The Enemy of America?
American Sentiments Towards Muslims

Kyle Crawford

Swarthmore College

Islam is one of the most vilified religions in America. In fact, almost 2 out of every 5 Americans view Islam as violent and nearly 65% of Americans see Islam as a very different religion from their own. The recent controversy surrounding the Ground Zero mosque offers a concrete example of how these negative sentiments have impacted the U.S. There have been a plethora of polls examining public opinion towards Muslims but little analysis has been done to look at exactly how a variety of factors like education, political ideology, sex, age, race and knowledge of Islam work together to impact one's attitudes. In order to solve this problem, I present a multivariate regression using data from the 2009 Pew Survey on Religion and Public Life. I show that education, political ideology, race, gender, knowing someone who is Muslim, and knowing about Islam are statistically significant in their contribution to attitudes towards Islam. Moreover, by utilizing literature from political science, sociology, and psychology I provide a theoretical framework for understanding how these of variables affect one's opinion of Islam. My research provides much-needed analysis on a timely and important topic that will continue to play a role in American politics.

Following the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush proclaimed, "the enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends."[1] However, after 9/11, Muslims were increasingly vilified in the United States as people of violence. Terms like the "axis of evil," "rogue state," "failed nations," and "Islamic terrorist" have become synonymous with Islam.[2] Polling data shows that Americans have highly prejudicial attitudes towards Muslims. A *USA Today* poll found that about one-quarter of Americans would not want a Muslim as a neighbor and about 40% of Americans say they feel some prejudice towards Muslims.[3] The 2008 election illustrated how alarming anti-Islamic sentiments had grown. Then candidate Barrack Obama was said to be a "closet Muslim"[4] and he was accused by many in the public as being anti-American, disloyal, and a possible terrorist.[5] In light of these prejudicial attitudes, the question of how far reaching anti-Islamic sentiment is, and what variables contribute to thinking that Islam is violent are important ones. In order to answer these

[1] "Bush Speech -- September 20, 2001," *NewsHour* (Online), September 22, 2001, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/terroristattack/bush_speech_9-20.html/.

[2] Naveen Khan, "Acknowledge and Prepare for Anti-Muslim Bias in the Courtroom," *The Jury Expert* 21 (2009): 48.

[3] Marilyn Elias, "USA's Muslims Under a Cloud," *USA Today*, August 10, 2006, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-08-09-muslim-american-cover_x.htm/.

[4] Ted Sampley, "Barack Hussein Obama - Who is he?" *U.S. Veteran Dispatch*, December 29, 2006, http://www.usvetdsp.com/dec06/obama_muslim.htm/.

[5] Alex Spillius, "Barack Obama called 'Terrorist' at Republican Rallies as US Election Campaign Turns Nasty," *Telegraph*, October 10, 2008, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/barackobama/3174101/Barack-Obama-called-terrorist-at-Republican-rallies-as-US-election-campaign-turns-nasty.html/.

questions, I conducted an analysis of the 2009 Pew Survey on Religion and Public Life. I model the variables that contribute towards believing Islam encourages violence and I will explain how each variable contributes to this belief. It is my hope that I will contribute to an understanding of anti-Islamic sentiment growth.

The 2009 Pew Survey on Religion and Public Life found that nearly 65% of non-Muslims believe that Islam and their own faith are very different. [6] The Survey also found that 38% of Americans say that Islam encourages violence more than other religions while 45% believe that Islam does not encourage violence more than other religions.[7] Even though fewer Americans view Islam as encouraging violence than those who do, the fact that almost 2 in every 5 American see Islam as violent is staggering. Islam is clearly perceived as an 'other.' It is a group that is seen as culturally and religiously different to many Americans. However, not only is it seen as different, it is viewed as threatening.[8] The events of 9/11 and other terrorist attacks have served to create and enforce negative stereotypes about Islam. In the aftermath of the Iranian Hostage Crisis, Edward Said wrote how the American media and public categorically failed to comprehend Islam and his thoughts still resonate today.

> Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed, apprehended either as suppliers of oil or as potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Islamic world.[9]

Muslims in the United States echo this viewpoint and polling data supports Said's statement. A 2001, poll conducted by Georgetown University found that about 70% of Muslims felt that Islam was not accurately represented in the media.[10] The media tend to focus on "sensational events like terrorist attacks, hijackers, politically extremist groups and poor treatment of certain groups such as women" [11] and this means that many in the American public have a negative, stereotypical view of Islam. Walter Lippman, a pioneer in the field of public opinion explained that the views and knowledge people have which forms public opinion is primarily a consequence of what they see and hear from the press.[12] Thus, the fact that Islam is viewed as violent is not surprising.

Previous Literature

Scholarship that focuses on feelings of tolerance and prejudice towards "outgroups" is vast. However, there is little literature, which specifically focuses on American attitudes towards Muslims. The little that exists has been in large part driven by the 9/11 attacks and a heightened awareness of anti-Islamic sentiments. Still, significant holes exist in this burgeoning area of study. My work hopes to add to this paucity of scholarship.

In order to place this study in the context of the literature that has preceded it, I will trace some of the major scholarship that has focused on tolerance and prejudicial beliefs towards minority groups and more recently literature on attitudes towards

[6] Pew Research Center, "Views of Religious Similarities and Differences: Muslims Widely Seen As Facing Discrimination," Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2009.

[7] Ibid., 2.

[8] Kerem Kalkan et al., "Band of Others? Attitudes Toward Muslims in Contemporary American Society," *American Journal of Political Science* 71 (2009): 848.

[9] Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 26.

[10] Brigitte Nacos and Oscar Torres-Reyna, *Fueling our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 4.

[11] Kalkan, *Band of Others*, 2.

[12] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922).

Muslims. Gordon Allport's, *The Nature of Prejudice* is a seminal piece on the nature of prejudice.[13] Allport presents a psychological approach to understanding prejudice and he, like many to follow him, argue that understanding prejudice is a complicated task that has a multiplicity of origins. He wrote, "there is no master key" to understanding why people are prejudiced towards others. "Rather, what we have at our disposal is a ring of keys, each of which opens one gate of understanding".[14] Allport viewed prejudice towards Muslims and other groups as an inescapable part of how we think.[15] He believed that the mind required categories and stereotyping, so that it could stay ordered. Yet at the same time he saw prejudicial attitudes as an irrational process that finds its genesis in ignorance.[16] Allport focused on the relationship between in-groups and out-groups, which would become the basis for Social Identity Theory.[17] Social Identity Theory in its most basic sense is a theoretical framework for understanding the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy. It is the idea that individuals categorize others based on their group membership with an emphasis on the similarities and difference between in-groups and out-groups. When it comes to Muslims, there is certainly a strong categorization of them as an out-group by Americans.

Samuel Stouffer conducted one of the first studies that utilized polling data to examine American's tolerance of minority groups. In the study, conducted during the era of McCarthyism, and published in 1955, respondents were asked questions relating to their feelings of tolerance towards communists, socialists, and atheists.[18] Stouffer used his data to show how tolerance is affected by a multiplicity of factors including but not limited to, age, education, sex, occupation and region. Consequently, Stouffer's study serves as a departing point for much of the scholarship on political tolerance. The literature on why certain traits induce tolerance is plentiful. The work of McClosky and Brill posits that tolerance is a learned social behavior.[19] In subsequent years Bobo and Licari[20] provided a conceptual and theoretical framework for why education increases individual's feelings of tolerance and many other scholars have filled in the story of why certain traits cause people to be more or less tolerant.

Scholarship on American attitudes towards Muslims is a growing field. There are a number of polls that have been conducted by various news organizations and polling groups that examine public sentiment towards Muslims, and there is some literature mainly published by these groups that provides analysis of the data. A 2006, Washington Post-ABC News Poll, announced that negative perceptions of Islam were increasing.[21] The poll reported that almost half of Americans had a negative view of Islam. Prior to the 9/11 attacks few public opinion polls included questions on Islam. However subsequently, Roper, Gallup, Pew, CNN, the Washington Post and every other reputable polling group are now asking questions on Islam. Panagopoulos traced trends in polling data from a variety of organizations and concluded

[13] Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954).

[14] Ibid., 208.

[15] Ibid., 20.

[16] Ibid., 240.

[17] Henri Tajfel, "The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations," *Annual Review of Psychology* 32 (1982): 1-39.

[18] Samuel Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties; A Cross-Section of the Nation Speaks its Mind* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), 5.

[19] Herbert McClosky and Alida Brill, *Dimensions of Tolerance: What Americans Believe about Civil Liberties* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1986).

[20] Lawrence Bobo and Frederick Licari, "Education and Political Tolerance," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53 (1989): 285-308.

[21] Claudia Deane and Darryl Fears, "Negative Perception Of Islam Increasing," *Washington Post*, March 9, 2006, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/08/AR2006030802221.html/.

that Americans "possess lingering resentment and reservations about Arab and Muslim Americans." [22] He wrote that Americans have low levels of awareness about fundamental elements of Islam. Further, Panagopoulos found that following 9/11, public resentment of Muslims fluctuated a great deal but opinion stabilized in the following months.[23] Polling organizations like Pew and Gallup have published detailed analysis of polling data that examine the attitudes that Americans have towards Muslims. Both a Pew report[24] and a Gallup publication[25], report similar findings, namely that Muslims are widely discriminated against. Further, both report that knowledge of Islam and knowing Muslims are associated with a positive view of Islam. The Gallup poll is one of the only publications which presents a multivariate analysis of the variables that are associated with prejudice toward Muslims; showing which variables contribute to more prejudicial attitudes toward Muslims when other variables are controlled for.

Data Analysis

Few researchers have performed a multivariate analysis of the variables associated with prejudicial attitudes and presented a detailed conceptual framework for understanding how each variable contributes towards anti-Islamic attitudes. The dependent variable that I examine is whether respondents believe that Islam encourages violence more than other religions. My data analysis uses data from Pew's, 2009 Annual Religion and Public Life Survey. The survey was conducted in two waves; the first from August 11-19, 2009 and the second from August 20-27, 2009. The survey has a total of 3,012 respondents and interviews were done in both English and Spanish. Both landlines and cellphones were included in the survey and the sample was weighted to account for the 2008 Census Bureau's population survey.[26] I plan to answer two main questions in my research. Firstly, what variables are associated with more prejudicial attitudes toward Muslims? And secondly, why are these variables associated with these prejudicial attitudes? In Table 1, I present 3 separate models that illustrate how a variety of independent variables are associated with believing that Islam encourages violence. These include: political ideology, education, age, race, sex, knowing that Muslims refer to variables. God as Allah, knowing the Islamic equivalent of the bible is the Koran, and knowing a Muslim. The first model includes only demographic variables, the second only attitudinal variables and the third includes all variables.

[22] Costas Panagopoulos, "The Polls-Trends Arab and Muslim Americans and Islam in the Aftermath of 9/11," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70 (2006): 613.

[23] Ibid., 608.

[24] Pew Research Center, "Views of Religious Similarities and Differences."

[25] Joseph Carroll, "Post-9/11 Patriotism Remains Steadfast," *Gallup*, July 19, 2005, http://www.gallup.com/poll/17401/post911-patriotism-remains-steadfast.aspx/.

[26] "Pew Research Center, "Views of Religious Similarities and Differences."

Table 1: Is Islam More Likely than other Faiths to encourage Violence?

	Model 1- demographic characteristics		Model 2 - attitudinal characteristics		Model 3 – both	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
Intercept	1.931**	(0.065)	1.656**	(.049)	2.051**	(.080)
Education	-.061**	(0.12)			-0.37*	(0.013)
Race	-.034**	(.007)			-0.31**	(.010)
Age	.022**	(.001)			.019*	(.007)
Sex (Male =1)	-.068**	(.024)			-.082**	(.024)
Ideology	-.079**	(.009)			-.079**	(.009)
Knowing anyone who is Muslim			-.50**	(.025)	-.121**	(.025)
Knowing that Muslims refer to God as Allah			-.006	(.004)	-.007	(.004)
Knowing the Islamic equivalent of the Bible is the Koran			.010*	(.004)	.010**	(.004)

*p < .05, **p<.01

Model 1: R^2=.081, Model 2: R^2= .028, Model 3: R^2=.099

Source: 2009 Pew Religion and Public Life Survey

Understanding the Model:

The independent variables that are statistically significant are denoted with asterisks. In statistics, significance refers to an association that is not due to sampling error. [27] Sampling error is the likelihood that a sample will be different from the actual population.[28] Since surveys like the Pew Religion and Public Life Survey cannot gain a sample that exactly matches the actual population, sampling error is a measure of the probability that a given sample will differ from the population Statistical significance is indicated with one or two asterisks; one asterisk with p<.05 and two for p<.01. These p-values express significance levels. The lower a p-value the stronger the evidence that you can reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis is a statement that there is no relationship between variables. For example, the null hypothesis for the association between education and a belief that Islam is violent would be that education has no effect on believing Islam is more violent than other religions. The null hypothesis for race would be that race has no effect on believing Islam is violent. A p-value of .05 means there is moderate evidence that the null hypothesis can be rejected and a p-value of .01 is strong evidence that the null hypothesis can be rejected.[29]

The size of the coefficient indicates how large the effect of an independent variable (i.e. education, race, age) is on the dependent variable (thinking Islam encourages violence). The sign of the coefficient, that is, whether it is positive or negative indicates the direction of the effect.[30] For example the coefficient on the education variable has a negative sign, which means that more education is correlated with a belief that Islam is not violent.

Ideology:

The ideology variable is based on the question from the Pew survey that asks respondents to describe their political views as very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal. In all cases ideology is statistically significant at p<.01 (Table 1). Being conservative is associated with a belief that Islam encourages violence. This finding is unsurprising because in general liberals tend to be more tolerant than conservatives.[31] Tolerance in this sense is being willing to accept those who are different from oneself. Believing that Islam encourages violence is an undeniably intolerant attitude, which draws on the stereotypes and prejudices of Muslims. McClosky and Brill make clear the reasons why conservatives tend to be more intolerant than liberals. They write that the "hopes, fears and values embodied in each of the ideologies" is the cause for the differences in tolerance. Specifically, conservatives are more focused on the security of the state from internal and external enemies than liberals so it makes sense that conservatives have a heightened, yet misguided perception of Islam as a threatening group. [32]

Another reason to understand why conservatism is more associated with believing that Islam encourages violence has to do with the way that political elites influence public opinion. Zaller writes that political elites strongly influence citizen's opinions and in addition citizens "respond

[27] Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (New York: Wadsworth Cengage, 2010), 478.

[28] Brian Macfie and Philip Nufrio, *Applied Statistics for Public Policy* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 162.

[29] David Moore, *Statistics* (San Francisco: W.H Freeman, 2001), 443.

[30] "Interpreting Regression Output," Princeton University Data and Statistical Services, (2007), http://dss.princeton.edu/online_help/analysis/interpreting_regression.htm/.

[31] Herbert McClosky and Alida Brill, *Dimensions of Tolerance: What Americans Believe About Civil Liberties*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1986), 274; Leonie Huddy et al., "Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies," *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (2005): 593-608.

[32] McClosky and Brill, *Dimensions of Tolerance*, 276.

mechanically on the basis of partisan cues".[33] In other words citizens respond more strongly to elites who are of the same political ideology as themselves.[34] In the public discourse on Islam, I hypothesize that conservative elites are the main source of negative portrayals of Islam. Even though President Bush condemned violence against Muslims after 9/11, his policies put the Muslim world in a negative light. Two of the three countries that Bush declared part of the "axis of evil" in 2002 are Islamic countries. In addition, the U.S. Global War on Terror, begun under a Republican President, comprises two primarily Muslim nations; Afghanistan and Iraq. The implicit assumption in these actions is that Islam encourages violence. More recently, opposition to the Ground-Zero Mosque demonstrates how anti-Islamic sentiments manifest themselves. The commentary preceding and later characterizing this event is an excellent example of such sentiments. For example, in July 2010, Newt Gingrich, the former Speaker of the House wrote, "America is experiencing an Islamist cultural-political offensive designed to undermine and destroy our civilization."[35] Comments like this help to produce anti-Islamic sentiment, especially among conservatives. Rep. Peter King (R-NY) is another example of a conservative elite who portrays Islam in a negative stereotypical manner. King's hearing on "The Extent of the Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and that Community's Response" reinforces negative stereotypes about Islam. King says that "there's been a lack of full cooperation from many people in the Muslim community" with law enforcement. In contrast, police say that this is not the case.[36]

Education:

The education variable is based on a question that asks respondents to report the highest level of education they have completed. The multivariate regression shows that less education is associated with believing that Islam encourages violence more than other religions. In Model 1, which includes only demographic variables, education is significant at $p<.01$ and in Model 3, with every variable, education is significant at $p<.05$[37] (Table 1).

Education links strongly to the application of democratic norms like political tolerance. McClosky explained that democratic values are complicated and difficult to acquire and formal education aids in developing them.[38] Further, those with less education have a more difficult time applying more abstract democratic principles to particular situations because they are unable to identify that the same principles are at stake in both situations.[39] In the context of stereotyping Muslims this is a particularly important notion because, although many easily apply democratic norms in rejecting racism, the poorly educated have a more difficult time recognizing that stereotyping Muslims is a similar situation.

Other studies, which help explain the link between education and tolerance, include those conducted by Bobo and Licari.[40] They

[33] Ibid., 311.

[34] John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 6.

[35] Paul Bedard, "Gingrich Blasts Plan For Mosque at Ground Zero," *US News*, July 23, 2010, http://www.usnews.com/news/washington-whispers/articles/2010/07/23/gingrich-blasts-plan-for-mosque-at-ground-zero/.

[36] Reza Aslan, "On Muslims, King has Reached His Own Fact-less Conclusions," *US News*, March 11, 2011, http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/reza_aslan/2011/03/on_muslims_king_has_reached_his_own_fact-less_conclusion.html/.

[37] In some cases a variable may be more significant in one Model than another. This is due to the fact that each Model controls for different variables.

[38] McClosky, *Dimensions of Tolerance,* 232.

[39] Philip Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics " in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), 270.

[40] Lawrence Bobo and Frederick Licari, "Education and Political Tolerance," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53 (1989): 285-308.

completed a secondary analysis of the 1984 General Social Survey and found a strong relationship between education and tolerance. They explained this by saying that greater cognitive sophistication is produced by more years of schooling.[41] Higher levels of cognitive sophistication mean that individuals can more critically evaluate and reject the stereotypes that exist about Islam and other outgroups. Along similar lines, Nunn, Crockett and Williams said that education leads to greater political tolerance due to higher cultural knowledge and cognitive flexibility.[42]

Age:

The age variable is based on a question that asks respondents to report their age. For the purposes of regression analysis, age was recorded into six age categories.[43] Age is statistically significant in the Model 1 at $p<.01$ and at $p<.05$ in Model 3 (Table 1). The link between growing older and being less tolerant is a well-established one.[44] There are several reasons why this is the case. First, studies have shown that as one ages a person has a greater inability to "relinquish familiar, long-held values."[45] This is because the more someone uses and applies their values and views the more they are reinforced.

The second reason why those who are older are less tolerant is because attitudes are reflective of the historical period in which an individual lived.[46] In the case of the United States, the country has been moving on a path towards greater tolerance over its history so those who are older have more intolerant attitudes ingrained in their psychology.[47] McClosky and Brill detailed that historical experience influences tolerance but it was only later that a more nuanced way of understanding this was developed.[48] Schuman explored the idea of cohort experience. This is the idea that the events experienced in adolescence and early adulthood have an extremely large effect on memory.[49] Learning about an event later in life, well after it has occurred, does not have nearly the impact on memory as experiencing it first hand. For example, being a young-adult when the attack on Pearl Harbor took place would have a much greater impact on your memory than learning about it in school. More research, though, is needed to explore the connection between cohort experience and tolerance. However, based on the existing research it seems reasonable to hypothesize that experiencing the attacks on Pearl Harbor might instill xenophobic attitudes, which translate to more intolerant and stereotyped views of Muslims. Even though it is unclear what the interplay between cohort experience and simple generational differences in tolerance are, the current framework seems to explain why older generations believe Islam encourages violence quite well.

Race:

The race variable is derived from the Pew question that asks respondents to report their race. For the purposes of my regression analysis, I divided race into the categories of White, Black or African-American, Asian or Asian-American, Mixed race, or other. The survey did not include the category of Hispanic as a response category, so they are included in the 'other' category. Due to the small number of respondents in the categories outside of White and African-American, I will only focus on differences amongst White and

[41] Ibid., 286.

[42] Clyde Nunn et al., *Tolerance for Nonconformity* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978), 64.

[43] (1) - 18-24, (2)- 25-34, (3) – 35-44, (4) – 45-54, (5) – 55-64, (6) – 65+.

[44] McClosky, *Dimensions of Tolerance*; Nunn et al., *Tolerance for Nonconformity*; Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties*, 1958.

[45] McClosky, *Dimensions of Tolerance,* 398.

[46] Ibid., 398.

[47] Ibid., 400.

[48] Howard Schuman and Willard Rodgers, "Cohorts, Chronology, and Collective Memories," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2004): 217-54.

[49] Ibid., 218.

African-American respondents. Multivariate regression analysis shows that race and the belief that Islam encourages violence is statistically significant at p<.01 for both Model 1 and 3. White respondents believe that Islam encourages violence at a higher level than African-American respondents. One reason why this might be the case is that a greater number of African-Americans are Muslim. The presence of Muslims within the African-American community means that prejudice of Muslims among African-Americans is less than Whites, because contact with an 'out-group' decreases prejudice of that group.[50] Harlow and Dundes suggest another possible reason for why being African-American is associated with lower levels of anti-Islamic sentiment. They show that race shapes one's perspective on the world and that repeated experiences with racism are a strong influence on one's perspective.[51] Since African-Americans have repeated experiences with racism they might then be more critical of racist discourse on Muslims. As a result, African-Americans are less likely to have anti-Islamic sentiments.

Thus far, I have shown why certain variables contribute to feelings that Islam encourages violence by primarily using the frame of tolerance. However, feelings of patriotism also impact one's feelings that Islam is a violent religion. It is well established that African-Americans are significantly less patriotic than Whites due to the "chronic inequality" they have experienced.[52] Patriotism has been strongly linked toward a more positive predilection for in-groups, [53] and because Muslims are stereotyped as a violent and threatening out-group, it is logical that feelings of patriotism would be associated with more negative attitudes towards Muslims. One of the problems with this explanation, though, is that my analysis uses race as a proxy for patriotism. It would have been better to include a patriotism variable in my regression; however, the Pew survey does not have a question that is a good indicator of patriotic feelings. In future research, it might be helpful to use a different data set that does include questions those illicit respondents feelings of patriotism.

Sex:

The sex variable is statistically significant at p<.01 in both Model 1 and 3. The multivariate regression shows that, even when all other variables are controlled for, being male is more highly associated with believing Islam encourages violence than being female. This finding was unexpected given the findings of Golebiowska, who showed that women are less tolerant and less willing to accept political outgroups.[54] Researchers attribute this difference in tolerance to a number of factors; "gender differences in commitment to abstract norms of democracy, political expertise, threat perceptions, and moral traditionalism" are the prime reasons for gender differences in tolerance.[55] One theory says that because women play a larger role in family life, raising children and caring for them women are generally more fearful of groups that are perceived as threatening. Terrorist attacks which are perceived as being driven by Islam play into this fearfulness.[56] This line of reasoning has been shown to apply to many situations of tolerance, however the secondary

[50] Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Samuel Stouffer, *Communism,*

[51] Joe Feagin and Melvin Sikes, *Living with Racism the Black Middle Class Experience* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994); Roxanna Harlow and Lauren Dundes, "United We Stand: Responses to the September 11 Attacks in Black and White," *Sociological Perspectives* 47 (2004): 439-464.

[52] Jim Sidanius et al., "The Interface between Ethnic and National Attachment," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61 (1997): 128.

[53] Theodore Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: WW Norton & Co., 1950).

[54] Samuel Stouffer, *Communism, conformity and civil liberties,* 136; Ewa Golebiowska, "Gender Gap in Political Tolerance," *Political Behavior* 21 (1999): 43; Nunn et al., *Tolerance for Nonconformity*, 113.

[55] Golebiowska, Gender Gap in Political Tolerance, 58.

[56] Ibid., 47.

analysis of the 2009 Pew Survey on Religion and Public Life does not follow the idea that women are less tolerant than men. In the Pew Survey being male is associated with the view that Islam encourages violence.

The reason this is the case, again, I believe has to do with patriotism. Men tend to be more patriotic than females.[57] Given this we must look at how President Bush, other conservatives, and the media framed the War on Terror. As I discussed earlier, it was framed with the implicit assumption that Islam encourages violence. From this standpoint, the fact that men believe Islam encourages violence at higher levels than females does not contradict the literature on gender differences in tolerance. This is because believing that Islam is violent is not a matter of tolerance but a matter of feeling duty bound to serve one's country.

Knowing a Muslim:

The Pew Survey asks "do you, yourself happen to know anyone who is a Muslim?"[58] The variable is divided into four categories: "Yes, "No," "Respondent is Muslim," or "Don't Know." Knowing someone who is Muslim correlates with believing that Islam does not encourage violence. It is statistically significant at $p<.01$ in both Models 2 and 3. This can be explained using the Contact Hypothesis. The hypothesis posits that contact between groups of people improves intergroup relations.[59] One reason that knowing someone who is Muslim translates into being less likely to believe that Islam promotes violence is because contact with Muslims can challenge the stereotypes associated with Islam. Stephan and Stephan argue that ignorance increases one's inclination to have prejudicial feelings towards a group. "By having the opportunity to build new, non stereotypic associations with group members, contact can undermine stereotyping."[60] Moreover, knowing someone who is Muslim can lead to greater levels of intercultural understanding and cultural sensitivity that can reduce biases. One of the limitations of this variable is that the Pew survey does not differentiate between respondents who know one Muslim and respondents who know many Muslims. Knowing only a few Muslims would likely be less of an impact on anti-Islamic-sentiments than knowing many, however, the survey does not allow for this type of analysis.

A large part of Social Identity Theory is that individuals categorize others based on the groups that they belong to.[61] Coming into contact with Muslims can lead to the decategorization and personalization of individuals in this group. Decategorization means that those who know Muslims put less emphasis on the original group boundary of Islam and more emphasis of a Muslim as a separate individual. This can translate to the personalization of Muslims "thereby disarming the forces of categorization"[62] and reducing stereotypes that exist about Islam; namely that it is a violent faith.

Knowing the Islamic Equivalent of the Bible is the Koran & Knowing the Islamic Equivalent of God is Allah:

I group these two questions together because they fall victim to similar methodological problems. The Pew Survey asks, "do you happen to know the name of the Islamic equivalent to the Bible?"[63] Respondents' responses were divided into three categories. The first was if respondents correctly identified the Koran as the Islamic

[57] Carroll, "Post 9/11 Patriotism Remains Steadfast."

[58] Pew Research Center, "2009 Religion and Public Life Survey: Final Topline," Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2009.

[59] Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, 488; John Dovidio et al, "Intergroup Contact: The Past, Present, and the Future," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 6 (2003): 5.

[60] Ibid., 10.

[61] Tajfel, *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*.

[62] Dovidio, *Intergroup Contact*, 11.

[63] Pew Research Center, "2009 Religion and Public Life Survey."

equivalent to the Bible. The second was if the respondent offered a response but it was incorrect, and the third if the respondents stated that they did not know the answer or they refused to answer. Knowing the Islamic equivalent of the Bible is statistically significant in Model 2 at $p < .05$ and in Model 3 at $p < .01$. Knowing the Islamic equivalent to the Bible means you are more likely to view Islam as encouraging violence. This is very surprising considering that knowing the Islamic equivalent of the Bible means you likely have some basic knowledge about Islam and would be inclined to not view Islam in a stereotyped manner.

The Pew Survey also asks, "do you happen to know what name Muslims use to refer to God?" Like the question on the Koran, respondents' responses were divided into three categories. The first, if they identify Allah as the name Muslims use to refer to God. The second, if they offer a response but it is incorrect and the third, if they report not knowing or refuse to respond. Knowing the Islamic equivalent of God is Allah is not statistically significant for any model. This is again surprising because it would seem that knowing the name Muslims use to refer to God would indicate a familiarity with Islam and the ability to see through Islamic stereotypes.

The reason that both these variables do not contribute to a belief that Islam does not encourage violence in the expected manner relates to the way that Pew coded the variables. Pew should not have coded responses of, no, don't know, and refused to respond as missing for the questions which asked about the Koran and Allah. Since Pew did, it is impossible to disentangle those respondents who said that they did not know what the Islamic Bible was or Muslim God from those who refused to answer. In other questions in the survey these respondents accounted for as much as a few hundred of responses[64].

Explaining Nonattitudes:

Converse claims that "large portions of an electorate…simply do not have meaningful beliefs, even on issues that have formed the basis for intense political controversy among elites."[65] This is the basis for the idea that a great deal of the public does not have attitudes on many issues. I now discuss how I have dealt with nonattitudes in my analysis of the 2009 Pew Survey on Religion and Public Life. The Pew Survey includes a response category for respondents who refuse to answer a question or for those who say that they do not know. Individuals who are in this response category represent some of those who have nonattitudes. The regression analysis filtered these responses, so that only those who report attitudes are included in the analysis. Unfortunately, many who do not have opinions on a question will still respond, meaning that nonattitudes become a part of the data. In other words, a respondent might say they believe Islam does not encourage violence but this response is not based on any preexisting attitude. This type of response contributes to nonattitudes in the survey data. These types of answers are indistinguishable from respondents who provide responses that are based on preexisting opinions. The model can only filter out those who report that they don't have an attitude. This is unavoidable and is a limitation of all surveys.

Surveys inherently rely on self-reported data. Self-reported surveys rely on respondents to report their answers without any outside observation or experiment. The benefit of these surveys is that they are relatively inexpensive and efficient to conduct. The problem with the self-reported nature of

[64] Pew Research Center, "2009 Religion and Public Life Survey," 20.

[65] Converse, *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics,* 245.

surveys is that as I already detailed, respondents will sometimes provide answers to questions that they know nothing about. Moreover, it is well documented that respondents will sometimes simply give a socially desirable response. Social desirability can be loosely defined as "a tendency to give a favorable picture of oneself."[66] In polls, this causes respondents to give a response that they believe someone may want to hear rather than what is true for them. There are a variety of reasons for this including feeling embarrassed about an answer, not wanting to offend the interviewer or thinking that an answer is controversial.[67] The impact of social desirability on surveys is greatest when asking questions about controversial issues or when a respondent may have an opinion that is not popular. [68] Interviewers, like the ones who conducted the survey used in this study remind respondents that their answers will remain anonymous. This is done in order to mitigate any feelings of social desirability respondents might have, but even so, some respondents may still give answers that they feel will show themselves in the best light.

The Pew Religion and Public Life survey is affected by issues relating to social desirability. The dependent variable in the model is based on a question that asks respondents if they believe Islam encourages violence more than other religions. I think it is safe to say that this is at minimum a mildly controversial issue and for many quite controversial. Depending on what a respondent felt was socially desirable it is possible that they did not respond according to their actual opinion. Another impact of social desirability on the Pew Religion and Public Life Survey may relate to the education variable. It is possible that respondents reported having a higher level of education than they actually completed if they felt this was the more socially acceptable answer. There is evidence that shows that compared to self-administered surveys; telephone surveys (the method of the Pew Religion and Public Life Survey) are more susceptible to the effects of social desirability. Respondents are not influenced by the presence of an interviewer in these surveys and are thus more likely to answer truthfully about sensitive and controversial issues. [69] It would have been useful to compare the results of a similar self-administered survey in order to see how respondents differed in their responses. Unfortunately, a self-administered survey with the type of questions needed to investigate attitudes towards Muslims does not exist to my knowledge. However, the Pew survey uses well-tested question wordings, which limit some of the impacts of social desirability on responses. The questions are written so that respondents are not lead or primed to answer in a specific way.

Summary and Conclusions

The multivariate analysis of 2009 Pew Survey on Religion and Public Life clearly shows the variables associated with believing Islam encourages violence. One's political ideology, education, age, race, sex, and knowing a Muslim all influence the way a person views Islam and violence. Knowledge that the Koran is the Islamic text and that Allah is the Islamic God are entangled in methodological problems which make a clear conclusion as to their effect difficult. The research and explanations in this paper are certainly not fully-developed; however, my research presents a first step in a more thorough understanding of the variables that effect anti-Islamic sentiments. In future research it would be important to investigate

[66] Claire Sellitz, Lawrence Wrightsman, and Stuart Cook, *Research Methods in social relations* (New York: Wadsworth, 2001).

[67] Donijo Robbins, *Understanding Research Methods,* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2008), 67.

[68] Rafael Engel and Russell Schutt, *The Practice of Research in Social Work* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2008), 261.

[69] Robbins, *Understanding Research Methods,* 67.

variables that I did not include due to limitations of the Pew survey. These variables include: media consumption, patriotism, being in the military, or having family in the military. Muslims have been the victim of unfounded negative stereotyping and a belief that their faith encourages violence. Continued research on the public's opinion of Muslims is surely needed. Whether opinion on them shift dramatically or not, the reasons this has occurred will be not only fascinating but will surely illuminate a great deal about the nature of prejudice and stereotyping.

REFERENCES

Aslan, Reza. "On Muslims, King has Reached His Own Fact-less Conclusions." *Washington Post*, March 11, 2011. http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/reza_aslan/2011/03/on_muslims_king_has_reached_his_own_fact-less_conclusion.html/.

Babbie, Earl. *The Practice of Social Research*. New York: Wadsworth Cengage, 2010.

Bedard, Paul. "Gingrich Blasts Plan for Mosque at Ground Zero." *US News.* July 23, 2011. http://www.usnews.com/news/washington-whispers/articles/2010/07/23 /gingrich-blasts-plan-for-mosque-at-ground-zero/.

Bobo, Lawrence, and Frederick Licari. "Education and Political Tolerance." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53 (1989): 285-308.

"Bush Speech -- September 20, 2001." *NewsHour (Online).* September 22, 2001. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/terroristattack/bush_speech_9-20.html/.

Carroll, Joseph. "Post-9/11 Patriotism Remains Steadfast." *Gallup*. July 19, 2005. http://www.gallup.com/poll/17401/post911-patriotism-remains-steadfast.aspx/.

Converse, Philip. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter. London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964.

Deane, Claudia, and Darryl Fears. "Negative Perception Of Islam Increasing." *Washington Post*, March 9, 2006. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/08/AR2006030802221.html/.

Dovidio, John et al. "Intergroup Contact: The Past, Present, and the Future." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 6 (2003): 5-21.

Elias, Marilyn. "USA's Muslims under a cloud." *USA Today*, August 10, 2006, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-08-09-muslim-american-cover_x.htm/.

Engel, Rafael. *The Practice of Research in Social Work*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2008.

Feagin, Joe R., and Melvin P. Sikes. *Living with Racism: the Black Middle-Class Experience*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.

Golebiowska, Ewa. "Gender Gap in Political Tolerance." *Political Behavior* 21 (1999): 43-66.

Huddy, Leonie, Stanley Feldman, and Charles Taber. "Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies." *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (2005): 593-608.

"Interpreting Regression Output." Princeton University Data and Statistical Services, 2007. http://dss.princeton.edu/online_help/analysis/interpreting_regression.htm/.

Kalkan, Kerem et al. "Band of Others? Attitudes Toward Muslims in Contemporary American Society." *American Journal of Political Science* 71 (2009): 847-862.

Khan, Naveen. "Acknowledge and Prepare for Anti-Muslim Bias in the Courtroom." *The Jury Expert* 21 (2009): 1-55.

Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922.

Macfie, Brian, and Philip Nufrio. *Applied Statistics for Public Policy*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006.

McClosky, Herbert, and Alida Brill. *Dimensions of Tolerance: What Americans Believe about Civil Liberties*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1986.

Moore, David. *Statistics*. San Francisco: W.H Freeman, 2001.

Nacos, Brigitte Lebens, and Oscar Torres-Reyna. *Fueling our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

Nunn et al. *Tolerance for Nonconformity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978.

Panagopoulos, Costas. "The Polls-Trends Arab and Muslim Americans and Islam in the Aftermath of 9/11." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70 *(2006)*: 608-24.

Pew Research Center. *2009 Religion and Public Life Survey: Final Topline.* Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2009.

Pew Research Center. *August 2009 Religion Survey*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. September 9, 2009. http://people-press.org/dataarchive/form.php?DocID=402/.

Pew Research Center. *Views of Religious Similarities and Differences: Muslims Widely Seen As Facing Discrimination*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2009.

"Post-9/11 Patriotism Remains Steadfast." *Gallup*. July 19, 2005. http://www.gallup.com/poll/17401/post911-patriotism-remains-steadfast.aspx/.

Robbins, Donijo. *Understanding Research Methods*. Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2008.

Said, Edward W. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.

Sampley, Ted. "Barak Hussein Obama - Who is He?" *U.S. Veteran Dispatch*. December 29, 2006. http://www.usvetdsp.com/dec06/obama_muslim.htm/.

Schuman, Howard, and Willard Rodgers. "Cohorts, Chronology, and Collective Memories." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2004): 217-54.

Sellitz, Claire, Lawrence Wrightsman and Stuart Cook. *Research Methods in Social Relations*. New York: Wadsworth, 2001.

Sidanius et al. "The Interface between Ethnic and National Attachment." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61 (1997): 102-33.

Spillius, Alex. "Barack Obama Called 'Terrorist' at Republican Rallies as US Election Campaign Turns Nasty." *Telegraph*. October 10, 2008. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/barackobama/3174101/Barack-Obama-called-terrorist-at-Republican-rallies-as-US-election-campaign-turns-nasty.html/.

Stephan, W.G, and C.W Stephan. *Groups in contact: the psychology of desegregation*. Ed. Norman Miller and Marilynn B. Brewer. Orlando: Academic Press, 1984.

Stouffer, Samuel Andrew. *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties; a Cross-Section of the Nation Speaks its Mind*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955.

Tajfel, Henri. "The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations." *Annual Review of Psychology* 32 (1982): 1-39.

Zaller, John. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

*Sincere Thank you to Matthew Bolian, Senior Editor, and Peter Schlatter, Executive Editor, for your contributions!