



# **Reactions to the War on Terrorism: Ethnic Group Differences in the 2007 Pew Poll of American Muslims**

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3300 Symons Hall • College Park, MD 20742 • 301.405.6600 • [www.start.umd.edu](http://www.start.umd.edu)

## About This Report

This report is part of a series sponsored by the Human Factors/Behavioral Sciences Division in support of the Counter-IED Prevent/Deter program. The goal of this program is to sponsor research that will aid the intelligence and law enforcement communities in identifying potential terrorist threats and support policymakers in developing prevention efforts.

The authors of this report are Clark McCauley and Sarah Scheckter. Correspondence relating to this paper to Clark McCauley, Psychology Department, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010. Email: [cmccaule@brynmawr.edu](mailto:cmccaule@brynmawr.edu) Fax: 610.526.7476.

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## About START

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### **Abstract**

This study explores opinions relating to the war on terrorism for seven groups of participants in the 2007 Pew poll of U.S Muslims: African-American Muslims (self-identified as “Black” and born in the U.S. of U.S.-born parents) and Muslims born in Pakistan, Iran, Arab countries, South Asian countries excluding Pakistan, European countries, and sub-Saharan African countries. For all seven groups, half or more of participants did not believe the U.S. war on terrorism is sincere but less than ten percent had favorable opinions of Al Qaeda and only a few percent justified suicide bombing in defense of Islam. Within these general similarities two groups stood out. Iran-born Muslims were on average less religious than other groups but their opinions about the war on terrorism were strongly related to individual differences in religiosity, perceptions of discrimination, and opposition to government and government policies. African-American Muslims were more negative than other groups about the war on terrorism but their opinions were unrelated to these same individual differences. Discussion suggests that these results are the beginning of a more differentiated view of U.S. Muslims.

There can be little doubt that different diaspora groups in the U.S. have brought with them different subcultures. Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants to New York City famously created neighborhoods and communities of their own, and other major U.S. cities saw similar ethnic neighborhoods develop. Muslim immigrants to the U.S. have done the same, including Iranians in Los Angeles, Somalis in Minneapolis and Lebanese in Detroit. These immigrant communities reproduce to some extent their homeland traditions in language, religion, and ethnicity as well as food and music preferences.

There is reason to believe that different Muslim communities in the U.S. may also have different views of political issues and government policies. Such differences might arise initially from the political contexts that moved different groups to emigrate from their home lands. Many Iranians came to the U.S., for instance, when the Shah was toppled. Somalis came to the U.S. when famine and violence made their homeland a dangerous place. But the experience of diasporas in their new homes can also make a difference. 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 (e.g. Fukuyama, 2006; Sageman, 2008).

Recognizing that immigrant groups can differ markedly in their cultures and their political viewpoints should lead to caution about general characterizations of “Muslims” in any Western country. In the U.S., Muslims from Arab countries, Iran, or South Asia are likely to differ in many important ways, including their views of U.S. policies and the war on terrorism. In this paper we explore opinions of different groups of U.S. Muslims about issues relating to the war on terrorism. Using data from the 2007 Pew poll of U.S. Muslims we compare groups of U.S. Muslims defined by country of birth, with special attention to converts to Islam.

### **Muslims in the U.S.: Comparison by Origins**

If “Muslims” in the U.S. are in fact a congeries of different communities, how can we learn about these differences? The obvious approach is opinion polling but in practice it is difficult to get polling data that can represent tiny fractions of a population. Muslims in the U.S. are less than

one percent of the population, and different ethnic and diaspora groups of Muslims are correspondingly smaller percentages. Standard polling methods, such as random-digit dialing or address sampling, are impractical when the target group will comprise less than one percent of those sampled.

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

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

*African-American Muslims.* It is believed that there has been an African-American Muslim presence in the United States since the eighteenth century slave trade, though the bulk of the African-American Muslim population growth has occurred during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Estimates of the African-American Muslim population have varied widely: Turner (2004) has estimated that 42% of Muslims in the United States are African-American. Pew (2007, p. 1), on the other hand, estimated that 2.35 million Americans are Muslim, and estimated that 20% of that number are African-American (suggesting approximately 470,000 African-American Muslims). Pew further estimates that about half of all Muslims who were born in the United States are African-American, many of them converts (Pew Research Center, 2007).

African-American Muslims are typically members of one of several (typically Sunni) groups, including the American Society of Muslims (the descendent of the original Nation of Islam), the new Nation of Islam (now led by Louis Farrakhan), the Five Percenters, the Dar ul-Islam, the Islamic Mission of America, and other smaller organizations. We will refer to African-American Muslims throughout this paper. Though some use the term “Black Muslims,” this term has 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 (Pluralism Project, n.d.).

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

*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 (Yasmann, 2009), in Switzerland (Islam in Europe, 2010), in Germany (Islam in Europe 2010) and in the U.S. (Abrams, 2009). 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 (2009) show that converts to a religion are more fervent, but the differences between converts and born members are small. For instance, 69% of

converts and 62% of nonconverts say religion is very important to them; 52% of converts and 44% of nonconverts attend worship once a week. Such small differences in zeal are unlikely to be associated with big differences in political opinions. But these comparisons are averaged across Christian religions; Muslim converts and nonconverts were not compared. It is possible therefore that Muslim converts are much more zealous than born Muslims.

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

### **Overview of the study**

We analyzed the 2007 Pew Survey of U.S. Muslims to explore two questions. First, are there important differences in the political views of U.S. Muslims as a function of what country they were born in? Second, do converts to Islam have more radical political views than nonconverts?

We focus particularly on opinions relating to the war on terrorism. As discussed in Leuprecht et al. (2010), Al Qaeda frames its appeal as follows: the West is conducting a war on Islam, Al Qaeda is leading the Muslim resistance to the war on Islam, and suicide bombing and other attacks on civilians are legitimate because these are the only means open to Muslims against the power of the West. Our analysis focuses therefore on three opinions relating to Al Qaeda's frame: belief that the war on terrorism is not sincere, favorable opinion of Al Qaeda, and justification for suicide bombing in defense of Islam.

## Methods

### Sample Design

According to the 2007 Pew report, *Muslim Americans: Middle class and mostly mainstream*, “Nearly 60,000 respondents were interviewed to find a representative sample of Muslims. Interviews were conducted by telephone between January 24 and April 30, 2007 by the research firm of Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. (SRBI). After taking into account the complex sample design, the average margin of sampling error on the 1,050 completed interviews with Muslims is +/-5 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. An analysis of the geographic distribution of the Muslim population was undertaken, using several different sources of data. A key resource was the Pew Research Center database of more than 125,000 telephone interviews conducted between 2000 and 2006 (when planning for this project was completed); it was used to estimate the density of Muslims in each U.S. county. Another resource was data from large government surveys.”

According to the Pew Research Center (2007), 131 of the total 1050 interviews were conducted in Arabic, Urdu, or Farsi, rather than English, with all three translated surveys being back-translated by native speakers. Analyses reported here did not use the weighting that Pew used to estimate population values; percentages reported here may therefore differ slightly from corresponding percentages in the Pew report.

This report focuses on 1017 respondents who were coded by Pew for country or region of origin: 28 respondents were missing place of birth and 15 were born in countries coded by Pew as *other*. Of the 273 respondents reporting they were born in the U.S., 135 were identified as African-American Muslims; the remaining 138 respondents do not appear in this report. Thus the total of respondents represented in this report is 979 (=1050-28-15-138).

### Groups defined by birthplace

Two countries had large enough numbers of emigrants for separate analysis: Pakistan (137) and Iran (87). Arab countries combined had 103 emigrants (Pew Research Center, 2007, p.15, used

the United Nations Development Programme classification of the Arab region; emigrants in this survey came from Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, Morocco, Palestine, Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt), South Asian countries excluding Pakistan (Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan) had 151 emigrants, European countries (including Bosnia and Herzegovina) had 59 emigrants, and sub-Saharan African countries excluding Egypt (Sudan, Somalia, Africa - unspecified) had 107 emigrants. These groups are defined in the Pew data set by Pew investigators. In addition, we identified African-American Muslims as respondents who self-identified as Black and who reported being born in the United States with both father and mother born in the United States.

### **Missing data**

Some of the items of interest in the Pew Survey may be considered sensitive material, especially items about aspects of the war on terrorism. Possibly related to sensitivity, some items had non-negligible percentages of missing responses (*DK* or *refused*). In our tabled results, percentages are calculated without missing responses in the denominator, but we provide information about missing rates for categories of items.

### **Results**

Given the relatively small sample sizes for comparisons by origin (*n*s ranging from 57 to 151), and the many possible comparisons (7 categories of origin, see Table 1), reliance on statistical testing would likely inflate the number of significant results obtained. Rather than statistical significance, we use a criterion of substantive significance in which percentage differences less than 15 percentage points are not interpreted. In addition, we are alert to consistency: if one category of respondent is consistently different from others, we note this pattern for later discussion. For correlations, our threshold of substantive significance was magnitude of .25 or greater.

### **Demographics**

Overall, 47% of 1050 respondents were female; the range across our seven origin groups (Table 1) was from 37% to 48%. College level education or more ranged from 44% (Europe-born) to

74% (Iran-born), except African-Americans were lower at 22%. Family income of \$75,000 or more ranged from 24% (African-American, Africa-born) to 64% (Iran-born). Full time employment ranged from 49% (African-American, Pakistan-born) to 62% (S.Asia-born). Perceiving one's own financial condition as excellent or good ranged from 38% (African-American) to 71% (Pakistan-born). Currently married ranged from 63% (Europe-born) to 82% (Arab-born), except African-Americans were lower at 37%. Converts to Islam ranged from none (Pakistan-born) to 9% (Europe-born), except that African-Americans were mostly converts at 72%.

In general, African-American Muslims reported lower socioeconomic status than our six immigrant groups, were less often married, and much more often converts to Islam. Iran-born respondents reported highest education and income.

**Table 1**

**Demographics by origin: 2007 Pew survey of U.S. Muslims**

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

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

## Religiosity

Table 2 shows that African-American Muslims spend more time at the mosque than other Muslims: 56% (at least 18 percentage points higher than any other group) reported that they take part in social or religious activities at the mosque beyond salah and Jum'ah prayer. The next-highest group was Pakistan-born Muslims (38%). Seventy-nine percent of African-American Muslims (twice as many as any other group) endorsed the idea that mosques should express their views on social/political questions; the next-highest group on this item was Muslims born in the Arab region (50%). Taken together, results on these two items indicate that African-American Muslims have more of their social and political life centered in the mosque than other U.S. Muslims. This does not mean exceptional religiosity: African-American Muslims are not substantially different from other Muslims in attending mosque for prayer or belief in the Koran.

Also notable in Table 2, Iran-born and Europe-born Muslims are lower than other groups in attending mosque for prayer, other mosque activities, importance of religion, seeing the Koran as the word of God, and wearing the hijab in public. In general these two groups, especially Iran-born Muslims, show less religiosity than other U.S. Muslims.

**Table 2**

**Religiosity: 2007 Pew survey of U.S. Muslims: Percent italicized responses by origin**

	AfAm 135	Pakistan 137	Iran 87	Arab 193	S.Asia 151	Europe 59	Africa 107
On average, how often do you attend the mosque or Islamic Center for salah and Jum'ah Prayer? <i>once a week or more</i>	57	53	6	41	39	17	51
And outside of salah and Jum'ah prayer, do you take part in any other social or religious activities at the mosque or Islamic Center? <i>yes</i>	56	38	10	27	19	19	29
How important is religion in your life? <i>very important</i>	83	64	28	73	76	41	84
<i>Koran is the word of God (vs. written by men)</i>	90	96	57	94	93	67	91
In your opinion, should mosques keep out of political matters – or should they express their views on day-to-day social and political questions? <i>should express views</i>	79	26	18	50	33	23	39
Do you think of yourself first as an American or first as a Muslim? <i>Muslim</i>	59	58	27	39	46	34	47
When you are out in public, how often do you wear the headcover or hijab? [females only] <i>all the time</i>	47	31	11	61	25	8	49
Do you think there is a natural conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society, or don't you think so? <i>yes, there is a conflict</i>	37	18	21	21	25	33	17

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

### **Experience of Discrimination**

In general, results in Table 3 show that substantial minorities of every origin group report experiencing some kind of personal discrimination on account of their religion, and over half of every group see discrimination against Muslims as a group in security surveillance and in press coverage of Islam and Muslims.

African-American Muslims (42%) reported a higher rate of others acting suspiciously towards them because of their faith, at least 18 percentage points higher than any other group (the next highest being Muslims from Africa, 24%). Also, more African-American Muslims (39%) reported being the victims of discrimination in the U.S. (next-highest groups Iran-born, South Asia-born, and Africa-born Muslims all at 24%).

**Table 3**

**Experience of discrimination: 2007 Pew survey of U.S. Muslims: Percent italicized responses by origin**

	AfAm 135	Pakistan 137	Iran 87	Arab 193	S.Asia 151	Europe 59	Africa 107
Are you very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not at all worried about not being hired for a job or promoted because of your religion? <i>very</i> or <i>somewhat worried</i>	40	38	37	46	41	24	51
In the past twelve months, have people acted as if they are suspicious of you because you are a Muslim, or not? <i>yes</i>	42	16	21	16	20	10	24
... have you been called offensive names because you are a Muslim, or not? <i>yes</i>	19	9	8	14	13	9	9
...have you been physically threatened or attacked because you are a Muslim, or not? <i>yes</i>	3	2	1	2	4	2	2
And thinking more generally, not just in the past twelve months, have you ever been the victim of discrimination as a Muslim living in the United States? <i>yes</i>	39	17	24	23	24	20	24
Do you think that the government's anti-terrorism policies single out Muslims in the U.S. for increased surveillance and monitoring, or don't you think so? <i>singles out Muslims</i>	78	61	63	60	68	60	58
Do you think that coverage of Islam and Muslims by American news organizations is generally fair or unfair? <i>unfair</i>	74	61	69	73	59	55	64

*Note. Across 7 origin groups and 5 personal discrimination items (the first five items in Table 3), missing ranged from 0 to 5 percent. The two group discrimination items had larger missing rates: from 3 to 22 percent missing for the item asking about government surveillance of Muslims, and from 3 to 14 percent missing for the item asking whether news coverage of Muslims is unfair. Notably, African-American respondents showed lower missing rates: 3 percent missing on both items.*

### **Government Policies**

Across seven origin groups and four government items (Table 4), missing ranged from 2 to 22 percent. It seems likely that items about U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq would be more threatening for respondents than the item about President Bush, but, perhaps surprisingly, missing rates are at least as high for the latter as for the former. We assume that most of the missing data reflect real uncertainty in response to the question asked.

Consistent with this assumption, half or more of each origin group expressed dissatisfaction with “the way things are going” in the U.S., with the president, and with use of military force in Iraq. For every group, there was less disapproval of military force in Afghanistan than military force in Iraq; nevertheless a substantial minority of every origin group disapproved of using force in Afghanistan.

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

**Table 4**

**Government policies: 2007 Pew survey of U.S. Muslims: Percent italicized responses (percent missing) by origin**

	AfAm 135	Pakistan 137	Iran 87	Arab 193	S.Asia 151	Europe 59	Africa 107
Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today? <i>dissatisfied</i>	87 (4)	47 (7)	54 (6)	52 (11)	57 (7)	58 (12)	58 (9)
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president? <i>disapprove</i>	93 (4)	72 (18)	82 (16)	83 (19)	77 (13)	81 (10)	87 (22)
Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan? <i>wrong decision</i>	77 (7)	49 (15)	43 (5)	56 (20)	41 (12)	32 (20)	47 (18)
Do you think the U.S. made the right decision in using military force against Iraq? <i>wrong decision</i>	89 (2)	83 (12)	81 (8)	88 (17)	90 (9)	82 (14)	90 (16)

**Opinions Relating to Terrorism**

Percentages of missing responses for the three terrorism-related items are presented in parentheses in Table 5: 10-20 percent missing for the WOT item, 14-27 percent missing for the AQ item, and 3-11 percent missing for the Violence item. We note that these rates are only slightly higher than missing rates for the four government items in Table 4: 4-12 percent missing for the item about satisfaction with the way things are going, 4-22 percent missing for the items about approval of President Bush, 5-20 percent missing for the item about military force in Afghanistan, and 2-17 percent missing for the item about military force in Iraq. As already noted, missing rates for the four government items suggest that these items were not threatening to respondents. If missing rates for terrorism-related items are only slightly higher than missing rates for government items, then any fear of giving an honest opinion about the war on terrorism appears to have had only slight effect on survey respondents.

From another perspective, one might suppose that the most threatening item in Table 5 is the item about justifying suicide bombing in defense of Islam. This item, however, has lower missing rates (2-11 percent) than the WOT item (10-20 percent missing) or the AQ item (14-27 percent missing). Thus, we are inclined to believe that the percentages in Table 5 are only slightly conservative estimates of Muslim respondents' opinions relating to the war on terrorism.

In general, Table 5 indicates that about half of U.S. Muslims do not believe that the war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism, that fewer than ten percent of U.S. Muslims justify suicide bombing in defense of Islam, and that only a few percent of U.S. Muslims have a positive view of Al Qaeda.

Again African-American Muslims stand out from other origin-groups. Seventy-three percent of African-American Muslims reported that they did not consider the U.S. war on terrorism to be a "sincere effort" to reduce terrorism. This is seventeen percentage points higher than the next-highest group, Iran-born Muslims (56%).

**Table 5**

**Terrorism-related items: 2007 Pew survey of U.S. Muslims: Percent italicized responses (percent missing) by origin**

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

**Correlates of opinions about WOT, AQ, and violence in defense of Islam**

In this section we look for demographic characteristics and opinions that are correlated with the three terrorism-related items represented in Table 5. In particular we are looking for relationships that can shed light on why some respondents see the war on terrorism (WOT) as insincere, some have a favorable opinion of Al Qaeda (AQ), and some justify violence against civilians in defense of Islam (Violence).

Correlational analyses relating to these three items were carried out after recoding missing responses (*DK* or *refused*) as neutral values. The WOT item was originally coded 1 for

sincere and 2 for not sincere (*don't believe that*); missing was recoded 1.5. The AQ item was originally coded 1 *very unfavorable*, 2 *somewhat unfavorable*, 3 *somewhat favorable*, and 4 *very favorable*; missing was recoded as 2.5. Similarly the justifying violence item was originally coded 1 for *violence never justified*, 2 for *violence rarely justified*, 3 for *sometimes justified*, and 4 for *often justified*; missing was recoded as 2.5. Given the substantial percent missing for the WOT and AQ items (10-30%), recoding is a conservative approach to correlation such that observed correlations are based as much as possible on the same individuals.

With the same logic, correlational analyses were conducted with items listed second, fourth, fifth, sixth and eighth in Table 2 recoded 1.5 for missing data. Similarly recoded for correlational analyses were items listed second through seventh in Table 3, and all four items listed in Table 4. These items were all two-value yes-no items such that 1.5 provided neutral values.

In this and subsequent correlational analyses, we used a criterion of substantive significance rather than statistical significance. Statistical tests would make the same size correlation significant or not depending on sample size (here ranging from 59 Europe-born respondents to 194 Arab-born respondents). For our smallest sample, European origin respondents, correlations of about .25 are significant at  $p < .05$  two tailed, and correlations less than this value are unlikely to have practical significance. Thus we here attend only to correlations of magnitude .25 or larger.

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

**Converts.** The first demographic characteristic examined was whether a respondent was a convert or not. Our three terrorism-related items (see Table 5), considered separately for each

of six origin groups (no converts among Pakistan-born), produced 18 correlation coefficients (not tabled) linking conversion status with a terrorism-related item.

Of the 18 “convert correlations,” only two are substantial. For Iran-born respondents, converts are more likely to justify violence in defense of Islam (.29). For Europe-born respondents, converts are *less* likely to see the war as insincere (-.26). These two correlations offer little support for the idea that converts are more likely than born Muslims to be negative about the war on terrorism.

Converts were also compared with nonconverts for each of the eight religiosity items in Table 2. Across six origin groups (no converts among Pakistan-born) and eight items, only four of forty-eight correlations were .25 or greater. The four were scattered: Iran-born converts more likely than nonconverts to wear the hijab (.47), Europe-born converts were more likely to say that mosques should express social and political opinions (.27), Africa-born converts were more likely to rate religion as important (.44) but, surprisingly, also less likely to say that the Koran is the word of God (-.28). It appears that converts are not generally more religious than nonconverts.

**Correlates of terrorism-related items: demographics, religiosity, discrimination, and policy opinions.** For each origin-group, we correlated each of the three terrorism-related items appearing in Table 5 with each of the items appearing in Tables 1-4 (6 demographic items not including convert status, 8 religiosity items, 7 experience of discrimination items, and 4 items relating to government policies).

In order to show how the three terrorism-related items had different correlates, Tables 6 and 7 present correlation coefficients for each origin group for each item that had substantive correlations for at least **two** origin-groups. Table 6 thus represents the items best correlated with seeing the war on terrorism as insincere, and Table 7 represents the items best correlated with favorable view of Al Qaeda. Table 8 presents correlations for the same items as Table 7, this time related to justifying suicide bombing.

Table 6 shows that seeing the WOT as insincere is substantially correlated for most origin-groups with two discrimination items (Muslims singled out, media unfair to Muslims) and

with four national policy items (dissatisfied how things are going in the country, disapprove the president, wrong decision in Afghanistan, wrong decision in Iraq). Multiple regression using these six items produced Adjusted Rsquares shown in the last row of Table 6. These correspond to multiple R's ranging from .17 to .64, with opinions of African-American respondents least predicted by these items.

Table 7 shows that favorable evaluation of Al Qaeda is substantially correlated for most origin groups with two demographic items (lower education, lower family income), two religiosity items (thinking of self first as Muslim, often wear hijab), and one national policy item (wrong decision in Afghanistan). Among the thirty-five correlations in Table 7, nineteen are magnitude .25 or better. Multiple regression using four items (hijab item not included because only female respondents) produced Adjusted Rsquares shown in the last row of Table 7. These correspond to multiple R's ranging from .20 to .42, with opinions of African-American respondents again least predicted by these items.

For African-Americans, the highest correlate with favorable opinion of Al Qaeda was worry about not being hired or promoted because of being Muslim ( $r=.29$ ). This item does not appear in Table 7 because it produced a substantial correlation with the Al Qaeda item for only one origin-group and our criterion for including an item in Tables 6 and 7 was a substantial correlation for at least two origin-groups. But for African-American Muslims the perception of job discrimination was alone a better predictor of opinion of Al Qaeda than the regression prediction based on four items in Table 7 (.29 versus multiple R of .20).

**Table 6**

**Correlations with seeing war on terrorism as insincere, by origin**

	AfAm 135	Pakistan 137	Iran 87	Arab 193	S.Asia 151	Europe 59	Africa 107
Muslims singled out for surveillance	.11	.25	.32	.25	.26	.21	.17
American media unfair to Muslims	.07	.32	.33	.12	.26	.03	.43
Dissatisfied with the way things are going in the country	.20	.29	.39	.20	.21	.28	.11
Disapprove George W. Bush	.24	.30	.49	.30	.22	.32	.25
Wrong decision Afghanistan	.03	.14	.36	.33	.38	.04	.30
Wrong decision Iraq	.18	.29	.27	.39	.31	.28	.33
Regression Adjusted Rsquare	.03	.16	.41	.19	.23	.06	.25

**Table 7**

**Correlations with more favorable view of Al Qaeda, by origin**

	AfAm 135	Pakistan 137	Iran 87	Arab 193	S.Asia 151	Europe 59	Africa 107
Education	-.16	-.38	-.36	-.27	-.25	-.13	-.30
Family income	-.02	-.34	-.16	-.15	-.26	-.31	-.26
Think of self first as Muslim	.12	.27	.18	.32	.19	.41	.22
Often wear hijab (women only)	-.02	.10	.16	.30	.38	.52	.37
Wrong decision Afghanistan	.03	.17	.18	.29	.26	.28	.12
Regression adjusted Rsquare	.04	.12	.11	.18	.09	.08	.09

*Note. Regression does not include hijab item, answered only by women.*

Table 8 shows that justifying suicide bombing in defense of Islam is not substantially correlated with the same five items that produce substantial correlations with the Al Qaeda item in Table 7. Only three scattered correlations reach our .25 cutoff level. As already noted, there are no useful predictors of justifying suicide bombing. Multiple regression using four items (hijab item again not included) produced Adjusted Rsquares shown in the last row of Table 8. These correspond to multiple R's ranging from .00 to .33, indicating these items did not predict justifying suicide bombing for any origin group with the possible exception of Africa-origin respondents (multiple R of .33).

**Table 8**

**Correlations with justifying violence in defense of Islam, by origin**

	AfAm 135	Pakistan 137	Iran 87	Arab 193	S.Asia 151	Europe 59	Africa 107
Education	-.18	-.27	-.14	-.07	-.17	.12	-.24
Family income	-.00	-.05	.10	-.08	-.20	-.01	-.20
Think of self first as Muslim	-.11	.14	.27	.21	.15	.14	.26
Often wear hijab (women only)	.07	.22	.61	.15	.03	-.02	.26
Wrong decision Afghanistan	-.02	.15	.12	.00	.03	-.01	.12
Regression Adjusted Rsquare	.04	.01	.03	.02	.06	.00	.11

*Note. Regression does not include hijab item, answered only by women.*

Taken together, Tables 6-8 suggest two generalizations. The correlates of seeing WOT as insincere are perceptions of discrimination against Muslims and dissatisfaction with national leaders and national policies, whereas the correlates of sympathy for Al Qaeda and justification of suicide bombing are demographic items (younger, lower income), religious items (thinking of self first as Muslim, wearing hijab), and a policy item (wrong decision in Afghanistan). Further,

seeing WOT as insincere and opinion of Al Qaeda are better predicted by these respective items than justification of suicide bombing – for which prediction is negligible. Interpretation of this pattern is taken up in the Discussion.

### **Discussion**

In the Introduction we raised the general question of whether political opinions, in particular opinions related to the war on terrorism, might differ for different subcultures of Muslim Americans. To explore this question, we divided respondents to the 2007 Pew poll of U.S. Muslims into seven groups based on country of birth: African-American (135), Pakistan (137) Iran (87), Arab countries (193), S.Asia not including Pakistan (151), and African countries not including predominantly Arab countries (107). African-Americans were respondents self identifying as “Black” and reporting they were born in the U.S. of parents who were also both born in the U.S.

Then we identified three Pew questions in which opinions could be identified as running against the war on terrorism: seeing the war on terrorism as insincere, favorable opinion of Al Qaeda, and justifying suicide bombing in defense of Islam. In addition we identified nineteen Pew questions about issues that may be related to negative feelings about the war on terrorism: eight items about religiosity, seven items about perception of discrimination against Muslims, and four items evaluating satisfaction with government and government actions in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In broad terms, we examined opinions on these twenty-two items, as well as standard demographics, for each of the seven origin-groups. Then we looked for correlations of demographic items, religion items, discrimination items, and government satisfaction items with each of the three terrorism-related items for each of the seven groups.

### **Three opinions about terrorism**

Perhaps our most surprising result is that the three terrorism-related items in the Pew poll are not strongly related. The correlation between positive opinion of Al Qaeda and justifying suicide

bombing is consistently positive, but across the seven origin-groups the correlations range from .19 to .36. This level of correlation indicates that opinions about Al Qaeda and opinions about suicide bombing have importantly different origins, and success in changing one of these opinions may have little effect on the other.

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

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

### **General patterns of opinion among U.S. Muslims**

Across all seven origin-groups of U.S. Muslims, there are some broad consistencies. Religiosity, as indexed by attending mosque frequently, high ratings of the importance of religion, and seeing the Koran as the word of God, is high except for Iran-born and Europe-born. Between a quarter and a half of each origin-group sees itself as Muslim first and American second. About a quarter of each origin group reports having been a victim of discrimination against Muslims. More than half of each origin-group believes that Muslims in the U.S. are singled out for increased surveillance, and that coverage of Islam and Muslims by American news organizations is generally unfair. Half or more of each origin-group are dissatisfied with the way things are going in the U.S., disapprove of President George W. Bush, and believe that the U.S. made the wrong decision in using military force against Iraq. About half of each origin-group does not believe that

the war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism (73 percent for African-Americans).

This is a picture of political dissatisfaction in which most U.S. Muslims oppose U.S. policies relating to the war on terrorism and see their group as discriminated against. Given this level of dissatisfaction, it is perhaps surprising to find that favorable opinion of Al Qaeda is rare: across origin-groups, zero to four percent of respondents (except 9 percent for African-Americans). More common but still rare is the opinion that suicide bombing against civilian targets is justified in defense of Islam: across origin groups, two percent to ten percent justify this kind of violence.

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

When we turn from percentages endorsing terrorism-related items to correlations among items, the picture is no longer so consistent across origin-groups. Summarizing these correlations are the multiple regression Rsquares at the bottom of Tables 6-8. For Table 6, predicting view of the war on terrorism as insincere, the seven Rsquares range widely from .03 for African-Americans to .41 for Iran-born. The Rsquares are more similar across origin-groups for predicting favorable view of Al Qaeda (.04 to .18, Table 7) and for predicting justification for suicide bombing (.00 to .11, Table 8), but the wide variation of Rsquares in Table 6 indicates that item correlations can be importantly different for different origin-groups.

There are some other hints of origin-group differences in our results that may be worth pursuing in future research. It appears, for instance, that African-American Muslims are in some ways similar to and in some ways different from Africa-born Muslims. Given the many

comparisons possible, however, we focus here on two origin groups that appear most different from others: African-American Muslims and Iran-born Muslims.

### **African-American Muslims**

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

One might suppose that the elements of African-American concerns at the level of group comparisons would be correlated at the individual level. For instance, given that African-American Muslims are most likely to believe that the war on terrorism is not sincere and most likely to believe that the U.S. made the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan, one might suppose that it is African-American respondents who are against military force in Afghanistan who are most likely to believe that the war on terrorism is not sincere. But the correlation between opinion about Afghanistan and opinion about the war on terrorism is in fact near zero (.03).

For most origin groups, Table 6 shows that seeing the war on terrorism as insincere is associated with perceptions of discrimination, dissatisfaction with government, and opposition to U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. But for African-American respondents, these same items show no substantial correlations with opinion about the war on terrorism. Regression analyses confirm that prediction based on these items is weakest for African-American Muslims.

Similarly, for most origin groups, Table 7 shows that more favorable evaluation of Al Qaeda is generally associated with education and income, thinking of self first as Muslim, and wearing the hijab, or opposition to U.S. action in Afghanistan. But for African-American respondents these same items show no substantial correlations with opinion about Al Qaeda. Again regression analyses confirm that prediction based on these items is weakest for African-American Muslims.

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

We note that, for African-American respondents, the highest correlates of seeing the war on terrorism as insincere are items tapping general political dissatisfaction: with the way things are going in the country (.20) and with President George W. Bush (.24). For African-American respondents, but for no other origin-group, the highest correlate of more favorable view of Al Qaeda is worry about not being hired or not being promoted because of being a Muslim (.29). This pattern suggests that for African-Americans, opinions about the war on terrorism and about Al Qaeda are derived from opinions about domestic issues, including distrust of government and problems getting a job. In their views of terrorism, African-Americans appear to pay less attention than other origin-groups to U.S. foreign policy, including military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In brief, it may be that African-American opinions about the war on terrorism have little to do with the war on terrorism and more to do with dissatisfaction with politics and employment in the U.S. This suggestion cannot be evaluated without additional research.

## Iran-born Muslims

Iran-born Muslims report more education than any other origin-group and higher family income. They are also lowest in religiosity, as evidenced by lowest Mosque attendance (6% attending weekly or more), lowest social and religious mosque activities (10% once a week or more), lowest in rating religion very important in their lives (28%), lowest in seeing the Koran as the word of God (57%), and lowest in seeing themselves as Muslim first rather than American first (27%). However, Iran-born Muslims do not stand out for perception of personal or group-level discrimination, or for dissatisfaction with the U.S. government or its policies in Afghanistan and Iraq. Iran-born respondents were lowest in justifying suicide terrorism (2%) but the difference from other origin groups (5-10 percent) was not great.

Correlational results also show something unusual about Iran-born Muslims. Their opinions about the war on terrorism are by far the most strongly predicted by other Pew items, with an adjusted Rsquare of .41 (compared with next highest adjusted Rsquare of .25 for Africa-born Muslims). Opinions of Al Qaeda or opinions about suicide bombing are not strongly predicted, but wearing the hijab is correlated .61 with justifying suicide bombing. Although this correlation represents only the female respondents in the Iran-born group, it is large in relation to other groups for the same item (next highest correlation between wearing the hijab and justifying suicide terrorism is .26 for females in the Africa-born group).

What might explain the ways in which Iran-born Muslims stand out from other origin groups? One possibility is a difference in religious sect within Islam. Ninety percent of Iran-born Muslims report themselves as Shi'a, whereas the other six origin-groups report themselves mostly Sunni with percentages of Shi'a ranging from 4 to 17 percent. Outside the U.S., however, there is no evidence we are aware of that suggests that Shi'a are less religious than Sunni. Nor does the Shi'a versus Sunni difference offer any suggestion about why opinions about the war on terrorism should be more strongly predicted for Iran-born than for other origin groups.

Another possibility begins from the observation that Iran-born Muslims report higher education and more income than other origin-groups. One could imagine that respondents with

higher socioeconomic status produce more sensitive and more reliable distinctions on opinion items of every sort. Although this might help explain how opinions about the war on terrorism are more strongly predicted for Iran-born Muslims, the ‘better discrimination’ idea would predict that opinions of Al Qaeda and opinions about suicide terrorism should also be more strongly predicted for Iran-born Muslims than other origin-groups. But the opinions of Iran-born Muslims are not more strongly predicted by other Pew items.

We are left with a challenge. Sect, religiosity, and the ability of other Pew items to predict seeing the war on terrorism as insincere—all point to something different about Iran-born U.S. Muslims, but we have so far little help in explaining either their low religiosity or the ability of other Pew items to predict their opinions on the war on terrorism item.

### **Converts vs. nonconverts**

Across three terrorism-related items (Table 5) and six origin-groups (no converts among Pakistan-born), converts differed substantially (correlation at least .25) from non-converts on only four items spread across three origin-groups. These scattered correlations do not support the idea that Muslim converts are generally more politically extreme than born Muslims.

Across eight religion items (Table 2) and six origin-groups, converts differed substantially from non-converts on only four of forty-eight correlations. Perhaps the most direct test of the idea that converts are more religious are the correlations of convert status with rated importance of religion in the respondent’s life. The six correlations are .09, .02, .06, 00, -.10 and .44; only Africa-born Muslims show converts rating importance of religion higher than born Muslims (.44). Given that six of seven correlations between convert status and importance of religion are negligible, it is not surprising that convert status was unrelated to opinions about terrorism.

Our findings with regard to converts are subject to two limitations. There were no converts among Pakistan-born respondents, so correlations with conversion status could not be tested. Converts were rare (2-9 percent) in other origin-groups except African-Americans (72 percent), such that our comparisons of converts and nonconverts depend on data from only 2-5

converts in each origin group, except for African-Americans. Thus it is only for African-American Muslims that we can be confident in saying that converts do not differ from nonconverts in response to either the three terrorism-related items or the eight religion items. For African-American Muslims our results should count strongly against the idea that converts to Islam are more religious or more politically extreme.

### **Conclusion**

We analyzed the 2007 Pew Survey of U.S. Muslims to explore whether opinions relating to the war on terrorism differ for groups defined by the country or region in which respondents were born. Briefly our answer is that differences across origin groups are relatively small, except for two groups. African-Americans generally reported experiencing more discrimination and less support for U.S. military action in Afghanistan. Iran-born Muslims are highest in education and income, lowest in religiosity, and their opinions about the war on terrorism were more strongly predicted by other Pew items. We also raised the question of whether converts to Islam might be more religious and perhaps more politically extreme. Our answer is that they are neither more religious nor more politically extreme, although this answer can be asserted with confidence only for African-Americans because other origin-groups include only a few converts.

Most generally, our results support the idea that U.S. Muslims are not a homogenous group. African-American Muslims and Iran-born Muslims appear to be different in important ways from other origin groups, despite the fact that differences are not easy to establish in groups as small as we examine here (*ns* ranging from 59 to 193). We have only the most tentative suggestions for understanding the pattern of results for African-American and Iran-born Muslims, but this should not be surprising. The 2007 Pew poll of U.S. Muslims aimed to represent the population of U.S. Muslims but did not aim to learn about differences among different origin groups. The items in the poll were not designed to learn about group differences among U.S. Muslims. In this sense we have pushed the Pew poll beyond its design limitations and our results must be seen as only the first step in learning about group differences among U.S. Muslims. Nevertheless we believe that the pattern of results that distinguishes African-American and Iran-

born Muslims is clear enough to make a general point. U.S. Muslims are not a homogenous community and research to learn more about the sociology and politics of different communities will be more useful in the future than attempts to characterize “U.S. Muslims.”

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