

# The Structure and Dynamics of Muslim-Canadian Opinions about Same-Sex Marriage, Abortion, and Welfare

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## Abstract

Critics of Islam in Canada and across the Western world often frame anti-Islamic positions as a defense of tolerance against intolerance, and of equality against inequality. Islam, for this perspective, poses challenges for the integration of Muslim immigrants in Western societies. As a quintessential immigrant society, the Canadian context provides an opportunity to examine whether the integration of Muslim immigrants poses challenges that the integration of other immigrant groups do not. This paper builds on the “information-predisposition” theory of opinion formation and draws on public opinion evidence from Ipsos’ 2006 Canadian federal election “exit survey” to examine the structure and dynamics of Canadian Muslims’ opinions about same-sex marriage, abortion, and welfare. The analysis suggests that Canadian Muslims, as a group, do have distinctive opinions about these issues, but that there is substantial and systematic variation in opinions about these issues within the Muslim-Canadian community, particularly with respect to the issues of same-sex marriage and abortion. Indeed, closer analysis suggests that it is primarily foreign-birth and socialization, and not Islam, which generates distinctive moral opinions among Muslim-Canadians; and that it is a Canadian education, and not secularization, that undoes this distinctiveness.

## 1 Introduction

In January, 2007, the town of Hérouxville, Québec, Canada drafted a series of resolutions aimed at prospective immigrants. The most controversial resolution

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prohibited the stoning of women in public. “Nous considérons que les hommes et les femmes sont égaux et ont la même valeur,” the document proclaims, before reaffirming the community’s basic commitment to the fundamental rights of women, including their right to walk unaccompanied in public, attend school, and operate a vehicle (Municipalite de Herouville, 2010). The anti-Muslim sentiment that inspired these resolutions was certainly unusual in its candor (Bouchard and Taylor, 2008). But it was not unusual in its form. Critics of Islam in Canada and across the Western world often frame anti-Islamic positions as a defense of tolerance against intolerance, and of equality against inequality (Akkerman, 2005, 2010; Betz and Meret, 2009; Ehrkamp, 2010; Razak, 2008; Shachar, 2000).

The size of the Canadian Muslim population more than doubled between the 1991 and 2001 censuses, and this growth has continued apace. Worldwide population and migration patterns mean that Muslims will comprise an increasing share of immigrants to Canada for the next several years. By 2030, the number of Muslims in Canada is estimated to triple, from 940 thousand to 2.7 million, or 6.6 percent of the national population (Pew Research Center, 2011). The integration of new immigrants is partly about the attitudes of the immigrant population toward objects in the new society, and it is partly about the attitudes of the established society toward the new immigrant population. On both points, many argue, Islam may pose distinctive challenges for the integration of Muslim immigrants in Western countries (Huntington, 1993). Islam is said to be wholly at odds with core liberal democratic values. Muslims are sometimes said to see government welfare as a perpetual entitlement flowing from the obligations of the rich to the poor. Pia Kiergaard, the leader of the far-right Danish People’s Party, argued along these lines that Muslim immigrants threaten to the fiscal health of countries with generous welfare states. “The [Danish] Social Assistance Act is passé,” she said, “because it is fitted to a Danish family tradition and work ethic and not to Muslims for whom it is acceptable to depend financially on others...” (Kjaersgaard, 2002). Muslims are often said to hold similarly illiberal opinions about homosexuality, and, especially, the rights of women. Pim Fortuyn frequently called attention to the perceived hostility of Muslims toward homosexuality in Holland. And the alleged subjugation of women in Islam has been deftly exploited to support bans on Burquas, Hijabs, religious schools, Islamic civil tribunals, Minarets, and indeed, on immigration from Islamic countries altogether (Razak, 2008). From these perspectives, anti-Muslim sentiment among Westerners is not about xenophobia and intolerance. To the contrary, political actors often frame their opposition to Islam as a concern for tolerance itself. “I don’t hate Muslims, I hate Islam,” said Geert Wilders. “Islam is a threat to Western values. The equality of men and women, the equality of homosexuals and heterosexuals, the separation of church and state, freedom of speech, they are all under pressure because of islamization” (Wilders, 2010). In short, Islam is said to hamper the integration of Muslim immigrants in Western societies by generating hostility among Muslim immigrants toward Western values, and thereby generating hostility among Western citizens toward Muslim immigrants.

Do Muslims in Western countries hold opinions that deviate from liberal values? If so, do these opinions stem from the fact that Muslims are immigrants, or do they stem from Islam itself? If Muslims hold illiberal attitudes about government welfare, about women's rights, and about gay rights, then a question of direct practical significance is whether they hold these views by virtue of having been socialized in a country where illiberal views are common, rather than by virtue of their adherence to Islam. The opinions of people who have been socialized for the better part of their lives in foreign countries cannot be expected to change in a day. Indeed, homosexuality and abortion were illegal in many Western countries right up until the latter years of the Twentieth Century. Even so, to the extent that the opinions of Muslims are attributable to their country of origin rather than to their religion, these opinions are likely to change gradually in the new society, particularly among subsequent generations of Muslims, and regardless of whether or not Muslims maintain their devotion to Islam. In this scenario, Islam is not the problem, and time, rather than policy measures which target Islam, is likely to resolve the "clash" between new Muslim immigrants and established Westerners. If, however, Muslims express distinctive political opinions and these opinions turn out to be attributable to Islam, then devotion to Islam may buttress the opinions of new Muslim immigrants, and it may proliferate these opinions among subsequent generations of Muslims. In this scenario, Islam is the problem, and religious devotion perpetuates the ideological isolation of Muslims in Western countries.

A common line of argument in Western countries posits that Islam poses problems for the integration of Muslims in Western societies because it has negative effects on the attitudes of Muslims toward Western values. This paper tests the veracity of this basic argument in the Canadian case.

## 2 The Canadian Context

Canadians may well integrate the coming waves of Muslim immigration as easily as they have integrated previous waves of immigration from other immigrant groups. But there are reasons to be cautious. Indeed, in 1991, W.A. Shadid (1991) argued that there was at least one country—a country with high levels of social tolerance, a tradition of accommodation, and state support for multiculturalism—that was bound to avoid the anti-Islamic backlash that was occurring elsewhere at the time. That country was the Netherlands. "This does not mean that conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims are not conceivable in Holland," he said. "However, the scope of these conflicts will not exceed that of group conflicts existing in every society" (Shadid, 1991, 370). In 2010, Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom (PPV) became the third largest political party in the Netherlands and the most successful avowed anti-Islamic party in the Western World. Wilders has called for an outright ban on the Qur'an. In hindsight, Wilders' success in Holland may not be entirely surprising. To be sure, anti-Islamic rhetoric is designed to appeal to people who dislike immigrants (Fekete, 2008). But it also aims to appeal to people with predispositions to tolerance,

accommodation, and equality, precisely the people who have traditionally expressed the highest level of support for immigration and diversity

For understandable reasons, the bulk of the work on anti-immigrant sentiment is situated in the European context (Akkerman, 2010; Bevelander and Otterbeck, 2010; Bleich, 2009, 2003; Connor, 2010; Ehrkamp, 2010; Fekete, 2008; Shadid, 1991). Immigration is not nearly as controversial in Canada as it is in many parts of Europe. Indeed, Canada is a quintessential immigrant society. For precisely this reason, however, the Canadian context is particularly well suited for analyses that aim to disaggregate the patterns of Muslim integration from the patterns of immigrant integration more generally. Canada has one of the highest per-capita immigration rates in the OECD, and the proportion of foreign-born (and non-British) citizens has never fallen below 13 percent (Chui, Tran and Maheux, 2007). For the past 30 years, the top immigrant source countries have included non-white countries like China, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India and, more recently, Iran, Pakistan, and South Korea. About one in five Canadians are foreign-born (Statistics Canada, 2008), and one in ten Canadians are a member of a visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2001). Canada has an enduring and constitutionally entrenched tradition of minority religious accommodation, and, since 1971, an official state policy of Multiculturalism. This policy commits the government to actively promote the development of minority cultural identities. The policy enjoys unanimous support among all four political parties in the national Parliament. Indeed, multiculturalism is so entrenched in Canada that many consider it a signature characteristic of the country's political culture (Eliadis, 2007), a trait which distinguishes the Canadian "mosaic" from the "melting pot" in the United States. In the 2006 World Values Survey, less than 3 percent of Canadians indicated that they did not want "people of a different race" as neighbors; less than 2.5 percent said the same thing about "immigrants"; fewer still said the same about "people of a different religion" (World Values Survey, 2010). If the integration of Muslim immigrants in Western societies poses challenges that the integration of other visible minority immigrants do not, these differences should stand out clearly against the backdrop of the Canadian context.

### 3 Theory and Hypotheses

The opinions of individuals are shaped in important ways by the information environment that surrounds them, but they are not shaped exclusively by this environment (Disch, 2011). People hold predispositions which condition in important respects how they react to information in the social environment. As Zaller (1992, 6) explains, "every opinion is a marriage of information and predisposition: information to form a mental picture of the given issue, and predisposition to motivate some conclusion about it." "Information," from this standpoint, refers to the facts, ideas, arguments and issue-frames circulating in a given social environment. And "predispositions" refer to enduring allegiances and animosities toward certain ideas and groups (Zaller, 1992; Cochrane, 2010).

Predispositions are created and strengthened by new supportive information (“socialization”), and they are weakened by new dissonant information (“value change”). Thus, contradictory information gradually erodes predispositions and thereby changes opinions. Even so, this process is normally a slow one. Moreover, very strong predispositions may become especially resistant to change over time. Discordant information will not immediately overturn a strong predisposition. And predispositions that have been generated and reinforced by years of supportive information are likely to be particularly strong. Thus, old predispositions die harder than new ones, and a new information environment will typically have more of an effect on younger people than on older people (Inglehart, 1997).

Information and predisposition are individually necessary and jointly sufficient to generate an opinion. In repeated focused in-depth interviews with twenty-seven Americans from New Haven, Connecticut, Jennifer Hochschild (1981) found that many of her interviewees were deeply committed to the idea of equality. However, unlike the political and family spheres where arguments couched in the language of equality were common, Hochschild found that many of her interviewees did not support redistributive economic policies in part because they had not been exposed to arguments which couched economic redistribution in the language of equality. In this case, the predisposition was present, but the information was absent. Thus, the predisposition had no effect on opinion. On the other side of the information-predisposition interaction, Zaller (1992, 165) finds that new information about foreign affairs may have a different effect on the opinions of those who are predisposed to “dovish” and “hawkish” positions on defense. A particular piece of information may move the opinions of doves, but not hawks, or vice-versa. In this case, the information would be present, but the predisposition to accept it would not. These examples illustrate the basic theoretical point of the argument: it is not just information that matters, and it is not just predisposition. What matters is the interaction of the two.

From this perspective, there are two hypotheses which generate the expectation of distinctive opinions among Canadian Muslims. The first hypothesis, the “foreign socialization hypothesis,” draws attention to the fact that Muslim immigrants to Canada are overwhelmingly from regions of the world where Western liberal views about economics, women’s rights and, especially, homosexuality are not shared widely. Indeed, the top source countries for Muslim immigrants to Canada are Pakistan, Iran, United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Algeria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Afghanistan, and Turkey (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). Certainly, the institutional environments in these countries are different than in Canada. Homosexuality and abortion are illegal in most of these countries, and none of these countries compares to Canada in terms of their levels of economic freedom (Heritage Foundation, 2011). The opinion environments are also quite different. In the World Values Survey, 26 percent of Canadian respondents indicated that homosexuality was “never justifiable.” The comparable figures for respondents in Pakistan, Algeria, Iran, and Turkey were 96 percent, 93 percent, 94 percent, and 85 percent, respectively.

The differences are less pronounced, but still obvious, on the issue of abortion. In Canada, 31 percent of respondents indicated that abortion is “never justifiable.” This compares to 60 percent in Pakistan, 79 percent in Algeria, 77 percent in Iran, and 64 percent in Turkey. When it comes to opinions about welfare, less than 8 percent of Canadians agree very strongly with the statement that “the government should do more to take care of people” rather than the statement that “people should do more to take care of themselves.” The figures for Iran (20%), Morocco (35%), Pakistan (25%), Turkey (26%), Algeria (22%), Egypt (28%) and Iraq (35%) are all much higher. Simply, the institutional and opinion environments in these countries differ considerably from the Canadian context when it comes to homosexuality, abortion, and welfare. Popular opinion in these countries is far to the right of Canada on moral issues, and far to the left on economic issues. It would be remarkable, indeed, if immigrants who were born and raised in these countries did not hold opinions when they arrived to Canada that differed from those of native-born Canadians.<sup>1</sup>

The second hypothesis, the “religiosity hypothesis,” underlines the impact of Islam. Although it is perilous to characterize all of Islam as if it were a single unified doctrine about which there is no disagreement, Islam is commonly associated with right-wing opinions about homosexuality and women’s rights (Akkerman, 2005, 2010; Zolberg and Litt Woon, 1999), and left-wing opinions about the economy (Kjaersgaard, 2002). Indeed, this is the basis of the arguments of many far-right European politicians, notably Geert Wilders, that they do not dislike Muslims per se, but that they despise Islam. This “religiosity hypothesis” proposes that a predisposition to religiosity may well interact with the information environment in Islamic Mosques to generate right-wing opinions about moral issues and left-wing opinions about economic issues.

Both the socialization and religiosity hypotheses therefore predict precisely the same pattern of opinion among Canadian Muslims: to the right on homosexuality and abortion, and to the left on the economy. These hypotheses differ, however, in their predictions about the precise drivers of these opinions. If Muslim immigrants to Canada hold anti-gay, anti-abortion, and pro-welfare positions by virtue of having been socialized in countries where these views are common, then an observable implication of this hypothesis is that foreign-born Muslims will express these opinions at greater levels than native-born Muslims, regardless of any differences between them in their level of religiosity. From

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<sup>1</sup>On its face, it may seem reasonable to suppose that the economic and moral landscapes of Muslim countries are shaped by the overwhelming prevalence of Islam in those countries. Indeed, the proportion of the population in these countries that are Muslim range from a low of 95 percent in the case of Pakistan to highs of 99 and 100 percent in the cases of Algeria, Afghanistan, and Morocco. There are, however, countries in the Middle East and North Africa where Muslims are not a majority of the population. And when it comes to economic and moral issues, less-Islamic and, indeed, non-Islamic countries in these regions nonetheless have legal and opinion environments that are virtually identical, and in many cases more extreme, than those of their Islamic neighbors. This does not, of course, rule out the contention that Islam drives illiberal opinions. But it does suggest another plausible explanation. People who immigrate from this part of the world, regardless of whether they immigrate from a Muslim country, are likely to have been raised in distinctive information environment when it comes to moral and economic issues.

this perspective, illiberal opinions stem from being born and raised in a country where these opinions are widespread, regardless of the level of one’s commitment to Islam. If, on the other hand, Muslims hold illiberal opinions by virtue of being Muslim—that is, if these opinions stem from the Islamic religion itself—then the observable implication is that Muslims with higher levels of religious commitment will hold more conservative opinions about moral issues, and less conservative opinions about economic issues, regardless of whether they were born in Canada or not. According to this line of argument, Islamic religious beliefs generate the distinctive opinion patterns of Muslims.

These hypotheses therefore generate two empirical research questions: are the moral and economic opinions of Canadian Muslims different from those of other Canadians? And, if they are different, what are the drivers of these differences? The “foreign-socialization” and “religiosity” hypotheses generate precisely the same prediction about the first question—that is, “yes”—but they generate altogether different, though not mutually exclusive predictions, about the second question. In the case of the foreign-socialization hypothesis, the expectation is that foreign-born Muslims will be more distinctive than native-born Muslims, controlling for any differences between them in their level of religiosity. And in the case of the religiosity hypothesis, the expectation is that highly devoted Muslims will be more distinctive than less devoted Muslims, controlling for any differences between them in their country of birth.

## 4 The Moral and Economic Opinions of Muslims

Figure 1a-c summarizes the opinions of Canadian respondents about gay marriage, abortion and welfare. The data are taken from a sample of 36 003 Canadian voters, including 160 Muslims, who opted-in to a post-election “exit” survey from a standing web panel of more than 200 000 Canadians.<sup>2</sup> The heights of the

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<sup>2</sup>Using a public opinion survey to measure the opinions of minority groups about politically charged topics is a difficult endeavor in any country, including Canada. The financial costs associated with generating large random samples of very small minority populations are very high, and large government funded surveys, like the Ethnic Diversity Survey, tend to avoid asking questions about controversial and deeply partisan political topics. For this reason, the following analysis of Muslim political opinions in Canada draws on a large sample generated and donated by a major private public opinion firm, Ipsos. The sample consists of 36 003 Canadian voters, including 160 Muslims (55 native-born, 105 foreign-born), who opted-in to a web survey from a standing panel of more than 200 000 Canadians. A sample of this size permits detailed analyses of sub-populations. However, the web component, as well as the opt-in component, raise questions about the representativeness of the sample. That is, how well does the proportion of different groups in the sample correspond to their proportion in the population as a whole? Despite the best efforts of polling companies to generate standing panels via multiple methods of random sampling, any deviations from random selection in a survey pose problems for the representativeness of the sample (Chang and Krosnick, 2009). Some groups, simply, may be under-represented or over-represented vis-a-vis their share of the population as a whole. In this case, however, the research questions are analytical, rather than descriptive. The question is not about how many Muslims there are in Canada, the question instead is how the opinions of Muslims compare to those of other groups in the

bars correspond to the proportion of different groups that hold right-wing opinions about these issues. The dashed horizontal lines in the figure represent the national average. Thus, notice the positions of Muslims in each Figure. Nearly 40 percent of Muslims in the survey, compared to 13 percent of non-Muslims, said that there should be absolutely no legal recognition for same-sex relationships, not even the second-tier status of “civil unions.” 37 percent of Muslims said that abortion should be illegal in most or all cases, compared to 18 percent of non-Muslims. And when it comes to government intervention, only about 18 percent of Muslims, compared to 41 percent of non-Muslims, said that the government does too many things that should be left to businesses and individuals. This is not simply a “religious effect.” Muslims are far more likely to hold right-wing opinions about moral issues, and left-wing opinions about economic issues, than any other major religious group in the country. Protestants and Catholics are only half as likely as Muslims to hold conservative opinions about same-sex marriage and abortion, respectively. And Muslims are four times more likely than either of these groups to hold left-wing opinions about state intervention. In short, Muslims tend to express right-wing opinions about same-sex marriage and abortion, and left-wing opinions about welfare.

Muslims are not only distinctive in the level of their opinions about each of these issues; they are also distinctive in the patterns of their opinions about all of these issues combined. As a group, the way that Muslims bundle their opinions about economic and moral issues intersects altogether the prevailing axis of political competition in Canada. Indeed, Muslims are more left-wing when it comes to welfare than even the supporters of Canada’s most left-wing political party, the New Democrats. Muslims are more right-wing when it comes to same-sex marriage and abortion than even the supporters of Canada’s most right-wing political party, the Conservatives. As a result, no Canadian political party provides Muslims an opportunity to project in the ballot box their moral and economic opinions simultaneously. And, perhaps more significantly, Muslims may be vulnerable politically from both the left and the right. Muslims may be vulnerable to anti-Muslim frames that appeal to the predispositions of leftists about moral issues, and they may be vulnerable to anti-Muslim frames that appeal to the predispositions of rightists about economic issues.

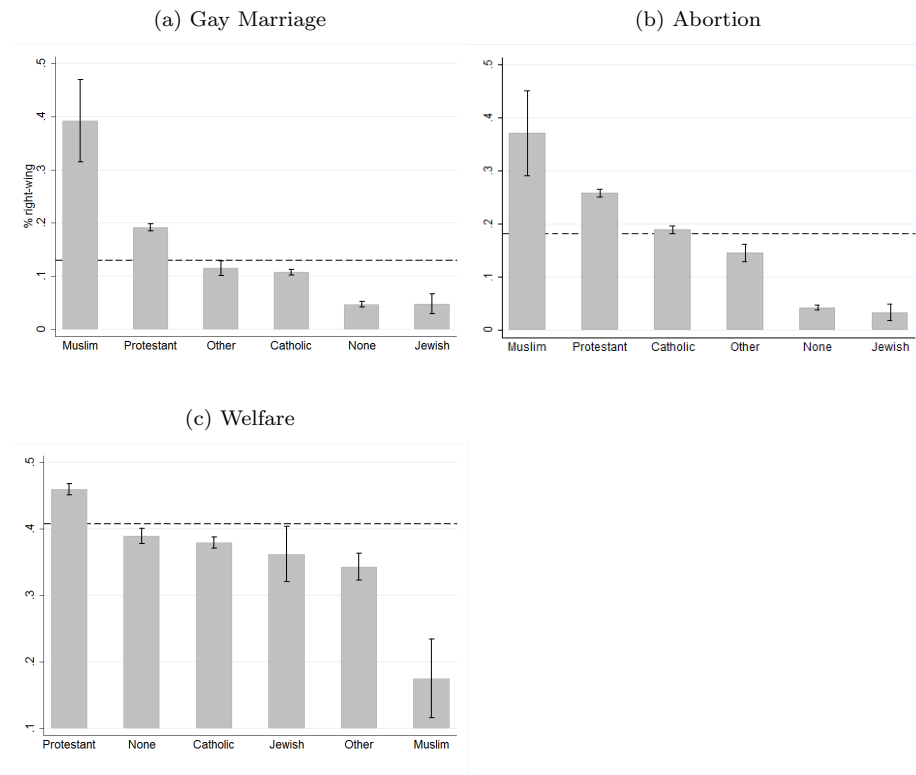
Figure 2 sheds additional insights on the foreign socialization and religiosity

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country. This does not solve the problem completely. There are fewer reasons to suspect, however, that discrepancies between the proportion of these groups in the sample *via-a-vis* their share of the population will bias, any more than in other kinds of surveys, the evidence regarding differences between these groups in their opinions about specific issues. In other words, there may be fewer Muslims and more Protestants in the survey than there should be, but that does not mean that the opinions of the Muslims and Protestants in this survey will deviate to any greater extent than they do in other kinds of surveys from the actual differences between the opinions of Muslims and Protestants in the population as a whole. The parameter that is being estimated is not their relative share of the population; it is the difference in the opinions of different groups. Even so, it is important to be straightforward about both the strengths and limitations of different kinds of data collection methodologies. And while these data facilitate sub-group analyses that other kinds of data cannot support, they are nonetheless two “opt-ins” removed from randomization—respondents opt-in first to the standing sample, and second to the specific survey.



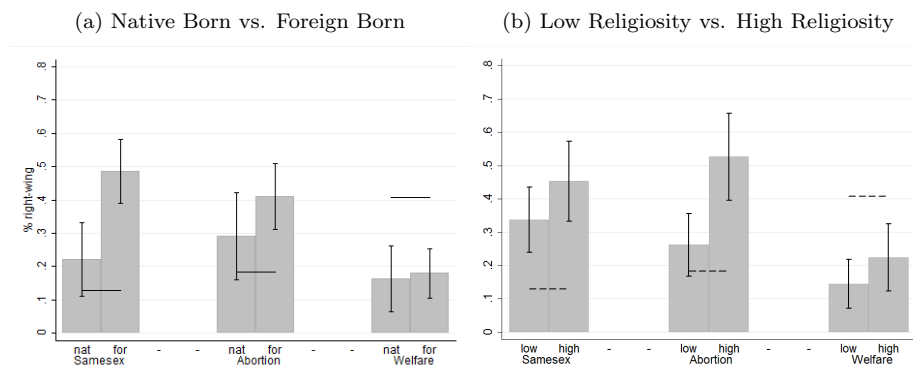
Figure 1: Public Opinion among Major Religious Groups in Canada Muslims express right-wing opinions about moral issues and left-wing opinions about the economy. Dashed horizontal lines represent the national average. Confidence intervals at 95 percent. The confidence intervals are calculated on the assumption that the sample is a perfect random sample of the population. Source: *Ipsos*, 2006



hypotheses by summarizing the opinions of native-born and foreign-born Muslims, and regular and non-regular Mosque attenders, about same-sex marriage, abortion, and welfare. Frequency of mosque attendance is the best available measure of religious commitment in these data, and, for the purposes of this graph, the seven category measure is dichotomized into those who attend a Mosque regularly (once a month or more) and who do not (a few times a year or less). The heights of the bars represent the proportion of each group with a decidedly right-wing opinion about each issue, and the national average for all Canadians is represented by the dashed horizontal lines. On the issues of same-sex marriage and abortion, there are clear differences in these Figures between native-born and foreign-born Muslims, and between less devoted and more devoted Muslims. The difference between native-born and foreign-born Muslims is especially pronounced on the issue of same-sex marriage, and the divide between less religious and more religious Muslims is larger on the question of abortion.

In both cases, the differences are highly significant statistically. There are about twice as many foreign-born as native-born Muslims who oppose same-sex marriage ( $p = .002$ ), and about twice as many devout as less devout Muslims who oppose abortion ( $p = .002$ ). Notably, however, there are no differences between either of these groups in their opinions about welfare. A higher level of support for welfare appears to transcend the immigration and religious divide among Muslims. Thus, the divisions within the Muslim community on moral issues do not appear to extend to economic issues.

Figure 2: Public Opinion among Muslims Foreign-born Muslims express considerably more animosity toward gay marriage than do native-born Muslims, and highly religious Muslims express more animosity toward abortion than do less religious Muslims. Confidence intervals at 95 percent. Source: *Ipsos*, 2006



There are, of course, more than one and only one difference between Muslim and non-Muslim Canadians, between native-born and foreign-born Muslims, and between less religious and more religious Muslims. Indeed, these groups differ on a range of variables. As a result, differences in opinion that appear to result from Islam may in fact be attributable, for instance, to foreign-birth, and differences among Muslims that appear to be attributable to foreign-birth or religiosity may in fact be attributable to something else, like age. Furthermore, differences in political opinions across these groups may emerge not just from differences in their respective levels of these other variables, but also from differences in the effects that other variables have on the opinions of people within each group. It is conceivable, for instance, that while native-born and foreign-born Muslims turn out to have just slightly different levels of religious commitment, religious commitment may have far more of an effect on the opinions of foreign-born Muslims than it does on the opinions of native-born Muslims. The reverse might be true for some other variable, like formal education. In essence, the level of a variable does not need to vary between groups in order for that variable to generate a difference of opinion between those groups. Thus, isolating the independent effects of immigration and religiosity requires multivariate regression analyses which take into account the possibility that the levels and

the effects of other variables may differ across the subgroups of interest.

For these reasons, the following analyses turn to multivariate regression and specify two interaction models for each dependent variable. In each case, the first model controls for a range of differences between Muslims and non-Muslims. And the second model controls, among other things, for differences between between native-born Muslims and foreign-born Muslims. Because opinions about same-sex marriage, abortion, and welfare are measured on non-continuous limited scales with  $j$  categories ranging from the most left-wing (1) to the most right-wing position (max), the regression models are formalized in the regression equation:

$$\text{logit}[Pr(y \leq j)] = \alpha_j - \beta_x, j = 1, 2, \dots, \text{max} - 1] \quad (1)$$

where, in MODEL 1 for each dependent variable,

$$\begin{aligned} \beta_x = & \beta_1 FEMALE + \beta_2 AGE + \beta_3 EDUC + \beta_4 INC + \beta_5 IMMIG + \beta_6 RELIG + \\ & \beta_7 MUSLIM + \beta_8 MUSLIM * AGE + \beta_9 MUSLIM * EDUC + \\ & \beta_{10} MUSLIM * INC + \beta_{11} MUSLIM * IMMIG + \\ & \beta_{12} MUSLIM * RELIG \end{aligned}$$

and, in MODEL 2 for each dependent variable,

$$\begin{aligned} \beta_x = & \beta_1 FEMALE + \beta_2 AGE + \beta_3 EDUC + \beta_4 INC + \beta_5 IMMIG + \beta_6 CHURCH + \\ & \beta_7 MUSLIM + \beta_8 MUSLIM * AGE + \beta_9 MUSLIM * EDUC + \\ & \beta_{10} MUSLIM * INC + \beta_{11} MUSLIM * IMMIG + \\ & \beta_{12} MUSLIM * CHURCH + \beta_{13} IMMIG * AGE + \\ & \beta_{14} IMMIG * FEMALE + \beta_{15} IMMIG * EDUC + \beta_{16} IMMIG * INC + \\ & \beta_{17} IMMIG * CHURCH + \beta_{18} MUSLIM * IMMIG * AGE + \\ & \beta_{19} MUSLIM * IMMIG * FEMALE + \\ & \beta_{20} MUSLIM * IMMIG * EDUC + \beta_{21} MUSLIM * IMMIG * INC + \\ & \beta_{22} MUSLIM * IMMIG * CHURCH \end{aligned}$$

Taken together, these interaction models generate the kind of leverage needed to isolate the independent effects of religiosity and immigration on the opinions of Muslims.

Table 1 summarizes the results of MODELS 1 and 2 for all three dependent variables. These are interaction models. Thus, the main effects of each variable correspond to the coefficients for that variable when the values of all of

Table 1: The Correlates of Left/Right Opinion About Same-Sex Marriage, Abortion, and Government Intervention

	Samesex.1	Samesex.2	Abortion.1	Abortion.2	Welfare.1	Welfare.2
main						
female (fem)	-0.46***	-0.46***	-0.25***	-0.25***	-0.32***	-0.31***
age	0.38***	0.40***	-0.03*	-0.02	0.35***	0.35***
education (educ)	-0.21***	-0.21***	-0.16***	-0.16***	-0.04***	-0.03***
income (inc)	-0.00	-0.00	-0.01***	-0.01***	0.05***	0.05***
immigration (immig)	0.29***	0.99***	0.08*	0.27	-0.18***	0.12
church	0.37***	0.37***	0.49***	0.49***	0.01	0.01*
muslim (mus)	2.03*	4.01**	1.94*	2.89*	-1.02	-3.91
mus*age	-0.36	-0.58	0.04	-0.22	0.16	0.78
mus*fem	0.50	0.99	-0.04	0.96	-0.36	-0.07
mus*educ	0.12	-0.25	-0.03	-0.31	-0.03	0.37
mus*inc	-0.13**	-0.12	-0.10*	-0.10	0.01	-0.02
mus*church	-0.28***	-0.29*	-0.20**	-0.14	0.02	-0.12
mus*immig	0.97**	-2.57	0.16	-1.36	0.05	3.78
immig*age		-0.21***		-0.10		-0.01
immig*fem		-0.03		0.04		-0.09
immig*educ		0.02		-0.00		-0.02
immig*inc		-0.02*		-0.00		-0.01
immig*church		-0.04*		0.02		-0.02
mus*immig*age		0.36		0.26		-0.93
mus*immig*fem		-0.53		-1.29		-0.73
mus*immig*educ		0.53*		0.37		-0.56
mus*immig*inc		0.00		0.02		0.08
mus*immig*church		0.09		-0.09		0.22
cut1						
_cons	0.05	0.11	-0.81***	-0.79***	1.16***	1.19***
cut2						
_cons	2.18***	2.24***	1.32***	1.33***		
cut3						
_cons			3.22***	3.24***		
<i>N</i>	34098	34098	33141	33141	35143	35143
pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.103	0.103	0.101	0.101	0.027	0.028

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

the other variables with which it interacts are equal to zero.<sup>3</sup> On the issue of same-sex marriage, Muslims are generally more conservative than non-Muslims, even when the effects of all of the other variables in these models are taken into account. In MODEL 1, Muslims are on average 35 percentage points more likely than other Canadians to oppose any legal recognition of same-sex relationships (45% vs. 10%), assuming that there are no differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in the levels and effects of age, education, income, foreign birth, and religious commitment. Muslims who express a high level of religious commitment are somewhat more likely to oppose same-sex marriage than are Muslims who express a low level of religious commitment ( $b = .09$ ), but heightened religious commitment has a stronger rightward effect on the opinions of non-Muslims about gay marriage ( $b = 0.37$ ). When all other variables are held constant at their mean level, there is a 30 percentage point difference in the level of opposition to legal recognition of same-sex relationships between, on the one hand, non-Muslims who never attend religious ceremonies and, on the other hand, non-Muslims who attend religious ceremonies more than once a week (6% vs. 36%). Among Muslims, the gap between Mosque attenders and non-attenders is smaller and statistically insignificant (43% vs. 31%). Muslims, it seems, tend to be conservative in their opinions about same-sex relationships, regardless of their level of commitment to Islam.

The story is different when it comes to foreign-born and native-born Muslims. In general, immigrants are slightly more conservative than native-born Canadians in their opinions about same-sex marriage. About 12 percent of immigrants in Canada oppose any legal recognition for same-sex relationships, compared to about 10 percent of native-born Canadians. The gap among native-born and foreign-born Muslims, however, is particularly pronounced. When all variables are held constant at their mean level for Muslims in MODEL 1, fully 42 percent of foreign-born Muslims oppose any legal recognition of same-sex relationships, compared to only 17 percent of native-born Muslims. Even though the confidence intervals for such small samples are invariably quite wide, this difference between native-born and foreign-born Muslims is highly significant statistically ( $p = .004$ ). Moreover, the results from MODEL 2 may be particularly telling. In this case, notice the effect of formal education among three groups: native-born *non*-Muslims ( $b = -0.22$ ), native-born Muslims ( $b = -0.22$

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<sup>3</sup>For instance, the coefficient for FEMALE in the first model for SAMESEX (-0.46) should be interpreted as the effect of FEMALE among non-Muslims, because FEMALE interacts with MUSLIM in the model and the coefficient for FEMALE on its own is therefore the effect of FEMALE when the variable MUSLIM equals 0 (i.e., non-Muslims). In order to discern the effect of FEMALE among Muslims, we must add to the main effect of FEMALE the coefficient of the interaction term, MUS\*FEM (0.50). As the coefficient for FEMALE (-0.46) added to the coefficient for MUS\*FEM (0.50) is approximately equal to 0, we may conclude that there is no difference between Muslim men and women in their opinion about same-sex marriage, at least when the effects of the other variables in the model are taken into account. In other words, the leftward effect of FEMALE on opinions about same-sex marriage applies only for non-Muslims (-0.46) and not for Muslims (-0.46 + 0.50). The interaction models summarized in Table 1 therefore make it possible to leverage comparisons between Muslims versus non-Muslims, immigrant versus native-born, Muslim immigrants versus non-Muslim immigrants, and immigrant Muslims versus native-born Muslims.

- 0.25 = -0.47), and foreign-born Muslims ( $b = -0.22 - 0.25 + 0.02 + 0.54 = 0.09$ ). As we might expect, a higher level of formal education has a powerful leftward effect on the opinions of native-born Canadians about same-sex marriage. Indeed, the effect of formal education is particularly pronounced among native-born Muslims. But formal education has no such effect on the opinions of foreign-born Muslims. Indeed, when all other variables are held constant at their mean level for Muslims, 47 percent of native-born Muslim high school dropouts express opposition to same-sex relationships, compared to only about 5 percent of native-born Muslims with a graduate or professional degree. By contrast, foreign-born Muslims are more likely to express opposition to same-sex relationships, regardless of whether they dropped out of high school or completed a graduate/professional degree (35% vs. 48%). Although closer analyses would be needed to pinpoint precisely an explanation for the discrepancy between the effects of education on native-born and foreign-born Muslims, one possibility, certainly, is that formal education has a different socializing effect for those educated in Canada than it does for those educated in North African and Middle-Eastern countries.<sup>4</sup>

Muslim opinions about abortion are also more conservative than the opinions of other Canadians. All else being equal in MODEL 1, Muslims are about 31 percentage points less likely than non-Muslims to express unequivocal support for abortion; they are 40 percentage points more likely to agree that abortion should be illegal in most or all cases. Among Canadians as a whole, there are modest differences between men and women, large differences across categories of formal education, and very large differences across categories of religious commitment. Unlike the lines of division on same-sex marriage, however, the same lines that divide Canadian society on abortion also divide Muslims. On the question of whether abortion should be illegal in most or all cases, and holding all other variables at their mean level for Muslims, Muslim men are about 6 percentage points more likely to agree than Muslim women (38% vs. 32%); Muslim high school dropouts are 25 percentage points more likely to agree than those with a graduate degree (51% vs. 26%); and Muslims who attend a Mosque more than once a week are 38 percentage points more likely to agree than are those who do not attend a Mosque at all (58% vs. 20%). By these standards, the discrepancy between native-born and foreign-born Muslims is comparatively small (31% vs. 36%).

At first glance, it may be tempting to conclude from these results that opinions about abortion lend support to the religiosity hypothesis rather than to the foreign socialization hypothesis. While these findings do suggest that foreign-birth alone is not as strong of a driver of Muslim opinions about abortion as it is about same-sex marriage, there are two key findings in these models that are worth considering in some detail. First, in MODEL 1, the effect of religious devotion among Muslims ( $b = 0.49 - 0.20 = 0.29$ ) is substantially smaller

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<sup>4</sup>Indeed, in the World Values Survey, the correlation between exposure to formal education, on the one hand, and favorable opinions about homosexuality on the other hand, is .31 in France, .28 in Britain, and .24 in Canada; the comparable figures for Indonesia, Iran, Jordan and Egypt are .04, .00, .03, and -.04, respectively.

than the effect of religious devotion among non-Muslims ( $b = 0.49$ ). The 38 percentage point gap between Muslims with the highest and lowest categories of religious devotion is certainly large, but there is a estimated difference of 54 percentage point between non-Muslims in these same categories (62% vs. 8%). Indeed, the discrepancy between Muslims and non-Muslims on the issue of abortion is not largest among those who are the most devoted to their religion, it is largest among those who are the least committed to their religions. Compared to highly religious Canadians more generally, highly religious Muslims are no more likely to agree that abortion should be illegal in most or all cases. But compared to non-religious Canadians more generally, non-religious Muslims are far more likely to express a right-wing opinion about abortion.<sup>5</sup> Although Muslims are somewhat more religious than Canadians in general, the difference between Muslims and non-Muslims in opinions about abortion is not largest among those who are the most committed to their religion, it is largest among those who are the least committed to their religion. If Islam were driving the distinctively conservative opinions of Muslims, then we would expect that opinions would be most disinctive among Muslims who were the most committed to Islam, not the least committed. Something other than Islam, it seems, is accountable for the conservatism of Muslims about abortion.

A second key finding, and perhaps a partial answer to the missing link above, emerges from a closer look in MODEL 2 at the effects of education on abortion. Among non-Muslim Canadians, education has a left-wing effect on opinions about abortion (-0.16). Simply, a higher level of education is associated with a lower frequency of conservative opinions about abortion. Although the results in MODEL 1 suggest that education has approximately the same effect on the opinions of non-Muslims ( $b = -.016$ ) and Muslims ( $-.016 - 0.03 = -0.19$ ) alike, the results in MODEL 2 indicate that the coefficients in MODEL 1 mask important differences in the effect of formal education on the opinions of native-born and foreign-born Muslims. Among native-born Muslims, the effect of education is larger ( $b = -0.16 - 0.31 = -0.47$ ) than it is even among non-Muslim native-born Canadians ( $b = -0.16$ ). Among foreign-born Muslims, by contrast, the effect of education is smaller ( $b = -.16 - .31 -.00 + .37 = -.10$ ). In more substantive terms, the estimates for native-born Muslims are that about 60 percent of high-school dropouts believe that abortion should be illegal in most or all cases; the comparable figure for native-born Muslims with a graduate degree is 8 percent. Among foreign-born Muslims, about 50 percent of high school dropouts oppose abortion, compared to 36 percent of those with a graduate degree. In other words, there is a 52 percentage point spread between dropouts and grads among native-born Muslims, and only a 14 percentage point difference between dropouts and grads among foreign-born Muslims. This has two implications for the foreign socialization hypothesis. First, the level of conservatism among native-born and foreign-born Muslims is virtually identical at the lowest levels of education, but very different at the highest levels. Native-born Muslims with

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<sup>5</sup>This same difference persists, even when the analysis is confined to Canadians who have a clear religious identification.

a university education are far more left-wing than foreign-born Muslims with a university education. This suggests the possibility that a formal education in Canada has a different effect on opinions about abortion than a formal education in the countries from which Muslims immigrate.<sup>6</sup> Second, native-born Muslim dropouts are far more conservative than non-Muslim dropouts (+30%), but native-born Muslims with a university degree are hardly at all more conservative than other Canadians with a university degree (+4%). Although closer analyses are needed, these findings suggest that when it comes to abortion, much as when it comes to same-sex marriage, a formal education in this country levels the playing field, so to speak, between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The findings for opinions about welfare are summarized in the final two models. In a straight-up main-effects model, Muslims are substantially more supportive of welfare, even when controlling for the socio-demographic variables in these models. However, this effect, while highly significant statistically in the main effects model, is not significant statistically once the first set of interaction terms are introduced in MODEL 1, particularly the interactions for age, education, and income. This is in part the result of inflated standard errors due to the close correlation between age, education, and income—particularly among Muslims—and it is in part the result of the measurement error inherent in my use of a single binomial measure to capture opinions about the economy. These problems aside, however, there are nonetheless three notable results which emerge from these models. First, Muslims immigrants are somewhat more supportive of welfare ( $b = -.18 + .05 = -.13$ ) than native-born Muslims, but the effect of foreign-birth among Muslims is no larger than the effect of foreign-birth among non-Muslims. This is consistent with the foreign-socialization hypothesis, though it does not explain why Muslims are more left-wing in their economic outlooks than are other immigrants. Second, religious devotion is not at all associated with left-wing opinions about welfare, and this applies among Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Indeed, if anything, a heightened devotion to Islam is associated with increasingly mainstream opinions about welfare. This contradicts the religiosity hypothesis. And third, the same kinds of factors that drive left-wing opinions about welfare in the population as a whole—particularly age, income, and gender—apply with equal, if not greater force, among Muslims.

There is, however, one exception. In the population as a whole, and net of other effects, a higher level formal education is associated with left-wing opinions about welfare. Yet, this left-wing effect does not apply among native-born Muslims ( $b = -0.03 + 0.37 = 0.34$ ), and it appears to be even stronger in the left-ward direction among foreign-born Muslims ( $b = -0.03 + 0.37 - 0.02 - 0.56 = -0.24$ ). At first glance, this finding may seem to contradict the foreign-socialization hypothesis—the effect of formal education appears more “typically Canadian” among foreign-born Muslims than among native-born Muslims. But this interpretation ignores the fact that Muslims and other Canadians do not start

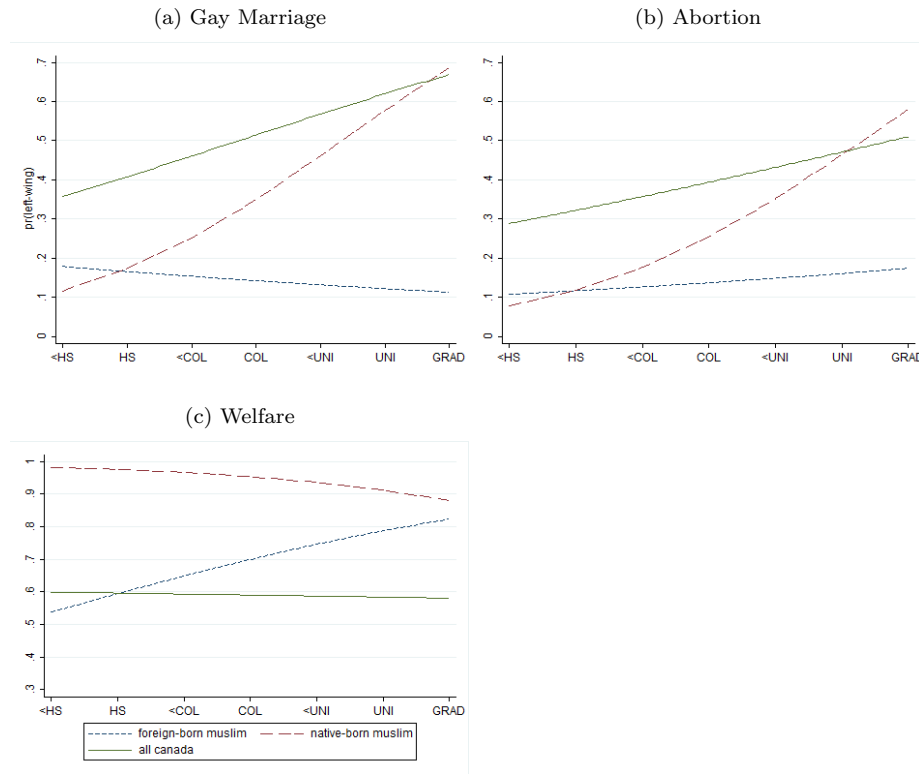
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<sup>6</sup>Turning again to evidence from the World Values Survey, the correlation between exposure to formal education, on the one hand, and favorable opinions about abortion on the other hand, is .23 in France, .21 in Britain, and .22 in Canada; the comparable figures for Indonesia, Iran, Jordan and Egypt are -.02, .08, .07, and .04, respectively.



out from the same baseline level of support for welfare. Muslims are substantially more left-wing. As a result, the non-effect of education among native-born Muslims moves the economic opinions of highly educated native-born Muslims in the direction of other similarly educated Canadians, and the leftward effect of education among foreign-born Muslims moves their economic opinions away from the national average. Much like it did for opinions about same-sex marriage and abortion, a high level of formal education among native-born Muslims moves economic opinions closer into line with the Canadian average, but formal education has no such effect on the opinions of foreign-born Muslims.

Figure 3: The Effect of Formal Education on Political Opinions Level of formal education has a very different effect on the opinions of native-born Muslims than on the opinions of foreign-born Muslims. Source: *Ipsos*, 2006



In sum, the distinctive economic and moral opinions of Muslims turn out to be attributable primarily to two subgroups of Muslims. The first sub-group is native-born Muslims with very low levels of formal education. And the second sub-group is foreign-born Muslims. There is a prominent role in this story for a key socializing variable: formal education. Figure 3 captures from each model (MODEL 2) the effect of education on the opinions of native-born and foreign-born Muslims, when all other variables are held constant at their mean level

for Muslims. The general effects of education on the opinions of all Canadians are added to these graphs for the sake of comparison. Notice that education has a very different effect on the opinions of native-born Muslims than it does on the opinions of foreign-born Muslims. Indeed, on both of the moral issues analyzed in this paper, the opinions of native-born Muslims with very low levels of formal education resemble the opinions of foreign-born Muslims. By contrast, the moral opinions of highly educated native-born Muslims look precisely like the moral opinions of highly educated non-Muslim Canadians, and they look nothing at all like the moral opinions of foreign-born Muslims. As a group, foreign-born Muslims turn out to hold distinctive opinions on these issues, regardless of their level of formal education. Again, more detailed analyses are needed which integrate measures of country of birth, length of residence in Canada, and whether foreign-born Muslims completed their education inside or outside of Canada. But it is clear from these findings that a formal education in Canada appears to have a very different effect on opinions about these issues than a formal education in the countries from which Muslims immigrate.

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

As immigrants, Muslims are subject to all of the general anti-immigrant arguments about job losses, crime, welfare abuse, ethnic purity, foreign loyalties, and so on (Fekete, 2008). As Muslims, however, they are subject to additional anti-Islamic arguments couched in the language of liberalism and secularism (Reitz et al., 2009; Triadafilopolous, 2010). To be sure, the first set of arguments is likely to appeal primarily to those who already dislike immigrants—a relatively small share, to be sure, of the Canadian population. But the second set of arguments target otherwise tolerant liberals, precisely the citizens who have traditionally expressed among the highest levels of support for immigration and cultural diversity (Freeman, 1995; Nunn, Crockett and Williams, 1978; Zaller, 1992).

This paper has sought to address empirically the question of whether Muslims do, as a group, tend to express in the Canadian context the kinds of opinions which they are often accused of harboring in the European context. The results are mixed. As a group, Muslims do tend to hold right-wing opinions about moral issues and left-wing opinions about economic issues. On gay marriage, abortion, and welfare, Muslims “stand-out,” so to speak, from other religious groups in Canada. They stand out first for the levels of their opinions about these issues, and second for their patterns of opinions about the issues. The prevalence among Muslims of right-wing social opinions and left-wing economic opinions intersects the dominant line of left/right disagreement on these issues in Canada. Thus, Muslims may be vulnerable in Canada, as they are in Europe, to attacks from both left-wing and right-wing frames.

On the other hand, however, there is a great deal of variation within the Muslim community in their opinions about these issues, and closer analyses suggest that Islam plays virtually no role in generating the distinctive opinions

of Muslims. Muslims are more religious than other Canadians, but non-religious Muslims are more different from non-religious non-Muslims than highly religious Muslims are from highly religious non-Muslims. The effects of religion are not ruled out by the evidence uncovered in this paper, but nor does the religiosity hypothesis emerge as a standalone or especially persuasive explanation for the patterns of opinions among Muslim-Canadians. Islam, it seems, is not “the problem,” and efforts to curb the practice and visibility of Islam - efforts which are well under way in some European countries - are unlikely to address the ideological distinctiveness of Muslims, even about social issues like gay rights and abortion.

There is a role for the foreign-socialization hypothesis and, especially, for a key socialization variable: formal education. On the whole, Muslims who are born in Canada are more liberal than Muslims who are born abroad. This generalization, however, masks important differences within the native-born and foreign-born Muslim communities. Simply, a formal education has a massive liberalizing effect on the opinions of native-born Muslims about gay marriage and abortion, but the level of formal education has virtually no effect on the opinions of foreign-born Muslims. As a result, foreign-born Muslims are far more distinctive than native-born Muslims when it comes to opinions about gay marriage and abortion. Even so, the moral opinions of native-born Muslims without a high school diploma align almost perfectly with the opinions of their foreign-born counterparts, and the opinions of native-born Muslims with a university degree are no different than the opinions of all other university educated Canadians. Although more detailed data need to be brought to bear on these questions, the evidence uncovered here suggests that it is primarily foreign-birth and socialization, and not Islam, which generates distinctive opinions among Muslims; and that it is a Canadian education, and not secularization, that undoes this distinctiveness. If these results are generalizable, and if they are replicated with other data, then it appears that governments concerned about the ideological integration of young Muslims should worry less about their religion and more about their education.

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## Appendices

### A Variables and Frequencies

1. FEMALE:

- 0 "Male" 13,153
- 1 "Female" 22,850

2. IMMIG: "Were you born in Canada or did you move to Canada from another country?"

- 0 "Born in Canada" 32,206
- 1 "Moved to Canada" 3,797

3. INCOME:

- Household income, 16 categories in original data. Mean & Median  $\approx$  9.5
4. AGE:
    - Three categories in original data: 1. 9,502 2. 16,129 3. 10,372
  5. EDUCATION:
    - 1 "primary or less" 85
    - 2 "some hs" 1,832
    - 3 "hs" 5,743
    - 4 "some college" 6,366
    - 5 "complete college" 7,373
    - 6 "some university" 4,778
    - 7 "undergrad degree" 6,463
    - 8 "grad degree" 3,365
  6. RELIGION: "Which of the following best describes your religious identity?"
    - 1 "Muslim" 160
    - 2 "Protestant or other Christian" 13,775
    - 3 "Hindu/Sikh/Other"  $71+33+1,971=2,075$
    - 4 "Catholic" 12,298
    - 5 "None" 6,765
    - 6 "Jewish" 511
  7. CHURCHATT: "Other than on special occasions, such as wedding, funerals or baptisms, how often did you attend religious services or meetings in the last 12 months?"
    - 0 "not at all" 17,185
    - 1 "once a year" 4,105
    - 2 "a few times a year" 5,834
    - 3 "once a month" 902
    - 4 "a few times a month" 2,190
    - 5 "once a week" 3,572
    - 6 "more than once a week" 1,674
  8. WELFARE: "Which comes closer to your view:"
    - 0 "Government should do more to solve problems" 21,309
    - 1 "Government is doing too many things that should be left to businesses and individuals." 14,694

9. ABORTION: “Which is the closest to your position. Abortion should be”
- 1 “Legal in all cases” 14,687
  - 2 “Legal in most cases” 12,988
  - 3 “Illegal in most cases” 4,751
  - 4 “Illegal in all cases” 1,443
10. SAMESEX MARRIAGE: “Which comes closest to your views about gay and lesbian couples, do you think...”
- 1 “They should be allowed to legally marry” 18,290
  - 2 “They should be allowed to legally form civil unions, but not marry” 12,055
  - 3 “There should be no legal recognition of their relationships” 4,505