



Article

Examining Islamic religiosity and civic engagement in Melbourne

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Abstract

With geopolitical concerns surrounding the rise of militant, transnational groups who draw on Islamic texts for legitimacy, the place of Islam in western societies has become a source of anxiety, fear and suspicion. The central concern is whether Muslims living in the West have the capacity to become fully active citizens. This article uses quantitative and qualitative methods to examine whether Islamic religiosity is a predictor for civic engagement and active citizenship among Muslims living in Melbourne, Australia. The findings show that organized religiosity can be a strong predictor of civic engagement, countering the discourses that demonize Islam as a source of radicalization and social disengagement. While the findings show that suspicion of divisive forces and lack of trust in public institutions might prevent some young Muslims from engaging in formal political participation, grassroots civic engagement enables Muslims to demonstrate care and feel like active citizens of the Australian community without compromising core religious values.

Keywords

citizenship, civic engagement, religion, sociology of religion

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Concern and anxiety relating to Muslim communities in Australia and other western societies has dramatically risen since 9/11, and has not dissipated, with emerging fears and concerns surrounding the Islamic State (IS) and other militant, transnational groups who draw on Islamic sources for legitimacy (Cesari, 2010; Lister, 2014; Tottoli, 2014). Moreover, recent events such as the Sydney Siege in Australia and the Charlie Hebdo and the Paris attacks in France have exacerbated the climate of suspicion. While some voices in the Australian public sphere have called for calm, warning against a tendency to associate Australia's diverse Muslim communities with such acts,¹ other political commentators and opinion leaders have suggested that maintaining religious beliefs has proven a barrier to Muslims becoming fully engaged citizens of Australian society.² In response (and following similar programs in the UK and other countries), the Australian government has developed school-based civic education and community engagement programs, in addition to training programs for imams who assume mentoring and leadership roles within Muslim communities (Harris and Roose, 2014; Mansouri and Marotta, 2012; Spalek and Intoual, 2007). From an institutional point of view, these measures are problematic in that they conflate the practices and beliefs of Islam, or Islamic religiosity, with radicalization and violent extremism. This, in turn, gives weight to policies which increase surveillance of Muslim communities, treating them as 'problem' communities (Mansouri et al., 2011).

Yet research conducted largely in the USA has found that religion is a gateway to other forms of civic engagement, and that individuals with a strong personal commitment to religion participate more fully in the social and political life of western countries (Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001). Much of this literature has focused on Catholic and Protestant religious groups in USA, with few empirical studies showing a positive relationship between Islamic religiosity and civic engagement among American Muslims (Read, 2014). As there is limited quantitative research to date that has empirically tested this relationship among Australian Muslim communities, this article will use survey data collected as a part of an international comparative study (funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery project 2013–16) to investigate whether Islamic religiosity is a predictor of civic engagement in Australia. This quantitative analysis will be combined with findings from in-depth interviews and focus groups with a broad cross-section of practising Muslims living in Melbourne.

Religion and civic engagement

There is a substantial body of research, especially in the USA, exploring the association between religious affiliation and civic engagement (Jamal, 2005; Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001; Kniss and Numrich, 2007; Putnam, 2000; Verba et al., 1995). One of the milestones of this literature is Verba et al.'s (1995) work, which suggested that associational memberships (especially religious ones) shaped civic skills, and that these skills positively affected socio-economic status, social and political participation, and levels of civic engagement. Verba et al. (1995) argued that religious organizations provided a platform and an opportunity for the acquisition of civic skills, especially among those who were most disadvantaged and thereby least likely to participate in politics in the United States (Verba et al., 1995).³ Similarly, Putnam and Campbell (2010) found that religious participation was a form of cultural capital that encouraged the acquisition of

additional social capital through civic engagement. In a nutshell, scholars saw religious affiliation as a gateway to other social networks, to information gathering and to civic skills acquisition, encouraging participants to join other (non-religious) voluntary associations (Greeley, 1997; Putnam, 2000; Wilson and Musick, 1997). This association between religious participation and civic engagement has therefore been viewed as a useful tool for advancing the rights of immigrant communities in the USA (Kniss and Numrich, 2007). Other strands of research have focused on the differences between faiths, suggesting that the cultural and social capital offered by religious participation varies across traditions. For example, previous research highlighted the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism, arguing that there was a higher level of civic engagement among Protestant believers because of differences in the organizational structure as well as an emphasis on social relations and civic training (Lenski, 1961; Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999; Verba et al., 1995).

The literature about religiosity and civic engagement has been developed not only in the USA but also in other western countries, especially countries of the European Union (Davie, 2001; Yeung, 2004). A few studies have also confirmed the correlation between religious practices and civic engagement in Australia (Lyons and Nivison-Smith, 2006); but there are no studies to date that have specifically examined such relationships among Australian Muslims, in particular, whether their involvement in religious associations (i.e. mosques) is linked to deeper civic engagement and social participation in the wider society.

Building on previous research, in this article we investigate if (and to what extent) there is a positive association between Islamic religiosity and civic engagement based on measures of organized religiosity, subjective religiosity and civic engagement as developed primarily by Read (2014). As in previous research, we expect to find a positive correlation between religiosity, and especially organized religiosity, and civic engagement in our dataset. Notwithstanding difficulties associated with defining terms and measures that are applicable to a broad cross-section of Muslim communities living in Australia, we feel that the findings emerging from this analysis will nonetheless be relevant in a context of increased Islamophobia and suspicion of Muslim communities in Australia, which has become amplified since September 11 – and more recently with the emergence of the so-called Islamic State – leading Muslims in the West to be cast as archetypal suspect citizens who must ‘prove’ their citizenship credentials.

Islamic religiosity and citizenship in Australia

The case of Islamic religiosity in Australia is an interesting one for several reasons. First, according to the 2011 Census there are 476,300 Muslims in Australia (2.2% of the population) (ABS, 2012). Yet Muslims evoke a disproportionately negative public response when compared to other religious groups in Australia. The Scanlon Foundation Survey of October 2014 reports that 15% of Australians have a ‘very negative’ attitude towards Muslims as opposed to 12% in 2012. If we compare these findings with prevalence of negative attitudes towards Christians (3% in both 2012 and 2014) and Buddhists (5% in both 2012 and 2014), we develop a clear picture of the rise in prejudice towards Muslims in Australia.⁴ Reviews of media reporting and political discourse show that even though historically they have been socially and economically disadvantaged, Muslim communities

in Australia are most likely to encounter deep-seated prejudices, which have become enflamed in a post-September 11 context (Hage, 2011; Kabir, 2005; Mansouri and Marotta, 2012). As such, the greatest barriers to social and political participation, according to Australian studies, are experiences of anti-Muslim prejudice in media reporting and formal political representation (Hassan, 2013).

A review of the literature about Islamophobia in Australia suggests that Muslims perceive and experience racism and Islamophobia as a barrier that hinders formal political participation; the perception is that political institutions do not represent or support Muslim community aspirations and political agency, so participation provides few if any benefits (Kabir, 2005).⁵ In addition, the few Muslim voices that are often heard contribute to discourses that link Islamic religiosity with fundamentalist values, radicalization and terrorism (Brown, 2012). This exacerbates public perceptions of a 'deficit' in Muslim civic engagement which fuels and perpetuates notions that violent extremism is caused by intensity of religious affiliation and participation; an 'excess' that is hard to contain and which might have dangerous outcomes. In line with this discursive construction of Islamic religiosity as a problematic 'excess', policy responses, particularly those focused on minimizing the risk of violent extremism, have focused on strengthening normative and prescriptive forms of citizenship by promoting participation of Muslim communities in 'mainstream' forms of civic and political participation. This has been undertaken based on the view that deeper engagement with the 'mainstream' community engenders greater commitment to the shared liberal and democratic values and political traditions of the society, minimizing factors leading to violent extremism.⁶ The underlying assumption here is that a secular, rather than religious, form of engagement is a more desirable outcome among Muslim Australians in the fight against extremism and political violence.

From the range of existing studies exploring political participation among Muslim community members, very few examined forms of religiosity and civic and political participation (Kabir, 2005).⁷ Some studies⁸ examined religiosity mainly as a barrier to forms of political participation, and used qualitative methods (interviews and focus groups), which reported interesting perspectives in relation to perceived barriers and aspirations to broader social and political participation. These studies, however, did not empirically investigate the association between religiosity and civic engagement using survey data.

What is different about the research presented in this article is that, although the sample is not representative, it offers broader insights into whether similar studies done by Read (2014) in the USA context are replicable in the Australian context. These insights will be accompanied by qualitative data analysis from interviews and focus groups, which provide a nuanced understanding of what it means to be a 'good citizen', and how Islamic religiosity contributes to such active citizenship.

The study

Methodology and sample

The analysis relies on two sets of data. The quantitative study aims at understanding if (and to what extent) there is a relationship between religiosity and civic engagement. The qualitative study contributes to the understanding of this relationship explaining why

Muslims participate in both civic and religious activities. The qualitative data was collected via semi-structured interviews of approximately one hour in length, conducted with 48 participants (Female = 22; Male = 26) recruited through snowballing methods. Four focus groups were also conducted with religious and community groups.

The data set that we used for the quantitative analyses draws on an original survey of practising Muslims in Melbourne (N = 96). Participants were recruited with a purposive sampling method through religious and other community organizations. The sample is therefore mostly made up of individuals who participate in activities associated with religious and community organizations such as: Islamic representative councils, youth centres, women's networks, interfaith organizations and mosques. However there is a considerable variance in the degrees of civic engagement in the sample, with 30 participants reporting no participation at all in any organized religious group or social activity. This variance in civic participation suggests that the results, although not representative of the Muslim population in Melbourne, provide some important insights. In the quantitative study we used the following dependent variables to capture civic engagement. First we used a scaled item that combines responses to voluntary community activities to form a single scaled item combining responses (1 = yes; 0 = no) to 13 participation activities.⁹ We used such a method because previous studies showed that this is a synthetic and effective method to measure civic engagement in relation to other variables such as religiosity (Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001; Lam, 2006; Read, 2014). The scale ranges from 1 to 13 with a mean score of 2.11 (SD = 2.09, $\alpha = .68$). Being in the form of a scale we analysed this measure of civic engagement with ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Second, we also used other dependent variables commonly found in the participation literature. These include attributing significance to voting (i.e. 'Do you attribute significance to voting?') (1 = yes; 0 = no) and attributing significance to volunteering (i.e. 'Do you attribute significance to volunteering?') (1 = yes; 0 = no). Since they were both binary variables, we analysed them with binary logistic regression.

The main independent variables were two distinct measures of religiosity developed from Read's (2014) work. First, we used a scaled item of subjective religiosity that combined responses (1 = yes; 0 = no) with reference to eight different activities: daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan, private recitations of the Qur'an, Wudu (performing ablution), Zakat (alms giving), Khitan (circumcision), celebrations of the Prophet's birthday, and Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). This multi-dimensional measure of subjective religiosity assessed personal observance of Islamic religious teachings and participation in religious rituals and practices. The scale ranges from 1 to 8 with a mean score of 4.75 (SD = 2.54) and Cronbach's Alpha of .85 (eight items). Second, we used a scaled item of organized religiosity that combined responses (1 = yes; 0 = no) to five activities organized by religious institutions: Friday prayers, Eid celebrations, participation in Qur'an reading groups, attending mosque and participating in community-organized religious events. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with a mean score of 2.84 (SD = 1.72) and Cronbach's Alpha of .79 (five items). We decided to use these two different measures of religiosity in order to investigate if social participation in religious activities (measured by organized religiosity) predicts civic engagement in comparison to subjective religiosity (measured by rituals and practices that are performed by individuals, not requiring mediation by the mosque, imams, community organizers, etc.). This distinction is based on the

work of scholars who suggest that active participation in religious activities with a social dimension, such as attendance at church, mosque or other community spaces, are more significant predictors of encouraging civic engagement than private religious identification and beliefs (Greeley, 1997; Putnam, 2000; Verba et al., 1995). The concepts of organized and subjective religiosity were originally developed from Read's (2014) work, where those measures were constructed using the same technique of creating a scale from self-reported indicators of participation in religious activities and practices. Also in this case we used this method because it provides a synthetic and effective measure of religiosity that in previous studies showed statistical correlations with other variables such as civic participation (Read, 2014).

As community engagement can also be associated with other individual characteristics, we collected and dummy coded gender (Female = 0; Male = 1) and age (18–24 = 1; 25 and above = 0). We also collected education and income, and treated them as ordinal variables.¹⁰ The sample was composed of 47 females (49%) and 49 males (51%), 43 in the age group 18 to 24 (44.8%) and 53 in the age group 25 or above (55.2%), 59 people with a Bachelor's degree or higher (61.5%) and 37 with a high school certificate or lower (38.5%), 47 Australian-born (49%) and 49 Overseas-born (51%). We included gender, age, education and income as control variables in the analyses.

Results and key research findings

Organized and subjective religiosity: are they predictors of greater civic engagement? We used OLS and logistic regression models to investigate the predictors of our measures of civic engagement. In Table 1, the first two columns show the regression coefficients (and standard errors) of the models explaining the participants' civic engagement. The rest of the columns contain binary logistic regression coefficients on attributing significance to electoral participation and in volunteering. As the literature about civic engagement and participation predicts, measures of Islamic religiosity were significant and positive predictors of civic engagement (Verba et al., 1995). More specifically, organized religiosity was a statistically significant predictor of civic engagement ($p = .019$). Yet subjective religiosity was not statistically associated with civic engagement ($p = .110$) (Table 1).

Table 1 showed that per each extra point in the scale of organized religiosity, there was a .39 increase in the civic engagement scale. As for the other dependent variables, the data should be interpreted differently as they are binary logistic regression coefficients. For every one unit increase in organized religiosity, the odds of attributing significance to volunteering increased by .48. Table 1 shows that respondents between 18 and 24 years of age were about 82% less likely to attribute significance to voting. Also, respondents were 21% more likely to attribute significance to voting per each increase in the income group (see note 7 for the income scale). These results suggest that organized religiosity is significantly and positively associated with civic engagement but not with attributing significance to electoral participation.

Finally, as previous research found that basic demographic variables such as gender and age moderated the relationship between religiosity and civic engagement (Read, 2014), we created interaction terms between the independent variables (organized and subjective religiosity) and two potential moderators (age and gender). We obtained four

Table 1. Regression models predicting civic and political engagement (unstandardized b, Exp(B) and standard errors).

	Civic engagement scale		Significance to voting		Significance to volunteering	
Subjective religiosity	.18 (.11)		.99 (.18)		1.18 (.11)	
Organized religiosity		.39 (.16)*		.89 (.18)		1.48 (.18)*
Gender	-.28 (.55)	-.60 (.56)	.43 (.63)	.50 (.66)	1.66 (.55)	2.34 (.60)
Age	.12 (.56)	-.05 (.56)	.18 (.74)*	.19 (.74)*	1.84 (.55)	2.24 (.57)
Education	.19 (.19)	.21 (.19)	.86 (.23)	.85 (.23)	1.07 (.19)	1.10 (.19)
Income	.03 (.07)	.01 (.07)	1.21 (.09)*	1.21 (.09)*	1.03 (.07)	1.02 (.07)
Adjusted R ² and Pseudo R ²	.01	.04	.19	.19	.07	.10

*= $p < .05$.

Table 2. Interaction terms (gender and age by organized and subjective religiosity) (Unstandardized b, Exp(B) and standard errors).

	Civic engagement scale	Significance to voting	Significance to volunteering
Subjective religiosity*gender ^a	.07 (.08)	.96 (.09)	1.02 (.08)
Organized religiosity*gender ^a	.16 (.13)	.86 (.14)	1.02 (.12)
Subjective religiosity*age ^b	1.00 (.09)	.78 (.12)*	1.02 (.09)
Organized religiosity*age ^b	.20 (.14)	.70 (.19)*	.10 (.13)

^a= controlling for age, education and income; ^b = controlling for gender, education and income; * = $p < .05$.

interaction terms, and we ran logistic and linear regression models controlling for education and income (Table 2).

Table 2 suggests that age moderates the relationship between religiosity and attributing significance to voting, but not for the other two dependent variables. For civic engagement and attributing significance to volunteering, in the sample male and young (age 18–24) participants have on average higher levels of organized religiosity.¹¹ The relationship between religiosity and civic engagement is consistent across gender and age groups.

The problem of political institutions and formal citizenship: why do Muslims value participating in civic (but not electoral) activities?

The overall context for these findings was a deeply felt sense that the Muslim community, in Australia and elsewhere, had been misrepresented and affected negatively by mainstream political commentary regarding the place of Islam and Muslim diasporas in the West, especially post 9/11 and in response to the threat of extremism and terrorism. The response by Muslim communities has been two-fold. On the one hand, public pressure has highlighted the civic function of Muslim religious and community organizations, as agents for 'bridging' with mainstream political and cultural organizations to facilitate social inclusion (Akbarzadeh and Roose, 2011: 283). In terms of facilitating perspectives by Muslim voices, organizations have engaged more actively in media engagement and training, and have become more interested in promoting and publicizing more active types of citizenship. This was highlighted in interviews conducted with participants engaged either as volunteers or employees, of community and faith based organizations:

Alia (volunteer with Dandenong Interfaith network, Australian Intercultural Society and Sirius College):

With the community and the school that I'm working with our job is to build bridges as much as possible. You build those bridges, you build a common ground.

Ahmad (Islamic Council of Victoria):

You know it [negative media commentary after September 11] provided us with challenges to prepare ourselves and the philosophy is, from adversity comes opportunity, so it just woke up a lot of positive multiculturalists; a lot of multi-faith people – a lot of Muslims who are advocates, okay?

On the other hand, and often despite heavy involvement in volunteering and other forms of civic activities, some participants demonstrated mistrust towards formal political parties and institutions, and indicated their withdrawal from formal political participation. Explanations provided tended to indicate mistrust of political institutions fostered by heightened surveillance and scrutiny of Muslim communities after September 11. Mention was also made of the types of religious compromises that needed to be negotiated to join mainstream political parties, or even to vote, with special mention being made of the divisive basis of formal politics. In this sense, grassroots civic engagement was viewed as preferential in terms of giving back to the Australian community without compromising core religious values:

Alia: I'm not engaged in politics. There was one time where I was thinking should I go into politics? Will that help change the world? That's – when you're young, you want to change the world. But then you read and you see all the compromises you need to make and you're thinking well if I'm going to have

to compromise my values then politics might not be the best way and that's why a lot of Muslims are turning to just grassroots [...] Otherwise they generally try to steer clear of being politically aligned because in today's day and age you want to steer clear of things that are going to divide you [...] so that's why we just try to stay small in our own communities and try to help people in our own ways as much as possible.

This analysis highlights some crucial reasons for organized religiosity predicting civic engagement but not formal political participation (i.e. elections). By and large, participants suggested that this withdrawal was owing to a perceived lack of regard for Muslim community voices at the formal political level, and a perception that formal politics is about dividing rather than uniting the political community.

For some other participants, particularly the younger ones, the feeling of mistrust, disengagement and social exclusion led to ambivalence about conforming with mainstream expectations and engagement in political activities. For example, several interviewees – particularly 18–24-year-old, Australian-born, second-generation migrants – described a desire to be as politically engaged or non-engaged as every other non-Muslim Australian citizen:

Cosima: Being a citizen, well, it's just being yourself, I suppose. Being a citizen is being yourself, and abiding by the laws, that everyone else abides from it. So you're not, you shouldn't be any different to anyone else, just because you have a certain belief. Or you come from a certain culture.

In particular, there was a level of indignation about Islam being viewed by the Australian government as a law unto itself, which encouraged forms of dissociation from or indifference towards Australian law and politics. This was opposed by many participants who regarded their religion as being one of cooperation which encouraged obedience towards the rule of law:

Amal: [As Muslims] you're meant to respect the rule of the land or the law of the land. You're supposed to, for example you respect the law of the land unless the law of the land says it's forbidden to pray because then you would still – you would have to pray because that's what you're creator tells you to do but other things are just like common sense.

Further to this, some participants expressed their belief that the state focus on civic obligations and responsibilities for Muslims coincided with the withdrawal of basic decency, respect and hospitality towards Muslim citizens.

For other participants, the necessity of more active public 'engagement' after September 11 was welcomed and seen as a means of increasing the inclusion of Muslims in western societies. In particular, some participants felt that it provided an opportunity, at an individual level and a community level, to address misconceptions and highlight the universal principles and ethics of Islam which are shared by all Abrahamic faiths:

Tariq: As I said, being steadfast, overcoming this adversity, that's the Muslim way. We're the first ones to hold hands when things happen like that [September 11, Boston bombings] happen 'cause we know that obviously there's going to be an after-effect on many of the community – How do we go about it? I guess within ourselves, setting the right example and through others, so inspiring others, setting the right example by being a role model for others, that way they don't go down a certain pathway. That's really what shapes us, having that consciousness, knowing that there must be action taken [...] go out there, take initiative, make things happen and contribute in that positive way ... so I think it's the responsibility on just about everyone, especially within our own community, the elders and that.

These discussions carried over into conversations about particular religious rituals and practices, collective or subjective, that, for many participants not only instilled public virtues and feelings of deep care and belonging in the community, but also active forms of community engagement and service:

Abbas (speaking on the significance of dua prayers):

It's like a gravitational pull towards something, for example I felt I wasn't as sincere and close enough to God as I would've liked to be – I made in Arabic the words called *dua*, or asking supplication to God to guide me towards becoming closer to him, and as a result I've felt afterwards drawn to getting into Aged Care. Learning about it and having that as a direction. I'm not sure what I'll be doing there, but I feel there's a need there and work to be done, which will bring me closer to serving God and being closer to him.

Participants also identified strong links between the type of civic values and practices that Islam encourages and democratic ethics and principles. In asking participants about particular ideas which come from Islamic sources and ritual practices that might shape forms and practices of citizenship, there were some other unexpected points of overlap between religious beliefs and active citizenship practices in a republican tradition, with its emphasis on striving for the *common good*. In addition, a strong association was identified between the Islamic religious tradition and human rights principles that could contribute towards expanded definitions of citizenship, such as cosmopolitan or multicultural citizenship:

Imam Ismael: There's a verse in the Quran and it's very clear.... It states that if someone does good to you, it's only better to give something better in return. So the Australian people, the Australian government have given me the freedom to work here, to practise my religion, so it's only fair to return back to that community.... So we always encourage by helping our people especially our neighbours.

Nor must these norms always subscribe to or seek to channel political aspirations towards consensus, as in a model of deliberative democracy. Rather, some of these expressions relating religious beliefs and practices to active citizenship, particularly participation in the public sphere, reveal emerging understandings of citizenship which do not just focus on formal 'participation' alone, but which seek to open up spaces for personal activities that may contest and challenge the status quo. Indeed, for Abbas, Islamic teachings promote this sense of critical engagement, particularly for groups whose forms and expressions of citizenship are so frequently enacted in relation to asymmetric power relations:

Abbas: You can stand up being part of a country and disagree with things, it doesn't mean you have to agree because you're a citizen of a country, it doesn't mean you have to be a slave to the leadership, you can disagree for the benefit of the country and that makes you a better citizen. I like the story [...] from early Islam where someone was criticizing – it was the Khalif Omar and people were getting upset because this person was – I think it was a woman that was criticizing him and his leadership in public and when she finished he answered her, he says there is no good in a people that don't give advice and criticize, and there is no good in a leadership that doesn't hear it and react to it – and that's what I believe, I think we're lacking a good citizenship – active citizenship that's aware and makes their leaders accountable, and we're lacking a leadership that makes itself accountable and deals with the issues and not the popularity.

Discussion

This article aimed at examining the relationships between Islamic religiosity and civic engagement in Melbourne using quantitative and qualitative methods. It builds on the quantitative research that explores the relationship between organized religiosity (defined by attendance at mosques and other religious organizations) and active citizenship as produced largely in the USA (see Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Verba et al., 1995). This is complemented by qualitative analysis regarding subjective dimensions and perspectives of Islamic religiosity, and its importance or otherwise to forms of civic engagement and active citizenship (see Lobo and Mansouri, 2012; Mansouri et al., 2011).

The findings from the quantitative analysis confirm a positive relationship between Islamic religiosity and civic engagement. More specifically, organized religiosity (i.e. religious practices organized by religious groups and institutions) is a statistically significant predictor of civic engagement among Muslims in Melbourne. This finding challenges discourses that demonize Islam as a source of radicalization and social disengagement. While Islamic organizations and mosques are sometimes cited as potential places where radicalization and violent extremism can germinate (the so-called gateway organizations) (Neumann and Rogers, 2007), this article shows that organized Islamic groups can also act as a civic engagement incubator.

The qualitative study showed how more subjective dimensions, expressions and interpretations of how Islamic beliefs and ritual practices shape civic engagement and political

participation, key indicators of social integration and citizenship in the literature. In particular, the findings articulated here show how Muslim participants lived civic engagement as a form of activism to redeem the public image of Islam. This may be a reaction to the discourses demonizing Islam in the public sphere and to the sense of mistrust towards Islam in Australian public opinion. This is especially true for people who participate in religious groups and activities, who aim at rebranding the public image of their group of belonging. For example, as active members of peak representative bodies, interfaith networks, educational centres and activist networks, some assumed responsibility to 'build bridges' and address the challenges that Muslims face today.

The quantitative study also showed how religiosity did not predict attributing significance to voting. Rather, among people in the 18–24 age group, the more religious they are, the less likely they are to attribute significance to voting. This relationship is further explained by the qualitative findings, which highlighted that the negative perception of Islam in the public sphere pushed Muslims, especially youth, away from more institutionalized and traditional forms of political participation such as voting. This explains why young people expressed ambivalence about conforming with mainstream expectations and traditional political activities, but at the same time they valued grassroots civic engagement. Gender, contrary to what Read (2014) found, did not moderate the relationship between religiosity and civic engagement. This may be due to the small sample size: further research should test this moderation with a larger sample. The qualitative analysis showed that 'civic education' programs – as a normative exercise which identifies Muslim religious practice and expression as a barrier to broader forms of civic engagement – has furthered experiences of alienation and inequality among Muslims of diverse backgrounds.

As the central issue here is the presumed deficit of Islam in terms of its contribution towards encouraging 'good citizenship', some questions in the project were designed to elicit views regarding the nature of Muslim religious belief and practice, and whether or not these forms of obligation and responsibility to God and '*ummah*' create a barrier to western, secular modes of active citizenship. Our results showed that organizational forms of religiosity, as one dimension of Islamic religiosity, encouraged deeper forms of civic engagement. Yet the measure of subjective religiosity did not predict any form of civic and political engagement in our sample. This result may be explained by the fact that associational membership in religious institutions, as previous research showed, is a key predictor of political mobilization and civic participation (Jamal, 2005; Putnam and Campbell, 2010; Verba et al., 1995). This finding is not conclusive, however, with the measure being used in this article generating findings that differ from findings generated from in-depth interviews, focus groups and qualitative analysis of responses to open-ended questions (see Johns et al., 2015). Further research should test the relationships between subjective religiosity and participation with different methods and measures using a larger sample of Australian Muslims. Moreover, there has also been no capacity to explore differences between religious schools within Islam, their organizational structure and teachings, and forms of civic engagement among active members. This outlines the challenges facing researchers attempting to do quantitative and comparative research on Muslim believers and levels of civic engagement among them, given the multidimensionality of Islamic religiosity (see El Menouar, 2014, for a full description of the

challenges of measuring Islamic religiosity) and also the difficulty in defining what counts as civic engagement.

Conclusion

To conclude, this article contributes to the larger debate about Muslim citizenship in western societies. Formal citizenship is generally identified as the legal means through which membership to the nation is determined. It includes legal protections and rights in exchange for the citizen undertaking certain obligations and responsibilities. In a post 9/11 environment, it has involved demands for increased civic participation of Muslim citizens. For example, in order to be able to maintain a relationship whereby the state 'protects' Muslim citizens and their right to religious freedom, the state has placed the focus squarely on the obligations and responsibilities of Muslim citizens living in the West, and expanded the 'duties' they must perform to prove they are worthy of rights and protections. Shyrock (2009) describes this as a form of 'disciplinary inclusion', while Bilici (2012) regards it as 'negative incorporation'. This level of interference by the state has been justified on the basis of national security but has had the effect of pushing Muslims further towards insecurity, compromising their rights and freedoms to practise their faith publicly (i.e. through attendance at mosque, wearing religious attire, etc.) without the risk of being pronounced 'disloyal'.

This hypocrisy and its logical outcome, of dividing the Muslim community into 'good' and 'bad' citizens on the basis of how they perform their religiosity, was identified by some participants as confusing and discriminatory, and contributed further to a sense of disengagement and social exclusion. For some participants (especially the younger ones), this led to ambivalence about conforming with mainstream expectations at the level of political participation. This article contributes to this debate, providing evidence and discussion about the positive association between Islamic organized religiosity and civic engagement in Melbourne, and contributing towards a broadening of the terms and frames of discussing the forms and meanings of Islamic religiosity and citizenship practices of Muslims living in contemporary western societies.

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Notes

1. See: <http://ausmuslimwomenscentre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Understanding-Muslim-diversity.pdf>
2. See for example Paul Sheehan's article 'These Crimes Have Everything to Do with Islam': <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/these-crimes-have-everything-to-do-with-islam-20150111-12lxmn.html#ixzz3fpi6eCDt> (accessed 14 July 2015).

3. Verba et al.'s (1995) research focused on Catholic and Protestant churches in the USA, and found that belonging to Protestant church was correlated with higher civic skills. However this hypothesis was challenged by Jones-Correa and Leal (2001), who found that denominational differences had limited explanatory power for Hispanic American political participation.
4. See: <http://monash.edu/mapping-population/public-opinion/surveys/scanlon-foundation-surveys/mapping-social-cohesion-snap-poll-results-2014.pdf> (accessed 14 July 2015).
5. See: https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2014/muslim-mapping-report_access.pdf and https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2014/social-participation-muslim-men.pdf (accessed 10 June 2015).
6. See: http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/19729/2012_National_Action_Plan_Final_Evaluation.pdf (accessed 10 June 2015).
7. See also: https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2014/muslim-mapping-report.pdf (accessed 10 August 2015).
8. See, for example: https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2014/political-participation-muslims.pdf (accessed 10 June 2015).
9. The question was: 'What, if any, local community groups are you involved in? School associations, Charity organizations, Kids playgroups, Mother's groups, Youth activity groups, Political parties, Religious groups, Environmental groups, Sports clubs, Arts and cultural groups, Senior citizens clubs, Gym or exercise groups, Senior citizens clubs.' The responses were coded 1 = yes; 0 = no.
10. Income was coded as it follows: 1 = less than \$10,000; 2 = \$10,000 to \$19,999; 3 = \$20,000 to \$29,999; 4 = \$30,000 to \$39,000; 5 = \$40,000 to \$49,999; 6 = \$50,000 to \$59,999; 7 = \$60,000 to \$69,999; 8 = \$70,000 to \$79,999; 9 = \$80,000 to \$89,999; 10 = \$90,000 to \$99,999; 11 = \$100,000 to \$149,000; 12 = \$150,000 or more. Education was coded as it follows: 1 = not attended high school; 2 = attended junior high school (year 10); 3 = attended senior high school (year 12); 4 = Trade certificate or other diploma; 5 = Bachelor degree; 6 = postgraduate degree.
11. More specifically, males ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.64$) have higher levels of organized religiosity than females ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.70$), $t(94) = 2.78$, $p = .01$. Moreover, participants in the 18–24 age group ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.53$) have higher levels of organized religiosity than older participants ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 1.78$), $t(94) = 2.67$, $p = .01$. No differences appear in the levels of subjective religiosity.

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