 52 | 52 | 52 | 42 | 49 |
| Percent married | 37 | 39 | 82 | 78 | 77 | 76 | 81 | 76 | 82 | 83 | 64 | 62 |
| Percent convert to Islam | 72 | 72 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Note. Unweighted data. Percent missing (don't know, refused) was negligible for demographic questions, except ranging from 4 % (South Asia born) to 20% (Iran born) for income. Bold marks 2011 percentage that is substantially (20 percentage points) different from corresponding 2007 percentage.

African-Americans report lowest education (22-25% African-Americans reporting college degree or more vs. 36-74% for other origin groups) and lowest satisfaction with financial condition (32-38% reporting *excellent* or *good* vs. 40-71% for other groups). African-Americans are also less likely to be married (37-39% vs. 62-83%) and much more often converts to Islam (72% vs. 0-9%).

Iran-born respondents are older than those in other origin groups (10-22% aged 18-39 vs. 38-54% for other groups) and (not shown in Table 1) are overwhelmingly Shi'a Muslims whereas other origin groups are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslims (Iran-born 95% Shi'a vs. 2-16% Shi'a in other origin groups).

Religiosity

Table 2 shows responses to six religiosity items in 2007 and 2011 for each origin group. These items show no substantial change over time. Iran-born respondents stand out as less religious than others on five items (mosque prayer, mosque activities, importance of religion, Muslim first, and wearing hijab). African-Americans are more likely than others (49-56% vs 10-38%) to take part in social or religious activities beyond prayers at a mosque or Islamic Center, and more likely to see a conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society (37-49% vs. 17-32%).

Perceived discrimination

Table 3 shows that, for every origin group, at least a third and often more than half of respondents see discrimination against Muslims in government surveillance (2007 58-78%; 2011 37-75%) and in press coverage of Islam and Muslims (2007 59-74%; 2011 51-67%).

There is one substantial change over time (one of 30 comparisons): Iran-born respondents report decreased government surveillance of Muslims (2007 63%; 2011 37%). It is worth noting, however, that six of six origin groups show decline in the percent thinking surveillance singles out Muslims and likewise that six of six origin groups show decline in seeing American news coverage of Muslims as unfair.

Compared with other groups, African-Americans stand out as seeing discrimination against Muslims in government surveillance (75-78% vs. 37-68%).

Table 2. Religiosity: Percent italicized responses by origin

| | AfAm | | Pakistan | | Iran | | Arab | | S.Asia | | Africa | |
|--|------|------|----------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 |
| On average, how often do you attend the mosque or Islamic Center for <i>salah</i> and <i>Jum'ah</i> Prayer? <i>once a week or more</i> | 57 | 61 | 53 | 60 | 6 | 5 | 41 | 41 | 39 | 50 | 51 | 59 |
| And outside of <i>salah</i> and <i>Jum'ah</i> prayer, do you take part in any other social or religious activities at the mosque or Islamic Center? <i>Yes</i> | 56 | 49 | 38 | 38 | 10 | 20 | 27 | 30 | 19 | 35 | 29 | 38 |
| How important is religion in your life? <i>very important</i> | 83 | 86 | 64 | 74 | 28 | 30 | 73 | 75 | 76 | 73 | 84 | 86 |
| Do you think of yourself first as an American or first as a Muslim? <i>Muslim</i> | 59 | 51 | 58 | 45 | 27 | 24 | 39 | 56 | 46 | 50 | 47 | 52 |
| When you are out in public, how often do you wear the headcover or hijab? [females only] <i>all the time</i> | 47 | 38 | 31 | 31 | 11 | 9 | 61 | 56 | 25 | 21 | 49 | 44 |
| Do you think there is a natural conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society, or don't you think so? <i>yes, there is a conflict</i> | 37 | 49 | 18 | 22 | 21 | 32 | 21 | 18 | 25 | 29 | 17 | 23 |

Note. Across six origin groups and six religion items, missing ranged from 0–7 %, except “Natural conflict” item with 13% missing for Iran born, 9% for Arab and Africa born and 8% for Pakistan born. Bold marks 2011 percentage that is substantially (20 percentage points) different from corresponding 2007 percentage.

Table 3. Perceived discrimination: percent italicized responses by origin

| | AfAm | | Pakistan | | Iran | | Arab | | S.Asia | | Africa | |
|--|------|------|----------|------|------|-----------|------|------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 |
| In the past twelve months, have people acted as if they are suspicious of you because you are a Muslim, or not? <i>Yes</i> | 42 | 26 | 16 | 17 | 21 | 9 | 16 | 23 | 20 | 15 | 24 | 19 |
| ...have you been called offensive names because you are a Muslim, or not? <i>Yes</i> | 19 | 16 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 7 | 14 | 17 | 13 | 16 | 9 | 9 |
| ...have you been physically threatened or attacked because you are a Muslim, or not? <i>Yes</i> | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| Do you think that government’s anti-terrorism policies single out Muslims in the U.S. for increased surveillance and monitoring, or don’t you think so? <i>singles out Muslims</i> | 78 | 75 | 61 | 50 | 63 | 37 | 60 | 58 | 68 | 51 | 58 | 50 |
| Do you think that the coverage of Islam and Muslims by American news organizations is generally fair or unfair? <i>unfair</i> | 74 | 66 | 61 | 59 | 69 | 62 | 73 | 67 | 59 | 51 | 64 | 55 |

Note. Across six origin groups and three personal discrimination items (the first three items in Table 3), missing ranged from 0 to 4%. The two group discrimination items had larger missing rates: 5-26% missing for the item asking about government surveillance of Muslims, and 3-9% missing for the item asking whether news coverage of Muslims is unfair. Bold marks 2011 percentage that is substantially (20 percentage points) different from corresponding 2007 percentage.

Government policies

Table 4 shows that in both 2007 and 2011 African-Americans were more dissatisfied than other groups with how things are going in the country (2007 87% vs. 47-58%; 2011 54% vs. 28-39%). Nevertheless, dissatisfaction declined for every origin group, with substantial declines for African-Americans (87% to 54%), Arabs (52% to 32%), and African emigrants (58% to 28%).

The presidential approval item referred to President George W. Bush in 2007 and to President Barack Obama in 2011. Every origin group showed a substantial and indeed massive decline in disapproval (for African-Americans the decline was from 93% to 11%). It is clear that U.S. Muslims welcomed the change in President. In both 2007 and 2011, a sizeable proportion of every origin group saw the U.S. military in Afghanistan as a mistake (33-77%). Possibly as a result of their massive shift toward presidential approval, African-American showed a marginally substantial decline in seeing this mistake (77% to 58%).

Opinions relating to the war on terrorism

Table 5 shows that in both 2007 and 2011 about half of U.S. Muslims (2007 49-81%; 2011 39-50%) did not believe that the war on terrorism (WOT) is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism. Two groups showed a substantial decline in doubts about the war on terrorism (African Americans 81% in 2007 vs. 50% in 2011, Iranians 66% in 2007 vs. 40% in 2011); indeed every origin group showed a numeric decline in doubts about war on terrorism. This decline is likely associated with the massive increases in presidential approval in 2011.

Favorable opinion of al-Qaida (AQ) was very low in both polls (1-12% in 2007 and 0-6% in 2011). Similarly, justifying suicide bombing (SB) was low in both polls: 2-10% in 2007 and 2-9% in 2011.

The three terrorism-related items have non-negligible missing rates, raising the possibility that responses may be biased by fear of the consequences of endorsing pro-terrorist opinions. But the pattern of missing does not support this possibility. Table 5 shows that percentages of missing responses for the three terrorism-related items are similar in 2007 and 2011, with 9-22% missing for the WOT item, 9-27% missing for the AQ item, and 0-11% missing for the suicide bombing item. These missing rates are similar to missing rates in Table 4 (4-22% missing for the presidential approval item; 5-20% missing for the Afghanistan item), although these two items should be less threatening than the terrorism items. Also, we believe that the most threatening item in Table 5 asks about justifying suicide bombing in defense of Islam, yet this item has lower missing rates than the WOT item and AQ item. Overall, the pattern of missing data suggests that missing rates reflect more honest ignorance than defensiveness.

Consistent with this interpretation is the fact that six of six origin groups showed a decline in percent missing on the AQ item from 2007 to 2011. There is no reason defensiveness would decline, but ignorance might decline as al-Qaida continued to be salient in the news during these years. Indeed, bin Laden was killed in May 2011 during the Pew poll conducted from 14 April to 22 July 2011.

Table 4. Government policies: Percent italicized responses by origin

| | AfAm | | Pakistan | | Iran | | Arab | | S.Asia | | Africa | |
|---|-----------|------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|------------------|
| | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 |
| Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today? <i>Dissatisfied</i> | 87 (4) | 54 (7) | 47 (7) | 39 (10) | 54 (6) | 39 (7) | 52 (11) | 32 (9) | 57 (7) | 39 (8) | 58 (9) | 28 (9) |
| Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush (2007)/Barack Obama (2011) is handling his job as president? <i>Disapprove</i> | 93 (4) | 11 (6) | 72 (18) | 21 (11) | 82 (16) | 12 (10) | 83 (19) | 16 (11) | 77 (13) | 15 (11) | 87 (22) | 8 (9) |
| Do you think the US made the right or the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan? <i>Wrong decision</i> | 77 (7) | 58 (7) | 47 (7) | 56 (19) | 43 (5) | 59 (16) | 56 (20) | 61 (18) | 41 (12) | 49 (15) | 47 (18) | 33 (19) |

Note. Percent missing in parentheses. Bold marks 2011 percentage that is substantially (20 percentage points) different from corresponding 2007 percentage.

Table 5. Opinions related to the war on terrorism: Percent italicized responses

| | AfAm | | Pakistan | | Iran | | Arab | | S.Asia | | Africa | |
|---|------------|------------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 |
| Do you think the US led war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism or don't you believe that? <i>don't believe that</i> | 81 (10) | 50 (9) | 48 (12) | 45 (13) | 66 (15) | 40 (22) | 59 (20) | 45 (19) | 58 (19) | 39 (15) | 57 (18) | 48 (13) |
| Overall do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of al-Qaida? <i>very or somewhat favorable</i> | 12 (27) | 6 (16) | 6 (21) | 1 (12) | 4 (14) | 2 (9) | 4 (26) | 3 (16) | 2 (17) | 2 (13) | 1 (23) | 0 (14) |
| Some people think that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that this kind of violence is often justified, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified? <i>often or sometimes</i> | 10 (3) | 9 (0) | 9 (4) | 2 (3) | 2 (6) | 7 (5) | 8 (11) | 7 (10) | 9 (7) | 5 (2) | 5 (6) | 5 (9) |

Note. Percent missing in parentheses. Bold marks 2011 percentage that is substantially (20 percentage points) different from corresponding 2007 percentage.

Predicting Opinions Relating to the War on Terrorism

In this section we use multiple regression to find predictors of radical opinions relating to terrorism. Demographics, religiosity, perceived discrimination, and opinion of government policies (see Tables 1-4) were entered as predictors of opinions about the war on terrorism, al-Qaida, and suicide bombing (Table 5).

Based on substantial correlations between AQ and SB items (.24 in 2007 and .32 in 2011, with missing recoded as described below) we created a RadOpinion scale as the mean of responses to these two items. (The war on terrorism item was not correlated with AQ or SB items in 2007 or 2011). Thus four regression models were calculated: for both 2007 and 2011, a model predicting opinion of the war on terrorism and a model predicting RadOpinion.

To keep the number of respondents constant across the terrorism-related items, missing values for these three items were recoded as mid-scale values. For instance, missing values for the SB items were recoded as 2.5 on the four-point scale for this item (often, sometimes, rarely, never justified). Also, to control for mean opinion differences across origin groups, these groups were coded as dummy variables (African-Americans the uncoded comparison group), and these dummy variables were included in each of the four regression models. With so many predictors, we used a conservative level of significance and present here only predictors with a beta significant at $p < .01$. Complete results of the regression models are presented in Appendix 2.

Predicting opinion of the war on terrorism. In 2007 there are four significant predictors of seeing the war on terrorism as insincere: disapproval of President George W. Bush (beta .19), seeing military force in Afghanistan as a wrong decision (beta .16), seeing discrimination in government surveillance (beta .15), and seeing media unfair to Muslims (beta .13). In 2011 opinions are more crystalized. There is one outstanding predictor: seeing military force in Afghanistan as a wrong decision (beta .34). The adjusted R squares (.20 in 2007; .22 in 2011) indicate that, despite numerous and varied predictors, the level of prediction is only moderate (see Table 6).

Table 6: Regression predicting seeing the war on terrorism as insincere in 2007 and 2011

| Predictor | Beta | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| | 2007 | 2011 |
| Media - unfair | .13** | .06 |
| Discrimination USG surveillance - yes | .15** | .08 |
| Disapprove president | .19*** | .11* |
| Afghanistan was wrong decision | .16** | .34*** |
| R square | .25 | .27 |
| Adjusted R square | .20 | .22 |
| N | 425 | 381 |

Note. Only predictors with beta significant at $p < .01$ ** are tabled, except predictors significant only in 2007 or 2011 show also the non-significant beta for comparison. Missing values were excluded within predictors, but recoded as mid-scale for the terrorism-related measure predicted.

Predicting RadOpinion (favoring al-Qaida and Suicide Bombing). In 2007 there is one significant predictor of RadOpinion: low education (beta .23). In 2011 there are two significant predictors: low education (beta .20) and feeling physically threatened (beta .23). Again the adjusted R squares (.16 in 2007; .18 in 2011) indicate that the level of prediction is only moderate (see Table 7).

Table 7: Regression predicting RadOpinion Scale in 2007 and 2011

| Predictor | Beta | |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|
| | 2007 | 2011 |
| Education - low | .23*** | .20** |
| Being physically threatened | .04 | .23*** |
| R square | .21 | .24 |
| Adjusted R square | .16 | .18 |
| N | 425 | 381 |

Note. Only predictors with beta significant at $p < .01^{**}$ are tabled, except predictors significant only in 2007 or 2011 show also the non-significant beta for comparison. Missing values were excluded within predictors, but recoded as mid-scale for the terrorism-related measure predicted.

Are converts more extreme on terrorism-related items? About 70 percent of African-American Muslims are converts, but there are no converts among Pakistan-born and only 1 to 9 percent converts in other origin groups. Perhaps surprisingly, African-American Muslims show no substantial correlation between convert status and the three terrorism-related items (2007 correlations .04 to .07; 2011 correlations .04 to .15).

Discussion

This study had two goals. Following McCauley and Scheckter, we looked for origin-group differences in opinions of U.S. Muslims, especially opinions related to the war on terrorism.^[xvi] Additionally, we looked for change in opinion over time, by comparing results of the 2007 and 2011 Pew polls of U.S. Muslims. For both polls, we divided respondents into six origin groups based on birthplace: Pakistan, Iran, South Asian countries except Pakistan, Arab countries, sub-Saharan African countries, and African-Americans. Respondents coded as African-American identified themselves as Black and were born in the United States of parents also born in the United States. All analyses used unweighted data.

We focused on three opinions related to the war on terrorism: seeing the war on terrorism as insincere, favorable opinion of al-Qaida, and justifying suicide bombing in defense of Islam. In addition to eight demographic items, we examined 22 opinion items as possible predictors of the three terrorism items: six items about religiosity, five items about perception of discrimination against Muslims, and three items evaluating the U.S. government and its actions in Afghanistan. We compared results for these items across time (2007 vs. 2011) and across the six origin groups.

Stability and Change over Time

Demographic differences between 2007 and 2011 were small and inconsistent, except that five of six origin groups showed a decline in the percent reporting family income of \$50k or more. This decline is likely associated with the economic depression that began in 2008. The general stability of demographics in the two polls indicates that substantial differences in opinion between 2007 and 2011 are indeed changes in opinion rather than an artifact of sampling differences.

Like the demographic items, religiosity items show stability over time. All origin groups except Iran-born report high levels of religiosity, with very similar results in 2007 and 2011. As noted in the Pew report of the 2011 poll, religiosity of U.S. Muslims is similar to the religiosity reported by U.S. Christians.^[xvii] Between 2007 and 2011 there was one great shift in opinions of U.S. Muslims. All origin groups showed increased approval of the President (Barack Obama in 2011 vs. George W. Bush in 2007). For some groups these opinion changes were massive: African-American disapproval of the President went from 93 percent to 11 percent. Similarly if less in degree, all origin groups showed increased satisfaction with the way things are going in the country.

Possibly related to increased presidential approval, all origin groups showed a small decline in two measures of perceived prejudice against Muslims: the percentage seeing Muslims singled out for surveillance declined, as did the percentage seeing American news coverage of Muslims as unfair. Nevertheless minorities ranging mostly from 10 to 20 percent report experiencing suspicion and offensive names.

It is important to notice that U.S. Muslims maintained their overwhelming disapproval of al-Qaida and suicide bombing; across origin groups and years, approval rates ranged from zero to twelve percent. Less reassuring is the small decline in seeing the war on terrorism as insincere: in 2011 the percentage seeing the war on terrorism as 'insincere' ranged from 39-50 percent. Similarly, there was continuing disapproval of U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan; in 2011 disapproval ranged between 33 and 61 percent.

Summing up this section we can say that the election of President Barack Obama in 2008 was welcomed by U.S. Muslims, who between 2007 and 2011 became much more approving of the U.S. government and reported some small declines in experiences of discrimination. Reports of some kinds of discrimination remained high, however, with 2011 majorities of every origin group except Iran-born seeing American news coverage of Muslims as unfair and majorities saying government surveillance singles out Muslims.

Continuing reports of discrimination might suggest that some U.S. Muslims would react to discrimination with increased approval of al-Qaida and suicide bombing, but there is no sign of this kind of reaction. Disapproval of al-Qaida and suicide bombing is overwhelming and stable over time. But the "war of ideas" has made no progress on several fronts. In both 2007 and 2011, almost half of U.S. Muslims see the war on terrorism as insincere and almost half see the U.S. military in Afghanistan as a mistake.

Thus many U.S. Muslims are not happy about the war on terrorism, about military intervention associated with the war on terrorism, or about discrimination they feel at home. But the 2011 poll makes clear that U.S. Muslims have not turned their concerns toward increased approval of terrorist violence.

Predicting Terrorism-related Opinions

In both 2007 and 2011, seeing the war on terrorism as insincere was not correlated with opinion of al-Qaida or opinion of suicide bombing. The latter items were substantially correlated, and we created a RadOpinion scale that averaged responses to these two items. Then we turned to regression to look for predictors of the war on terrorism, and for predictors of RadOpinion. Dummy codings of group membership were included in the regression to control for group differences in response to the dependent variable.

Predicting opinion of the war on terrorism. In 2007 there were four significant predictors of seeing the war on terrorism as insincere: disapproval of President Bush, seeing military force in Afghanistan as a wrong decision, seeing discrimination in government surveillance, and seeing media unfair to Muslims. In 2011 there is only one significant predictor: seeing military force in Afghanistan as a wrong decision predicts opinion of the war on terrorism as well as four predictors taken together in 2007. Statistically, the level of prediction is moderate at best; we need to know more about why some Muslims remain negative toward the war on terrorism.

Our interpretation of this pattern is that disapproval of the war on terrorism in 2007 was part of a broad mix of disapproval of the government and its actions, whereas in 2011, under President Obama, the war on terrorism had crystalized to mean foreign military intervention in Muslim countries.

If this interpretation is correct, there is an interesting implication. Decreasing perceptions of discrimination in the United States probably will not affect Muslims' view of the war on terrorism. Decreasing discrimination experienced by U.S. Muslims is a worthy goal in its own right, but, on our interpretation, only change in perception of U.S. military intervention in predominantly Muslim countries will affect opinions of the war on terrorism. This kind of change may be possible. If they come to favor U.S. intervention against Islamic State, for instance, then U.S. Muslims may become more favorable toward the war on terrorism.

Predicting RadOpinion. In 2007 only low education was a significant predictor of RadOpinion, that is, the mean of opinion toward al-Qaida and opinion about suicide bombing. In 2011 there were two significant predictors: low education and reporting being physically threatened or attacked because of being Muslim. The one consistent predictor, low education, is not statistically strong; we do not yet understand why a small minority of U.S. Muslims have radical opinions.

Group Differences

Broken down by origin group, two groups stood out in both 2007 and 2011 results for U.S. Muslims: African-Americans and Iran-born.

African-American Muslims. Compared with other origin groups, African-American Muslims reported lower education, lower satisfaction with financial condition, were less likely married, and much more likely to have converted to Islam (72 percent vs. 0 to 9 percent for other origin groups). African-American Muslims were also more likely to take part in non-prayer activities at mosque or Islamic Center, more likely to see a conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society, more dissatisfied with how things are going in the U.S., and more likely to think that government's anti-terrorism policies single out Muslims for increased surveillance. Finally, African-Americans show a small tendency toward higher approval for al-Qaida (12 and 6 percent approval vs. 0 – 6 percent approval for other origin groups).

It is important to notice that African-American converts did not differ from African-Americans raised in Islam on any political opinion. This result may seem surprising given that converts have been found over-represented among Americans charged with ISIS-related activities.^[xviii] But there should be no surprise in finding that mass opinion and radical action do not show the same relation with convert status. The psychology of radicalization of opinion may be importantly different from the psychology of radicalization in action.^[xix]

In sum, it appears that African-American Muslims are economically less successful than immigrant Muslims, more alienated from U.S. culture, and more negative toward the U.S. government (except President Obama!). Recent controversies in the United States over police shootings of black men, and the Black Lives Matter movement, are likely to have increased alienation of African-American Muslims and left them if anything more negative about the U.S. government.

Iran-born Muslims. Demographically and religiously, Iran-born Muslims stand out in both 2007 and 2011. They are older than other origin groups, and less religious than other groups on five of our six measures of religiosity. Despite these differences, their opinions of U.S. government policies look like the opinions of other origin groups. Notably, they are no less negative about U.S. forces in Afghanistan, no less likely to see the war on terrorism as insincere, and no different in their condemnation of al-Qaida and suicide bombing.

The results for Iran-born are interesting in showing just how broadly U.S. Muslims disapprove of the war on terrorism and U.S. intervention in Afghanistan. Iran-born Muslims are mostly Shi'a rather than Sunni Muslims. Thus even Shi'a Muslims in the United States, who have sectarian reasons for disliking Sunni-based al-Qaida and who are in any case not very religious—even Shi'a Muslims show substantial disapproval of the war on terrorism (insincere 66 percent in 2007, 40 percent in 2011) and intervention in Afghanistan (wrong decision 43 percent in 2007, 59 percent 2011).

Conclusions

Here we headline some notable results of this study.

1. U.S. Muslims are not a homogenous community: Iran-born and African-American Muslims stand out from other origin groups.
2. In every origin group, U.S. Muslims remain overwhelmingly negative toward al-Qaida and toward suicide bombing in defense of Islam
3. Every origin group showed a 2007 - 2011 decline in doubts about the war on terrorism; nevertheless 39% or more of every group continue to believe that the war on terrorism is not a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism.
4. Religiosity remains high in every origin group except Iran-born, but religiosity is not associated with approval of al-Qaida or suicide bombing, or with disapproval of the war on terrorism.
5. Across origin groups, a substantial minority continue to see discrimination against Muslims in the United States, but perceived discrimination is not associated with opinion of al-Qaida, suicide bombing, or the war on terrorism.
6. Converts do not have more radical opinions than those raised in Islam, although converts may be over-represented among jihadi terrorists. It seems likely that radicalization of opinion and radicalization in action are different problems.
7. Disapproval of U.S. intervention in Afghanistan is substantial and stable over time.
8. We know little about why some U.S. Muslims are negative toward the war on terrorism: disapproval of U.S. intervention in Afghanistan is a significant predictor in 2007 and the only predictor in 2011.
9. We know even less about why a tiny minority of U.S. Muslims approve of al-Qaida and suicide bombing; low education is a significant but weak predictor in both 2007 and 2011.

Appendix 1

Demographics by origin: Comparison of Pew Surveys of US Muslims in 2007 and 2011 (weighted data)

| | AfAm | | Pakistan | | Iran | | Arab | | S.Asia | | Africa | |
|--|------|------|----------|-----------|------|-----------|------|------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 | 2007 | 2011 |
| N | 135 | 110 | 137 | 158 | 87 | 58 | 193 | 219 | 151 | 125 | 107 | 70 |
| Percent age group 18-39 | 56 | 54 | 55 | 47 | 19 | 21 | 54 | 54 | 42 | 39 | 57 | 56 |
| Percent female | 25 | 29 | 54 | 32 | 62 | 79 | 52 | 46 | 47 | 45 | 45 | 37 |
| Percent college degree or more | 9 | 12 | 37 | 43 | 41 | 41 | 22 | 28 | 37 | 53 | 23 | 10 |
| Percent family income \$50k or more | 32 | 33 | 50 | 43 | 79 | 61 | 33 | 27 | 53 | 56 | 30 | 21 |
| Percent employed full time | 45 | 53 | 47 | 51 | 40 | 43 | 27 | 36 | 49 | 52 | 45 | 43 |
| Percent financial condition <i>excellent or good</i> | 28 | 28 | 70 | 47 | 59 | 38 | 37 | 52 | 48 | 56 | 37 | 55 |
| Percent married | 32 | 39 | 73 | 69 | 69 | 74 | 82 | 73 | 84 | 76 | 52 | 48 |
| Percent convert to Islam | 66 | 67 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 10 |

Note: Bold marks 2011 percentage that is substantially (20 percentage points) different from corresponding 2007 percentage

Appendix 2

Table 8: Regression predicting seeing the war on terrorism as insincere in 2007 and 2011 (complete results)

| Predictor | Beta | | Predictor | Beta | |
|---|------|-------|---|--------|--------|
| | 2007 | 2011 | | 2007 | 2011 |
| Demographics | | | Discrimination | | |
| Age | -.04 | .06 | People acted as if they are suspicious of you because you are a Muslim | -.02 | -.06 |
| Sex | -.07 | .05 | Been called offensive names because you are a Muslim | .08 | -.04 |
| Education | .03 | -.05 | Been physically threatened or attacked because you are a Muslim | -.04 | -.01 |
| Income | .05 | .02 | Government's anti-terrorism policies single out Muslims in the U.S. for increased surveillance and monitoring | -.15** | -.08 |
| Employment | .09 | -.07 | Media unfair/fair | .13** | .06 |
| Financial situation | -.07 | .02 | Government | | |
| Marital status | .02 | .06 | Satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today | .03 | .05 |
| Convert status | .16 | -.01* | Approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president | .19*** | .11* |
| Religiosity | | | U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan | .16** | .34*** |
| Attendance of mosque | .02 | .05 | Dummy variables | | |
| Social activities within mosque | -.04 | .00 | AfAm vs Arab | .02 | -.01 |
| Importance of religion | -.02 | -.07 | AfAm vs Pakistan | .04 | .09 |
| Feeling first as Muslim/American | .12* | .10* | AfAm vs Iran | .11 | -.05 |
| Natural conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society | -.01 | -.05 | AfAm vs SouthAsia | .11 | .01 |
| | | | AfAm vs Africa | .01 | .11 |

Table 9: Regression predicting RadOpinion Scale in 2007 and 2011 (complete results)

| Predictor | Beta | | Predictor | Beta | |
|---|--------|-------|---|------|--------|
| | 2007 | 2011 | | 2007 | 2011 |
| Demographics | | | Discrimination | | |
| Age | .05 | -.08 | People acted as if they are suspicious of you because you are a Muslim | -.00 | .06 |
| Sex | -.02 | -.07 | Been called offensive names because you are a Muslim | .12 | .04 |
| Education | .23*** | .20** | Been physically threatened or attacked because you are a Muslim | .04 | .23*** |
| Income | .00 | .06 | Government's anti-terrorism policies single out Muslims in the U.S. for increased surveillance and monitoring | -.04 | .04 |
| Employment | -.01 | -.13* | Media unfair/fair | .06 | .09 |
| Financial situation | .11 | .12* | Government | | |
| Marital status | -.03 | -.03 | Satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today | .06 | -.02 |
| Convert status | .05 | .06 | Approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president | -.04 | .00 |
| Religiosity | | | U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan | -.07 | -.05 |
| Attendance of mosque | -.03 | .07 | Dummy variables | | |
| Social activities within mosque | .08 | .00 | AfAm vs Arab | .12 | .08 |
| Importance of religion | .00 | .09 | AfAm vs Pakistan | .20* | .13 |
| Feeling first as Muslim/American | -.11* | .07 | AfAm vs Iran | .13 | -.05 |
| Natural conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society | .08 | .11* | AfAm vs SouthAsia | .13 | .10 |
| | | | AfAm vs Africa | .20* | .06 |

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