

CFP: Special Issue of *Critical Sociology*

Islamophobia and the Racialization of Muslims

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Within Europe there are plenty of media-focussed works and discussions of particular controversies; the Danish Cartoons (*International Migration* special issue 44(5), 2006); anti-terrorism policies (Kundnani, 2009; Spalek and McDonald, 2010); public discourse on, and legislation relating to integration (Joppke, 2009; Mandeville, 2009; Modood et al., 2006; Schain, 2010; Sinno, 2008); women's clothing (Afshah, 2008; Dwyer, 1999). Yet the qualitative and empirical scholarly work on Islamophobia is still quite thin, and the comparative international dimension virtually unexplored. Indeed, political science perspectives are currently dominant in Europe, with the problem framed as one of governance—how to fit Islam into Western democracy—and the ongoing debate over the effectiveness of multiculturalism—which took an 'Islamic turn' after the 2005 London bombings. High-profile public officials, including the British Prime Minister and the German Chancellor, have in recent years dismissed multiculturalism as a public policy failure, for example.

One stream of public discourse argues that the term 'Islamophobia' itself is merely an over-used politically-correct smokescreen for those seeking to block any critiques of the social and/or political organisation of Muslims per se, in other words a method for closing down dialogue (Malik, 2005; MANIFESTO, 2006). This leaves a question mark over the degree to which Islamophobia is a useful tool for understanding the social world at all. Indeed, in the academic world, another critique suggests that the correct term should be 'Muslim-phobia', as the discrimination is levelled against people rather than religion (Halliday, 1999). Modood (1997) however, argues that 'Islamophobia' is about culture and people, and separating them analytically makes no sense. Indeed, the definitions of Islamophobia proposed in the UK in the 1990s (notably the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, 1997) refer to both culture and people. Critically then, the definition we give to Islamophobia impacts the frames through which we view it. Given the demographic diversity within the Islamic faith, and the conflation of religion and people, can we talk of Islamophobia as the racialisation of Muslims? We feel this is a fruitful avenue for conceptualising Islamophobia, involving some theoretical development of racialisation as an instrument of analysis. What does this perspective give us that would otherwise escape our attention, and further, what might it be missing out of its field of vision?

In the United States scholarship focused on the impact 9/11 has had on Arabs or an Arab identity (Tehrani 2008; Cainkar 2009). The role of religion and religious identity is becoming more popular in studies on 9/11 (Peek 2010). For example, laws and policies passed after 9/11, such as the USA Patriot Act, relied on public acceptance of the ideological construction of a Muslim as a threat to national security. The recent Congressional hearing on the *radicalization of Islam* in the United States highlights the tenuous status of Muslims living in the United States. Scholars debate whether or not the Muslim experience should be situated within 'race' theories that for far too long have been dominated by a black and white paradigm. With few exceptions (Rana, 2011) a critical analysis of the role that religious

identities play in the process of racialization in a post-9/11 society is missing, revealing that racialization as a theoretical concept has been under theorized.

The interest in the ways in which Islam and Muslims are constructed comes, of course, at a moment when the first decade since the attacks on the USA is being commemorated. In many European countries, a staple element of Far-Right parties' arsenals is a range of texts and images produced to argue that Islam is a violent, intolerant and alien faith, invading the continent and usurping its Judeo-Christian norms.

What we are seeking to do

The main emphasis in our project is on placing *qualitative fieldwork* from North America next to that carried out in Europe in order to understand what is common, and what differs in terms of national contexts. Studies drawn from other continents, however, will also be included.

We therefore welcome critical empirical qualitative studies drawn from around the world, and would prefer not to have further studies of news media or theory-based pieces. Articles might focus on Muslims' experiences of discrimination and how these differ in terms of gender, age, class, place and time. Or they might concentrate on attitudes of non-Muslims toward Muslims; or internet-based Islamophobia, an interesting location for studying the transnational threads. We also require a reflection on methods, and how the national and local studies developed here relate to existing literature.

The papers will provide the basis for a special issue of *Critical Sociology*, and a session proposal at a major conference. We invite the submission of abstracts or proposals (150-200 words) by **30 April 2012**. We hope to receive completed manuscripts by **1 October 2012**. Please email your proposals to *both* Steve Garner and Saher Selod at: s.j.garner@aston.ac.uk; sselod@gmail.com

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