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A Tale of Two Islamophobias
The Paradoxes of Civic Nationalism in Contemporary Europe and the United States

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Abstract
I argue that trends of diagnosing anti-Muslim attitudes and activism as “Islamophobia” in European and the U.S. contexts may actually aid and abet more subtle varieties of the very stigmatization and exclusion that the “phobia” moniker aims to isolate and oppose. My comparative purpose is to draw into relief—to make explicit and subject to critical analysis—features of normative public discourse in these two sociopolitical contexts broadly perceived to be peaceful, prosperous, liberal-democratic. The features I focus on function under the auspices of tolerant and nonexclusionary forms of “civic nationalism” that, in effect, fuel the conflict in question.

Keywords: Islamophobia, civic nationalism, Ground Zero mosque, religious tolerance, French headscarf controversy

Recent debates among comparative religious ethicists portray ethical analysis as a mode of evaluating ways that people exchange reasons with one another and how such normative discourse makes explicit norms that were previously only implicit in practices and institutional operations (Kelsay 2005, 2010, 2012; Lee 2013). This account propels comparative religious ethicists to attend to the
ways agents and institutions interact. Practices of giving and asking for reasons never take the form of abstract reflection and deliberation alone but are intrinsically situated and embodied. Central to the normative discursive practices to which reason-giving and -taking is part and parcel are responsive and applicative moves ("language entry" and "language exit" moves). In making such moves practitioners negotiate the goings-on in and around their respective locations, adjusting their normative attitudes in response and then acting in and upon their environment as the result of the normative inferences that unfold in the weave of social space. Physically positional moves such as perspectival observation of what occurs in one’s environment, and interactive “to-ing and fro-ing” with one’s surroundings are all entailed in participating in, understanding, explicating, and evaluating—contesting and revising—normative discourse.

While none of this is news to recent debates in comparative religious ethics, it bears exploring further how recognizing that the practices of giving and taking reasons are intrinsically spatially situated, embodied, and engaged might widen the range of subject matter that will, as a result, be of interest to comparative religious ethicists. This approach necessitates attending to how the framing and positioning of discursive spaces will be normatively charged in various ways, the implications this has for the arguments that unfold there, and the ways that shaping and forming of agents’ normative attitudes and institutional structures and practices may be inflected, amplified, or delimited by the normative valences of the practical contexts in which they occur. Contexts of discursive exchange are situated within relational and institutional histories, fraught with sociopolitical backgrounds, and are inscribed with differential power dynamics (institutional, symbolic, and so forth). These differentials may manifest in disparities in material resources, or cultural savvy, or training and adeptness in those discursive moves understood to constitute the practices of giving and asking for reasons, or perhaps as explicit forms of marginalization or exclusion. Differentials in status might be earned or imposed; they might manifest themselves either explicitly or operate tacitly. In each case, however, they stand to be explicated, critically assessed, and as necessary, challenged and altered. Insofar as ethicists explicate normative commitments, they must also examine contexts. Focusing on how all this is “lived” (in the senses of “lived religion” and perhaps in an analogous sense of “lived politics”) impels attention to the ways that these contexts affect agents/practitioners who participate therein (or perhaps are excluded from participation).
With the foregoing framework in mind, this essay contextualizes reactions to the expanding presence of Muslims in Europe and the United States in recent decades. I propose to illuminate and critically examine the more subtle modes of chauvinism these responses have generated and then to explore the impact of these dynamics on processes by which American and European Muslims are shaped and formed as citizens and as ordinary actors in these respective contexts.

**Islamophobia**

Numerous responses to the increasing presence of Muslims throughout Europe and the United States posit the expanding presence of Islam as a challenge to western conceptions of human rights and secular law. Some argue that behind these reactions are tendencies to reify the identity of an internally alien yet putatively inassimilable “Other,” and then to scapegoat that other through various forms of Islamophobia. However, the fact that the moniker of ‘Islamophobia’ typically gets ascribed to vocally xenophobic voices presents a deceptive complication for understanding and responding to such reactions. It is deceptively straightforward to portray as Islamophobic, and on that basis to marginalize, either acutely violent extremist fringe elements (e.g., the case of Anders Breivik in Norway and Wade Page in Oak Creek, Wisconsin), or unapologetically anti-Islamic activist groups or public figures (e.g., Pamela Gellner, Michelle Bachman, Bill Maher, Newt Gingrich, France’s National Front Party, or the legacy of Pim Fortuyn and politics of Geert Wilders in Holland). Isolating and branding pronounced instances of anti-Muslim rhetoric, activism, and terrorism as “Islamophobic” risks obscuring forms and effects of more subtle forms of anti-Muslim chauvinism that engender exclusion, inequality, and humiliation. What happens when attitudes and actions that approximate features that the label “Islamophobia” purports to describe occur more subtly as exclusion and humiliation within the very vocabularies and norms that have been devised to protect against the effects of Islamophobia in mainstream European and North American societies (e.g., tolerance, religious pluralism, and distinctively “civic” forms of nationalism)?

In this essay I make the case that trends of diagnosing anti-Muslim attitudes and activism as “Islamophobia” in European and the U.S. contexts may actually perpetuate more subtle varieties of the very stigmatization and
exclusion that this moniker aims to oppose. My comparative purpose is to draw into relief—to make explicit and subject to critical analysis—features of normative public discourse in these two sociopolitical contexts broadly perceived to be peaceful, prosperous, liberal-democratic. The features I focus on function under the auspices of tolerant and nonexclusionary forms of “civic nationalism” that, in effect, fuel the conflict in question. This investigation targets specific arguments and enabling institutional frameworks pertaining to immigration and citizenship. Even more important for my purposes, it requires assessing the often implicit shared symbolic self-conceptions and cultural practices through which these institutions legitimate themselves. In both contexts, the language of Islamophobia recurs in ways that, however inadvertently, camouflage more mundane structural manifestations and cultural legitimations of religiously identified inequality, exclusion, and humiliation. In both contexts, an effect of the discourse of Islamophobia is to shroud the complicity of actors, institutions, and sociopolitical context in the anti-Muslim trends that it rejects. In both contexts, discourses of Islamophobia camouflage deeper layers of different versions of nationalism that perpetuate the patterns of conflict. I hope to demonstrate that this dynamic trivializes the challenge presented by different religious identifications. It limits any real constructive engagement with the challenge of religiously identified conflict and identity oppositions, and truncates possibilities for healthy conflict.

A concurrent methodological purpose of this study is to explore if and how contextual patterns in Islamophobia discourses impact individual actors and identity formation. I conclude by assessing examples that suggest that the ways that agent-structure-culture interact bear directly on responses in which Muslim persons in European and U.S. contexts either strive to assimilate, radicalize, or engage in identity innovation. In order to illuminate and examine these complex implications, I borrow analytical concepts of “structural violence” and “cultural violence” as lenses to address the mundane yet pervasive trends operative among European Muslims and Muslim Americans. In what follows I describe analyses conducted in terms of Islamophobia, explore the difference it might make to redescribe them in terms of structural and cultural violence, and then assess the respective strengths and weaknesses of each through comparative analysis between assessments and proposed responses in European and U.S. contexts.
I. The French Muslim Schoolgirl Menace, Structural Violence, and the Limits of the “Phobia” Lens

In a widely influential analysis of the French Muslim headscarf controversy of 2003–2004, French anthropologist Emmanuel Terray deploys the psychoanalytical concept of “phobia” as a lens by which to illuminate what he describes as the “political hysteria” that erupted. His diagnosis runs as follows:

[W]hen a community fails to find within itself the means or energy to deal with a problem that challenges, if not its existence, then at least its way of being and self-image, it may be tempted to adopt a peculiar defensive ploy. It will substitute a fictional problem, which can be mediated purely through words and symbols, for the real one that it finds insurmountable. In grappling with the former, the community can convince itself that it has successfully confronted the latter. It experiences a sense of relief and thus feels itself able to carry on as before. (Terray 2004, 118)

The community in question is the French republic. The fictive problem is that of young Muslim women who wear their headscarves in public schools. The challenges that actually threaten the collective French self-conception are, first, the failure of France’s five-million-plus Muslim population to integrate into French society (e.g., its ghettoization, persistent poverty, and unemployment), and, second, a problem that is taken to be entailed in the rapidly growing French Muslim population—slowdown of progress toward gender equality in French society since the 1970s. Terray continues:

Politicians, journalists and intellectuals from every point of the compass have come together to assert their common celebration of Republican values against the Muslim schoolgirl menace. Such instances of fusion and unanimity are rare—and, in themselves, provide some temporary relief. The opponents of the headscarf can pride themselves on their valiant stand for the values of free expression and national cohesion against the ‘obscure forces’ on the prowl. In short, the process has brought a measure of national satisfaction which it would be wrong to scorn. True, such satisfaction will exact
a price, but only the skeptics will notice. And even they will have to admire the way that, in the name of liberty and integration, it has been necessary to pass a bill whose most obvious effects will be to ban and to exclude. (Terray 2004, 127)

Terray offers a powerful description of psycho-social and political processes which effect the marginalization of out-groups. Deploying “phobia” in a Freudian sense, he diagnoses a process of ritualized cleansing by scapegoating a particular segment of the French Muslim population that thereby provides a sense of normalcy and completeness (however temporary—much like someone with a phobia of bodily filth experiences fleeting relief after each obsessive-compulsive hand washing; Terray 2004, 127). The true problems of gender inequality, persistent poverty, and failure to integrate are projected upon this group, the most conspicuous representatives of which become symbolically identified with widespread anxiety. Legal sanction of that conspicuous subset (i.e., banning their visible participation in the symbolic practice—hijab, niqab, burqa) then secures a sense of unity and relief, however fleeting.

Is such an analysis sufficiently sensitive to the sociopolitical and institutional context and histories as these bear upon religious-identities, -pluralism, and -conflict? Stated differently, insofar as Terray assesses reactions to the “Muslim school girl menace” as surface-level symptoms of pervasive societal ills, the diagnosis of a widespread “Islamophobia” risks addressing the problem reductionistically. Indeed, Terray’s application of the concept of Islamophobia to the symbolically threatening presence of Muslims in Europe may conceal more than it illuminates. For instance, it obscures attention to the nature of France’s deep colonialist history vis-à-vis the Muslim populations it is absorbing (e.g., its civilizing mission as a colonial occupier, its role as beneficiary of previously colonial population as a domestic labor force, and so forth). Terray’s account of Islamophobia occludes the origins and character of both the nationalism and secularism at the heart of the French marginalization of Islam. It draws attention away from the deeply running and complex, sub-surface root systems of the presenting episode of the so-called headscarf controversy. This is particularly detrimental insofar as Terray’s diagnosis frames the case in ways that greatly influence what can be recognized as feasible intervention and response. In short, an analytically inadequate diagnosis sets
the stage for a prescription that may very well contribute to the conflict it aims to mediate.

I propose instead to test the possibility that conceptions of structural and cultural violence will prove more analytically precise and illuminating. I describe these concepts and then position them vis-à-vis the relative strengths and weaknesses of Islamophobia, first in France, and then in the United States. In particular, I demonstrate how these lenses illuminate forms and effects of religious nationalism that suffuse accounts that forward the unique durability of U.S. religious tolerance (vis-à-vis European nationalism) as a means of responding to, and overcoming, Islamophobia.

**Structural and Cultural Violence**

The analytical lenses of structural and cultural violence emerged among peace studies scholars in order to treat pervasive forms of violence, even when unintended. Distinguishing types of violence responded to the inadequacy of a conception of “peace” understood as those conditions that naturally emerge once explicit forms of violence are mitigated. Some sought to overcome a predominant “security studies” orientation by arguing that any real ‘peace’ must be paired with the simultaneous cultivation of social justice (i.e., “positive peace”). This required addressing the underlying causes giving rise to direct violence, such as structurally exclusive distributions of power, recognition, respect, social and economic resources, and the marginalizations entailed therein.

Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung came to describe structural violence as anonymous and/or unintended “patterned relationships among components of a social system” in and through which “individuals may do enormous amounts of harm to other human beings without ever intending to do so, just performing their regular duties as a job defined in the structure” (Galtung 1985, 145). Structural violence might also manifest as processes “working slowly in the way misery in general, and hunger in particular, erode and finally kill human beings” (145). So formulated, “violence” designates the array of causes by which the meeting of basic human needs is threatened. While “personal” or “direct” violence designates intentional physical harm to a person or group, structural violence” designates how need-denying effects
are manifest through the unintentional and/or anonymous operations of socio-, economic, and political structures. Structural violence may take forms of impersonal social patterns and institutions in which human potentialities for flourishing are truncated. For example, Galtung clarified:

[W]hen one person beats his wife there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance there is structural violence. Correspondingly, in a society where life expectancy is twice as high in the upper class as in the lower classes, violence is exercised even if there are not concrete actors one can point to directly attacking others, as when one person kills another. (Galtung 1969, 171)

The distinction sought to promote greater precision in how different forms of violence may interrelate symbiotically, even how one form of violence might be reduced in ways that actually increase another form of violence.6

The great challenge presented by thinking in terms of structural violence is not merely in tracking its manifestations but in figuring out how to “denaturalize” such forms of violence—to render them visible, and recognize that they might be challenged and altered. To illuminate the complex processes by which structural and direct forms of violence are normalized, Galtung devised an analytical concept of cultural violence. “Cultural violence” came to refer to the “aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science, that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence” (Galtung 1990, 196). Structural violence refers to the particular manifestations of marginalization, exclusion, and humiliation. Cultural violence refers to the means by which structural and direct forms of violence are legitimated and propagated. It consists of symbolic practices, institutional modes, and ideologies that represent forms of direct violence as necessary or inevitable, and make operations of structural violence seem natural, or at least not wrong.

Structural violence reaches beyond the explicit violation of rights. It manifests in processes that deny dignity and assail self-respect (i.e., various forms of “humiliation”). An example of structural violence is suffering stigmatization for one’s religious identity in the form of identifiable experiences
of social inferiority or social death, isolation, physical weakness, vulnerability, powerlessness, and the psychological effects of marginalization.\(^7\)

How do such analytical tools differ from, and ostensibly overcome the weaknesses of, the concept of Islamophobia? First, using “Islamophobia” as an analytical lens risks pathologizing forms of prejudice, rendering them irrational. One effect of this may be to designate it as impervious to the giving and taking of reasons. Islamophobia is sometimes caricatured as a “fear of the unknown.” More nuanced accounts allow for apprehensiveness in response to a legitimate threat, which may then be aggravated and projected outward and/or upon an internal “out group.” In such cases putatively irrational fear does not simply emerge as the reflex response to a perceived threat. Rather, what may begin as proportionate apprehensiveness is intensified and manipulated by parties who have some stake in perpetuating fear of a group or entity.\(^8\) This latter account contrasts somewhat with Terray’s diagnosis of Islamophobia in the French case above. For Terray, Islamophobia operates as a complex psycho-social process of symbolic projection and scapegoating—a social hysteria that becomes pervasive and diffuse.

Characterizing Islamophobia in terms of either social pathology or politicized phenomenon presents important points needing analysis. Indeed, they beckon the lens of “cultural violence.” Cultural violence is concerned to illuminate ways that various cultural formations—media, political rhetoric and objectives, commercial motivations—may contribute to generating chauvinistic and xenophobic perceptions and actions by rendering them necessary or natural. Yet if the analysis of cultural violence stops here, it risks an insufficient analysis and may inspire cures merely for symptoms.

**From Symptoms to Structure and Culture**

Recent discourse on Islamophobia in European and U.S. contexts often is portrayed as a visceral response to current events, particularly the widespread resurgence of militant religion. Here the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, the July 2005 terrorist bombings of the London Underground, the 2004 murder of Theo van Gogh in Holland, the Danish cartoon (2005–2006) or “Innocence of Muslims” (2012) controversies, the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, and terrorist massacre at Charlie Hebdo in Paris in 2015 are frequently invoked examples to which anti-Islamic anxieties
are indexed. Some accounts reach back to Ayatollah Khomeini’s fatwa ordering the death of Salman Rushdie for the alleged defamation of Islam in The Satanic Verses (1989). This orientation positions these trends in a relatively recent frame of reference. As an analytic, this focus on Islamophobia in Europe and United States normalizes inattention to the complex roots of nationalism and risks a sanitation of analysis.9

Consider, for example, the incisive analysis of Islamophobia expressed in political cartoons since 9/11 in the text Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy. The authors, Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg, examine Islamophobia as an analytical trope precisely because it points to “the latent sensibilities of . . . cartoonists (and, by extension, society), who must craft their responses quickly in order to remain current.” The authors continue, “[t]he term ‘Islamophobia’ hopes to suggest just this latency. Its invisible normality makes the antagonism toward Islam and Muslims that is inherent in so much of American mainstream culture difficult to engage, let alone counter” (Gottschalk and Greenberg 2008, 7).

An analysis so framed is tailored to context and thus slightly resembles analysis framed by “cultural violence.” In this vein it asks: How is it that political cartoons reflect unrecognized anti-Muslim/anti-Islamic sensibilities in the wake of 9/11? How have these cartoons reinforced attitudinal norms? How have these norms elided the context of events and thereby vindicated and exacerbated these sensibilities? And, how do these processes merge to reinforce social patterns that produce inequality, exclusion, and humiliation for Muslims (i.e., structural violence against Muslims)?

Gottschalk and Greenberg consider the 2005–2006 Danish cartoon controversy, in which an editor of the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten commissioned and published sketches of the Prophet Muhammad that incited outrage among numerous Muslims groups, eventually resulting in deadly rioting in Damascus, Beirut, Tehran, Kabul, Lahore, and Benghazi. Their brief account helps demystify what was presented in the twenty-four-hour news cycle and international media as “Muslim rage” (Theil 2006; Marshall 2006a–f). Indeed, closer inspection of these events reveals that the widespread reaction to the cartoons occurred only long after the paper’s editors rebuffed efforts by the Danish Muslims who first filed the complaint to mediate directly with the editors. Likewise, Danish political officials refused several proposals to meet with
ambassadors from Muslim majority countries and ignored numerous letters. Complaints from these Muslim groups made no mention of an alleged “absolute Koranic ban” upon portrayals of the Prophet. The concerns they raised focused on the intentions behind the cartoons to defame and provoke a minority group already disadvantaged and vulnerable within Danish society. They pointed out that publication of the cartoons coincided with, and in many ways reinforced, numerous other instances of anti-Muslim prejudice and of anti-Muslim prejudice and direct violence. These concerns were met with pro forma invocations of the non-negotiability of free speech in Danish society by Danish officials. Only several months later were the cartoons sent to scholars at al-Azhar University in Cairo and the secretary general of the Arab League in Lebanon, denunciation by whom drew international attention and ignited widespread anger.

As the authors have it, the Islamophobia-inflected coverage is visible in the fact that most popular media accounts portrayed the six cities in which deadly violence erupted largely to the exclusion of numerous other protests in which thousands of Muslims protested peacefully. We learn from their account, moreover, that the editor of the rightward-leaning daily, Jyllands-Posten, who commissioned and committed to publish whatever cartoons were submitted, had only three years prior to that refused to publish cartoons satirizing the resurrection of Jesus out of concern that it would “provoke an outcry” (Gottschalk and Greenberg 2008, 1–3).

As an intervention in rhetorical impact, this sort of analysis is indispensable. It contextualizes the events and in so doing illuminates voices of moderation attributable to the majority of Muslims but ignored by the popular media (Gottschalk and Greenberg 2008, 6). The authors highlight the hypocrisy at the heart of many of the Danish responses to these events and the inflammatory motivations that precipitated them in the first place. And yet, on its own, this analysis remains at the analytical level concerned with recent events. The frame of reference remains 9/11-centric. And while it aims to demonstrate how fear of Muslims is manufactured in popular media outlets, attending to the Islamophobia in this context overlooks historical, social, and political structures that underpin these episodes’ popular presentation. The concepts of structural and cultural violence, by contrast, force attention to how these episodes of conflict are embedded in deeper dynamics of orientalism, colonial histories, and nationalism.
When assessed through these lenses, for instance, responding to the Danish cartoon controversy within the frame of “civilizational discourse” (i.e., in terms of clashing civilizations) actually presents an instance of cultural violence. Such an account positions the episode as a collision between irreconcilable civilizational values of Western freedom of speech and expression versus Islamic traditionalism’s compulsion to censor and squelch all forms of blasphemy against the Prophet (Western freedoms versus Islamic fundamentalism). As should be evident, positioning the episode in this frame obscures the structural conditions in which the episode occurred. These are conditions in which Danish Muslims are a largely marginalized minority community. They suffer forms of political and social exclusion and high economic inequality. As Muslims in this context, they suffer forms of stigmatization and humiliation (Cesari 2013). These were the terms in which Muslim representatives cast their initial efforts to mediate the controversy. Danish officials in effect dismissed these efforts to mediate the controversy in these structural terms by appealing to the non-negotiability of free speech and freedom of the press. In effect, this oriented the controversy in terms of “clash of civilizations” discourse, which in turn camouflaged the forms of structural violence that framed the circumstances. Arguably, as I demonstrate in the final portion of this paper, this promoted conditions prone to resentment and radicalization born of the very structural forms of exclusion, inequality, and humiliation that official Danish responses refused to address.

Revisiting the French Headscarf Controversy: Civic Nationalism through Lenses of Structural and Cultural Violence

Scholars of nationalism distinguish between its ethnic and civic forms. Membership in the nation or group based upon the ethnicity or religion into which someone is born is characterized as ethnic and/or religious nationalism. By contrast, civic nationalism bases membership in the national group on one’s status as a citizen and legally recognized participant in the civic life of the society (Ignatieff 1993, 5–9).

France purports to practice a form of civic nationalism. Religious belief and practice is a matter of personal choice that needs to be kept in the private sphere. They understand religious identities to be “communalist” in character,
that is, markers for allegiance to a more basic and encompassing identity than French citizenship (O’Brien 2005, 14–60; Weil 2008, 1–2). These dimensions of French civic nationalism reflect distinctively French interpretations of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which are understood to unify French society. However, the law banning headscarves (and other obvious religious symbols) reinforces the suspicion that France’s civic nationalism is not benignly civic. It aims to protect against forms of discrimination that it considers likely to emerge from strongly held and devoutly practiced religious affiliations. And yet, this nationalism becomes deeply prejudicial toward religious forms that resist assimilation to French cultural norms. So conceptualized, French civic nationalism presents itself in conceptions of gender equality, commitments to pluralism, and freedom of conscience, all vindicated in terms of human rights. Yet these terms are deployed in ways that render them vehicles for marginalization. This makes the self-absolving civic/ethnic distinction difficult to sustain. Political theorist Bernard Yack captures the point, writing that while “[d]esigned to protect us from the dangers of ethnocentric politics, the civic/ethnic distinction itself reflects a considerable dose of ethnocentrism, as if the political identities of French and American were not also culturally inherited artifacts, no matter how much they develop and change as they pass from generation to generation” (Yack 1999, 105; 2012).

Islamophobia American Style?
The French case poses a particularly illuminating point of comparison to the cultural situation of Islam in the U.S. Assessments of Islamophobia in U.S. contexts, construed as a response to drastic events such as 9/11, claim that it can be uniquely overcome in the United States due to the American legacy of religious tolerance. Indeed, some claim that this legacy enables the United States to overcome episodes of Islamophobia in ways for which European countries are not equipped. Are there grounds for thinking that the United States is structurally better than Europe in this regard?

France’s antipathy to religious identities that resist domestication to French national identity is fairly distinct. Laws outlawing hijab (2004), niqab, and burqa (i.e., face covering veils, 2010) are justified in terms of protecting gender equality and shielding young women from pressure, preserving public
order in response to symbolic “permanent guerilla warfare” engaged in by politically minded Muslims who seek to challenge the constitutionally basic principle of laïcité (O’Brien 2005, 16–17, 42). And yet, to their credit, these laws make clear where the French government, and French ethno-religious nationalism, stands (Scott 2008, chapter 2).

By contrast, much scholarship devoted to understanding and countering Islamophobia in the United States has been particularly inattentive to the ways that civic nationalism may shade into forms of chauvinistic nationalism. One frequently recurring response invokes the general tolerance of U.S. society as a matrix within which all the initially fear-inspiring “out groups” across U.S. history have slowly but surely integrated, so that it eventually becomes difficult to recall that they were ever “out-groups” at all.

Several recent studies illustrate this tendency. Interfaith activist Eboo Patel devotes his book, Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America, to countering the Islamophobia that erupted in 2010 in response to plans to build a community center owned and operated by a Muslim American developer, which would house a Muslim prayer space, three blocks from the World Trade Center in New York City (“Ground Zero”). Reaction to this development by fringe anti-Muslim crusaders such as Pamela Gellner and her organization “Stop the Islamicization of America,” was amplified by national news media outlets and political elites as a national controversy (see Nussbaum 2012, 209–13). Patel responds with bewilderment at the claim that Ground Zero is “sacred ground.” The “sacred ground” of the 9/11 terror attacks is no more, and no less, sacred, he says, than the rest of American soil—“from sea to shining sea” (Patel 2011, xxvii). Patel devotes the book to substantiating his basic claim that “in America the forces of inclusion always defeat the forces of intolerance” (67).

To be fair, this line comes from a passage in which Patel admits (with consternation) to “pushing sunshine” while appearing on a CNN broadcast hosted by Christianne Amanpour. And yet, the triumphalist account of religious tolerance in America that this remark encapsulates is consistent with the narrative framing of the book set forth in the introduction:

[T]he American achievement, while far from perfect, is still remarkable. As Barak Obama said in his inaugural address, “Our Patchwork
heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christian and Muslims, Jews, and Hindus, and nonbelievers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth.” What is even more astonishing is our refusal to stand still, to be content with past progress or favorable comparisons to other nations. We constantly seek to improve this pluralist, participatory, patchwork democracy. (Patel 2011, xiv)

Comparably, in American Grace, Putnam and Campbell validate a similar narrative (a pivotal source upon which Patel draws heavily to substantiate his account), concluding that just as there were “bumps in the road along the way, as evidenced by outbreaks of anti-Catholicism, anti-Semitism, anti-Mormonism, and any number of other anti-isms. . . . Eventually . . . the national sentiment moved from grudging acceptance of other faiths to a way station of tacit approval to an outright embrace of religious differences as ecumenism took hold in the mid- to late twentieth century” (Putnam and Campbell 2012, 549–50).

In The New Religious Intolerance Martha Nussbaum examines the so-called Ground Zero mosque episode of 2010 at length to demonstrate why such an event is anomalous in the history of U.S. religious pluralism. “A nation is a narrative,” she explains. “A story of what has brought people together and what keeps them together, a story of shared sufferings, joys, and hopes. The story is always dynamic and can be retold in ways that foster inclusion—or, if fear gets the upper hand, exclusion” (2012, 96). Nussbaum then moves comparatively to illuminate how the United States can overcome its temptations to fear Muslims in ways that European contexts cannot.

European nations tend to conceive of nationhood and national belonging in ethno-religious and cultural-linguistic terms. Thus new immigrant groups, and religious minorities, have difficulty being seen as full and equal members of the nation. . . . As we’ve seen, there is another option, realized in a wide range of nations around the world: to define belonging in terms of political ideals, in which immigrants can fully share, despite not sharing the ethnicity, religion, or customs of the majority. Such nations have a far easier time
seeing how people who adopt minority ways of dressing, speaking, and worshipping can nonetheless be fully equal citizens. And they are likely to ponder far more quickly the next step: what is it to create fully equal rights of conscience when majorities arrange things in their own interest. (2012, 94–95)

Here Nussbaum’s comparison of the reception of Muslims in contemporary U.S. and European contexts falls along the lines of civic versus ethno-religious forms of nationalism.

Examining such accounts through the lens of cultural violence calls into question the basic narrative resemblances they share. It asks if, and then how, telling the story of religious conflict in the United States as a slow but progressive march toward gradually more inclusive tolerance presupposes and perpetuates forms of national exceptionalism that slip into a variation of religious nationalism. These lenses prompt inquiry into how such stories obscure more pervasive structural operations of religious intolerance. What does Nussbaum’s comparison of “cultural-linguistic” and “civic” forms of nationalism bring to light?

One element that comes to light in comparison is that if the national story of historical religious diversity lapses into a self-aggrandizing legend of the de facto religiously tolerant historical trajectory and character of a society, then religious tolerance risks becoming a feature of that people’s legitimating myth. Such a myth presents an instance of “cultural violence” if it camouflages, normalizes, or promotes social and political structures that exclude or humiliate some citizens.

Analysis through the lens of cultural violence thus questions whether, and to what degree, the self-absolving effects of drawing so clear a partition between ethno-cultural and religious nationalisms, on the one hand, and “civic nationalism,” on the other, might take on the function of religious nationalism obscured under “civic” guise. Statistically, U.S. citizens take pride in what they understand to be the religiously diverse character of the United States. And yet, this broadly shared self-conception of the character of American society facilitates religious intolerant attitudes. It facilitates forgetfulness regarding pre-9/11 currents of suspicion and antipathy toward Islam dating back several decades, and the more extensive histories behind these
trends (see, e.g., Said 2008). Moreover, what is perceived to be an overarching welcoming and inclusive ethos toward “religious others” obscures the real experiences of symbolic exclusion, profiling, surveillance, and suspicion, and even unconscious bias reported by numerous members of minority religious groups in the United States.

In *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*, sociologist Robert Wuthnow draws upon extensive survey data (1999–2005) that identified conflicted—even contradictory—self-perceptions of the features of religious diversity and tolerance in U.S. national identity. Americans widely report that they are proud of America’s capacity to accommodate religious diversity. While 85 percent agreed that religious diversity has been good for America, 20–23 percent of respondents endorsed policies to restrict the basic rights of minority religious groups (Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims) to meet and worship altogether. About 38 percent of Americans expressed support for initiatives that would make it more difficult for Muslims to settle in the United States, and 47 percent and 57 percent (respectively) associated the words “fanatical” and “close minded” with Islam. Sixty-six percent of respondents favored the U.S. government “keeping a close watch on all foreigners in the United States” (see Wuthnow 2005, chapter 7). A representative 60 percent of the public approved of the U.S. government collecting information specifically about Muslim religious groups (Wuthnow 2007, 161).

Statistical surveys have remained roughly consistent with the Religion in Diversity Survey in the intervening decade, indicating fairly broad public perception of Islam as having a propensity to promote violence. In 2014, reports of similar attitudes and perceptions of Islam actually increased to their highest point since 2002, with 62 percent “very concerned about the rise of Islamic extremism around the world,” 53 percent “very concerned about the possibility of rising Islamic extremism in the U.S.,” and 50 percent affirming the view that “Islam is more likely to encourage violence among its followers” (39 percent say it is not more likely to encourage violence; see Pew Research Center 2014, esp. 1 and 2).

For our purposes, the value of Wuthnow’s analysis is how it operates as an analysis through a lens of cultural violence. It illuminates what many people believe to be the case about religious tolerance in the United States, and at the same time, illuminates their stated preference for repressive legislation.
toward different religious identity groups (especially Muslims). Equally significant is the widely reflected understanding of the United States as a “Christian nation” founded on Christian principles (see Wuthnow 2007, 161).

I suggest this reflects less a pervasive condition of “Islamophobia” than a set of developments in which a symbolically articulated (exceptionalist) self-conception presents itself as intrinsically tolerant. This presentation thinly veils what are, in fact, chauvinistic attitudes embedded within what functions as a form of civil religion-cum-religious nationalism.

When compared to the far more explicit religious- and ethno-nationalist dynamics displayed toward Islam in European policy (discriminatory in their own right), the more repressed forms of religious nationalism in the United States are, comparably, more difficult to discern and overcome. The basic self-conceptual framework of “religiously tolerant” (speaking of the United States) remains both unchanged and unquestioned. The antecedent frames are not illuminated, but ignored.

This analysis prompts the further question: What does the comparatively extensive attention devoted to the Cordoba House episode—through sensationalism in the media, and by political figures like Newt Gingrich, Sarah Palin, and Barack Obama, but also a sustained focus upon this episode by activists (Patel) and scholars (Nussbaum)—mean, while little attention is paid to the 36 other concurrent cases of Muslim prayer spaces and mosques across the United States that were encountering varying degrees of public opposition?

Nussbaum is emphatic that one finds in the United States nothing even remotely approaching the prohibition of Muslim religious dress in public, as is found in France, or Switzerland’s nation-wide ban of Muslim minarets (Nussbaum 2012, 13). Prima facie, this is true. And yet, the power of cultural norms may function with exclusionary force that approximates formal legal prohibitions (e.g., headscarf bans) precisely because the former are less conspicuous. Examples in the United States are de-centralized, not legally encoded. But they nonetheless exert powerful pressures, perhaps for Muslims citizens to be inconspicuous, chilling dissent or protest even in response to the truncation of civil rights or subjection to quasi-legal treatment (e.g., profiling and surveillance). What happens when we deploy lenses of structural and cultural violence to these dynamics?
If we examine in greater detail the breadth of efforts to impede and/or altogether derail mosque and Islamic community center construction, a very different picture comes into view. In fact, obstruction to mosque construction in the United States rarely takes the guise of vocal anti-Muslim xenophobia. When it does, it is renounced as hateful and intolerant or challenged legally as formal discrimination. Instead, obstruction and opposition tend to be ad hoc, bureaucratic and procedural. It occurs under the auspices of making sure that zoning regulation technicalities are enforced, concerns over increased traffic, parking restrictions, noise,\textsuperscript{15} impact of reduced property values, and objections to negative aesthetic impact that a minaret and/or dome will have on the immediate surroundings.\textsuperscript{16}

These modes of obstruction are decentralized, regionally inflected, and executed ad hoc. As such, they contrast with the national legal prohibitions that one finds in France and Switzerland. Many of these efforts to obstruct mosque construction have been successfully challenged and overcome in court. And yet, at the same time, many have succeeded in discouraging, derailing, or at least altering initiatives to build Islamic community centers and mosques around the United States. In some cases, this has occurred by dissuading Muslim communities and developers by way of the protracted legal quagmires and local antagonisms to be overcome in order to have their formal rights enforced.\textsuperscript{17}

In short, structural and cultural violence lenses caution that what may appear to be the clear explanation of conflict may itself be implicated in the social structures and cultural narratives prevalent in the sociopolitical context. The result risks cosmetic treatment of a condition that actually infuses the structural features of a society and is all the more difficult to detect in virtue of legitimating narratives (e.g., “that in America the forces of inclusion always defeat the forces of intolerance,” Patel 2011, 67). In so far as many such episodic conflicts such as the Ground Zero mosque run their course, an American exceptionalist narrative reasserts the overarching trajectory of religious tolerance of the history and cultural and political identity of contemporary U.S. society, reinforcing the abnormal character of a particular incident. The danger is that any actual treatment of religious intolerance in U.S. society remains at the surface level and fails to descend to the difficult work of addressing the root system—structural and cultural—of the
nature and basis of religious intolerance in the United States. Lyn Neal and John Corrigan have sharpened what is at stake. “American religious history,” they write,

often reads something like a Garrison Keillor story where the religion is nice, its practitioners are upstanding, and the nation is above average. The dominance and celebratory nature of this narrative obscures important elements in the history of the United States. It prevents us from seeing the reality and persistence of religious intolerance in the nation’s past and present. Even as religious diversity has been a consistent feature of American religious life, so too has religious intolerance. . . . Failure to see and thus grapple with the persistent reality of religious intolerance in the United States . . . creates an inability to recognize how religious intolerance is disseminated and replicated. . . . It then becomes easy to write of intolerant acts or events as aberrant and random, rather than as constituent parts of a larger historical trajectory. Equally troubling, it fuels apathy about the protection of religious rights. (Corrigan and Neal 2010, 8)

To characterize prevailing responses to individual episodes such as the so-called Ground Zero mosque as “unproductive” is to identify and focus on recurring patterns in which an instance of conflict erupts, is sensationalized as controversy and/or threat in the twenty-four-hour news cycle, is exacerbated by extreme voices, and is then countered by those who invoke the intrinsic tolerance of the identities in question. One such pattern runs something like the following. Responding to a specific episode of controversy or conflict, interlocutors on one end of the ideological spectrum vilify Islam as intrinsically intolerant of non-Islamic identities. This inspires reaction from counterparts who are quick to absolve Islam as the element that precipitates the conflict in question. The former introduces a contrast between Muslims and non-Muslims that is clearly invidious; the latter, often in response to the former, disassociates the conflict from the religious identities in question—countering the invidiousness of the former by flattening the contrasting identities in the well-intentioned effort to mitigate the conflict.\textsuperscript{18}
Examples reflecting this pattern have occurred numerous times in the context of contemporary U.S. politics. In the throes of the “Ground Zero mosque” controversy, among many similarly minded public commentators, Newt Gingrich declared that “America is experiencing an Islamist cultural-political offensive designed to undermine and destroy our civilization” (see Nussbaum 2012, 209–13). This was countered publicly, in effect, by Barack Obama’s absolution of Islam from the events of 9/11. President Obama began by asserting that “Ground Zero is, indeed, hallowed ground.” But at the same time, he continued, “This is America. And our commitment to religious freedom must be unshakeable. The principle that people of all faiths are welcome in this country and that they will not be treated differently by their government is essential to who we are. . . . Al Qaeda’s cause is not Islam—it’s a gross distortion of Islam. These are not religious leaders—they’re terrorists who murder innocent men and women and children.” Further examples of this sentiment might be President Obama’s disassociation of Islam from the beheading of press and aid workers by soldiers associated with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or George W. Bush’s declaration that “Islam is peace” in the days immediately following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

This is precisely one of the patterns of engagement that prohibit the possibility of “healthy,” or at least potentially productive conflict. For example, the fact that the Park 51 project (i.e. the “Ground Zero Mosque”) was not ultimately derailed despite wide-spread, highly vocal, and explicitly anti-Muslim opposition does not indicate that that conflict was navigated productively. The surface-level result, while legal, leaves the patterns of conflict unrecognized and unaddressed, and the counter-productive processes by which that conflict unfolded fully in place. As a result, the pattern is prone to recur, and the effects of the conflict reify and repeat, without any effort to make them explicit in order to understand, challenge, and insofar as possible, re-direct and alter those relational patterns. It is important to identify and unpack such patterns of invidious characterizations of religious difference, and how they inspire—and perhaps cooperate with—counter-assessments that flatten and/or denude the subject matter of detailed differences that are crucial for thorough understanding. Such contrasting characterizations actually aid and perpetuate destructive and alienating forms of conflict (Kelsay 2005, 698).
Institutional Context: The Religious Free Market in the U.S.

Structural and cultural violence lenses prompt analysts to ask—how do conceptions of tolerance in the United States assimilate difference? To what degree might melting pot multiculturalism work insofar as it silences many meaningful differences and suppresses conflict? What are the presuppositions of conditions under which such tolerance will emerge and oppositions be overcome?

One central presupposition of the U.S. exceptionalist narrative portrays U.S. public life as an “open market” vis-à-vis religious identities. Values of tolerance and mutual respect for religious diversity facilitate free choice of religious affiliation. In the metaphor of America’s religious free market this translates to “low brand loyalty” on the “demand side,” which necessitates competition and innovation on the supply side (Putnam and Campbell 2012, 148). In other words, separation of “church and state” functions as a “constitutionally mandated free market for religion.” The lack of state institutionalization means that religious institutions compete for membership, thus creating the conditions of a “religious free market” characterized by innovation and diversification, survival (and demise) by coordination of the cultural market’s invisible hand. By this account, the laissez-faire cultural marketplace in the United States progressively includes, tolerates, and eventually absorbs religious “Otherness.”

And yet, much as “free market” economics asserts the virtues of the market’s invisible hand only inasmuch as it obscures countless ulterior influences (and disparities of power and cultural capital), so the cultural market of religious identities is freighted with histories and symbolically charged modes of civil religion that make participation in the cultural market for religion less than purely equitable and unfettered. If it is indeed the case that the distinctive mode of “civic nationalism” that Nussbaum ascribes to the United States is (as I have argued) actually quite religiously inflected, then the sociopolitical framework in which the putative “cultural market for religion” plays out in American society is not as “free” as this feature of American exceptionalism would indicate. In fact, this context is quite normatively charged, and in ways that reflect a so-called “Judeo-Christian” national character (or “Judeo-Christian secularism,” see Hurd 2008, 37–45).
Institution and Individual Agency

The relation of structural to cultural and direct forms of violence affords a complex conception of individual agency and institutional context. Here the individual is a responsible actor acting intentionally. At the same time, individual agency is interwoven with sociopolitical structures and cultural contexts. This means that an actor may be implicated in perpetuating forms of violence unconsciously. The cultural dimensions of agency mean that formation of consciousness and perception and understanding is a product of cultural processes of acculturation and cultural training, which deeply shape and inflect basic perceptions and understandings. And yet, the individual-agential dimension remains in play. Attitudes and perceptions can be illuminated, evaluated, challenged, and altered. On this account, forms of resistance are a real possibility in and through the structures within which an agent or group lives and moves. Structures also can be assessed and changed.

Various forms of “individual exceptionalism”— appeals to particular exceptional individual examples as evidence that explicit forms of exclusion have been overcome—often hold in place pervasive dynamics of structural and cultural violence. And yet, when viewed through lenses of structural and cultural violence, demonstrations that some member(s) of the designated group have normalized or even “risen above” adverse circumstances becomes recognized as an ingredient essential to holding forms of humiliation, exclusion, and scapegoating in place. The exception is enlisted as proof that the structures are not in themselves exclusionary and humiliating. This is then taken to justify leaving social structures in place.

In the French case, for instance, Muslim residents and citizens of France can demonstrate that they are “the good kind of Muslim” by demonstrating that they are “bad” or “indifferent” practitioners of Islam. They do this by not practicing, or practicing sporadically and without dedication or passion, thereby demonstrating that their Muslim identity is sufficiently subordinate to their participation in the national culture. This is not simply a segregation of religious practice and identity into nonpublic spaces of personal life. It is, rather, what some have called the “laicization of behavior” (Bowen 2008, 193–96; Scott 2008, 82–85).
The “laicization of behavior” operates bi-directionally. It operates among French Muslim citizens to prove that they can become authentically French, even though they are Muslim. Yet it is also the metric state actors use to determine which Muslims are insufficiently assimilated and which are “suspicious” and candidates for profiling. These metrics are also used by immigration officers to determine whether immigrants applying for citizenship have demonstrated “sufficient assimilation,” and thus, whether their applications are refused (see Bowen 2008; Bennhold 2008). This analysis puts on display the ways in which a sociopolitical institutional context actually shapes and forms individual selves.

Of course, the institutional context’s impact in shaping and forming individual selves does not leave the individual purely passive. While the “laicization of behavior” might be embraced, it might also be resisted or contested. Embracing institutional prescription can render certain institutional benefits (for instance, citizenship), but it may place individuals at risk of the psychological, spiritual, and/or emotional effects of structural violence. It may lead to an individual or group’s internalization of the dominant metrics and then promote self-conceptualization and self-measurement in those terms, even as the individual or group strives to demonstrate the thoroughness of their having assimilated to the identity, requirements, and expectations of the cultural-institutional context.

One encounters an example in the story of Muhammad Boyeuri—the young Dutch Muslim who, having come to embrace a form of radical jihadi Muslim identity, murdered the anti-Muslim Dutch film-maker and provocateur, Theo Van Gogh. As a second generation Dutch Moroccan, initially Boyeuri invested tremendous effort in assimilating to Dutch society. As Ian Buruma relates his story, Boyeuri can be described as exemplifying a common pattern among second-generation European Muslim immigrants of over-performing in his effort to assimilate to Dutch culture in response to the felt need to outperform his contemporaries of Dutch extraction for recognition and professional employment. The need to over-assimilate emerged from his starting from a position of social disadvantage in virtue of being Dutch Muslim. By Buruma’s account, the zeal with which Boyeuri sought to assimilate and his persistent failure to find full acceptance by mainstream Dutch society resulted in frustration and resentment. Both were pivotal in his eventual turn to radical Islam, and
indeed, precursors to his explicitly stated hatred of Dutch society and his murder of Van Gogh, whose television short, Submission: Part 1 (2004, written by Dutch MP Ayaan Hirsi Ali) Boyeuri claimed to be emblematic of the anti-Muslim excesses of that society.

In the United States comparable dynamics take forms arguably less conspicuous than this but in the experience of many Muslim Americans, just as profoundly. Especially since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, Muslim and Arab Americans have been subject to frequent profiling, suspicious treatment, detention, discrimination, and random acts of violence. There are crucial differences to be considered when comparing European and U.S. contexts in the terms of formational impact in the interactions between individuals and institutions. The majority of Muslims in the European Union (roughly 5 percent of the EU’s 425 million residents) are socioeconomically marginalized and mostly immigrants. Muslims in the United States tend to have more education and higher income than the general non-Muslim population (see Cesari 2011, 21–27).

Despite this difference in continental Muslim demographics, in a series of studies on the formation and experiences of Muslim Americans in the United States since 9/11, Sunaina Maira, Sally Howell, and Amaney Jamal found that within Muslim American communities in Houston and Detroit, American Muslims experience “disciplinary inclusion”—”a citizenship style in which every act of recognition, every assertion of identity and belonging entails (and is made against) a simultaneous message of Otherness and stigmatized difference” (Shyrock 2008, 202. See also Maira 2008; Howell and Jamal 2008). The authors take this term of ambivalent inclusion and discipline to suggest both that American multicultural pluralism affords certain important protections but does so, in part, in lieu of various required “identity concessions.” The concessions required often reflect much the opposite of the tolerance and straightforward inclusion celebrated in standard accounts of American religious pluralism. In fact, they entail experiences of marginalization, humiliation, suppressed differences, and chilled dissent that become illuminated when assessed through lenses of structural and cultural violence (or comparable analytical lenses).

In the same volume, Jen’nan Ghazal Read captures an example of this conflicted experience in her comparative study of two communities in central Texas—one Muslim Arab American and the second Christian
Arab American. Christian Arabs, she found, find far more space in which to distance themselves from negative identity associations. They could “use their religious and racial identities (Christian and white) as a bridge to the American mainstream,” whereas Muslim Arab Americans found their religion and racial identities (“darker phenotype”) barriers precisely to such integration (Read 2008, 124–25). Both possibilities of inclusion and marginalization, Read concludes, depend on the deep background of religious and racial hierarchies that fill out the relational and institutional contexts in the contemporary United States. The experiences of humiliation and isolation reported by many Muslim Americans—and the association of these experiences with instances of religious and political radicalization—make cases such as that of Muhammad Boyueri pressingly relevant to U.S. contexts.  

**Conclusion**

As we have seen, U.S. citizens generally conceive of their context as having a more inclusive and encompassing conception of religious tolerance, in contrast to those found in Europe. And yet, while the nationalist currents of U.S. civil religion avow multicultural and melting pot forms of tolerance—and hold tolerant coexistent and noninterference as a shibboleth—those deeply inscribed presuppositions about the centrality of tolerance to American society risk contributing to an exceptionalist national myth that actually cloaks and exonerates what are, in fact, far deeper and pervasive forms of violence. The lenses of structural and cultural violence are analytical tools fashioned to detect, explicate, and critically intervene in these pervasive forms of violence.

The greater challenge raised by analysis through lenses of structural and cultural violence lies in critically illuminating the cultural processes and structural fixtures that perpetuate dynamics of exclusion, inequality, and humiliation in ways that persuade those who consider themselves tolerant, accepting, and in favor of religious diversity. These are beneficiaries of—and perhaps even complicit in—the processes that perpetuate such forms of violence. These are perhaps the most formidable and the most controversial tasks for critical analysts, researchers, and critics in religion and ethics in public life. Following in the wake of recent debates, comparative religious ethics is especially well positioned to deploy indispensable analytical interrogation of
deep colonial histories, the deeply seated orientalist orientations that such histories contain and how these converge upon variations of nationalism.

Notes

1. I use the term with Robert Orsi’s exposition of “lived religion” in mind, an account I take to be largely consistent with the approach of normative ethical analysis I describe in the opening paragraphs of this article. See the “Introduction to the 2nd edition,” 2002.

2. See, for example, Elver’s chapter, “The United States: From Melting Pot to Islamophobia,” in 2012 (153–85).


4. For trenchant exposition of the contemporary French context along these multiple vectors, see Scott 2008, 45–75. As one example, Scott recounts in detail of the French efforts to “civilize” Algerian Muslims into the values of French secularism—as well as plundering material resources—in the near century and a half of colonial occupation. She makes the case that ethno-cultural dimensions have morphed into pervasive forms of racism toward Muslims in France (differences of culture, religion, ethnicity which become reified taken to be “innate, indelible, unchangeable”) (45). She further recounts how Muslim migration to France (in the 1970s) occurred largely (from the French perspective) under the auspices of cheap temporary labor by Moroccans, Tunisians, and Algerians, who (contra French expectations) have settled their families and stayed permanently (67–75).

5. And thereby creating a discrepancy in virtue of which “their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations” (Galtung 1969, 168–69).

6. Sociologist Peter Uvin points to several general patterns by which structural violence typically results in acute (direct/personal) violence: (1) the structurally subjugated will use direct violence to challenge and overturn the structures that oppress them; (2) those who benefit from the system will use direct violence to protect their status; (3) competition for resources leads to direct violence between oppressed groups; (4) rather than generate efforts to change the structures, it solidifies group identities and ignites scapegoating between allegedly inferior groups. See Uvin 2003.

7. While the limits of space prohibit making a more thorough exposition of this tri-focal analytical lens for identifying the multiple inter-relation of various forms
of violence, elsewhere I trace the genealogy of these concepts and demonstrate how they are used by scholars and activists as wide-ranging as Paul Farmer, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Michelle Alexander, Atalia Omer, Jean Zaru, Peter Uvin, Martin Luther King Jr., and Cornel West. See Springs 2015.

8. As I discuss at length below, Martha Nussbaum takes a nuanced version of this approach in her book The New Religious Intolerance (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), especially in chapter 1. For example, Resa Aslan (speaking in public intellectual mode) encapsulated the position in response to the Oak Creek Sikh Temple shooting: “Islamophobia has become so mainstream in this country that Americans have been trained to expect violence against Muslims—not excuse it, but expect it. And that's happened because you have an Islamophobia industry in this country devoted to making Americans think there's an enemy within,” in Freedman 2012; among other examples, see also Lean 2012.

9. In his text, Covering Islam, Edward Said meticulously demonstrates how the construction of conceptions of Islam that, however different they may be, share the characteristic of threatening Western liberal democratic societies began decades before the attacks of September 11th (Said 2008).

10. Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen went on record stating that “Danish society is based upon respect for free speech, religious toleration, and all religions are treated equitably. Free speech is the basis of our democracy. Free speech is far-reaching, and the Danish government has no influence on what the press writes.” For a detailed survey of these events, see Klausen 2009, 185–200.

11. For a textbook account of this framework—one quite explicitly indebted to Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis—see Ali 2004, 27–33 (“Let Us Have a Voltaire”).


13. Attention to cultural violence, for example, impels tracing contemporary currents of antipathy toward Islam in the United States back to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century dynamics of Western colonialism and then Cold War geo-politics—even prior to more recent (yet still well pre-dating 9/11) sources of anti-Muslim sentiments in the United States identified with events such as the Arab Oil Embargos of 1967 and 1973 (responding to U.S. involvement in Israel’s Six Day and Yom Kippur wars, respectively), and the later oil embargo of 1979, the Iranian Revolution and subsequent U.S. embassy hostage crisis (1979–1981), the suicide bombing of U.S. and French military barracks in Beirut by Islamic jihadis in 1983, and U.S. involvement in the Iran–Iraq war (1980–1988).

14. Opposition to Muslim communities was concurrently occurring in Alabama, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, Tennessee, Wisconsin. See Pew Research Center 2012.

15. This happened, for instance, at the Islamic Center of the South Bay, Lomita, California, and Al-Nur Islamic Center in Ontario, California.
See, for instance, the Muslim Educational Cultural Center of America (MECCA) in Willowbrook, Illinois; Mercy Foundation Inc. in Florence, Kentucky; Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Walkersville, Maryland.

See, for instance, the Hampshire Mosque in Amherst, MA.

I draw the modes of comparison integral to this pattern of conflict from Kelsay 2005.

Editor, “Obama’s Remarks about Ground Zero Mosque: The Transcript.” On the day following these remarks Obama clarified that he had not commented (and would not comment) on whether or not it would be advisable or wise to build a Muslim prayer space near Ground Zero. In fact, a CNN public opinion poll conducted August 6–11, 2010, found that the majority of Americans opposed the placement of a multifaith community center (containing a Muslim prayer space) near Ground Zero in spite of America’s tradition of religious pluralism and protection of religious freedom (68 percent of respondents opposed the plan to “build a mosque two blocks from the site in New York City where the World Trade Center used to stand,” CNN, Opinion Research Poll, August 6–10, 2010).

“Now let’s make two things clear: ISIL is not Islamic. No religion condones the killing of innocents, and the vast majority of ISIL’s victims have been Muslim” (Obama 2014).

I borrow the evocative concept of “healthy conflict” as essential to democratic processes, and a pivotal concern for comparative religious ethical analysis, from Kelsay 2005. I have worked at length to develop and expand that concept in conversation with categories of conflict transformation in Springs 2011.

The original proposal for a 15-story Islamic community center and prayer space was eventually reconceptualized and scaled back to be a three-story museum devoted to Islamic art and culture, although the plans for a museum did retain a prayer space. See Otterman 2014.

This account is especially evident in Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2009; it surfaces with far more subtlety in Putnam and Campbell 2012, and is preceded by such studies as Finke and Starke 1992 and Moore 1994.

Some compare this treatment with the U.S. suspicion, relocation, and internment of Japanese Americans into “war relocation camps” during World War II, more than half of which were U.S. citizens. This treatment of Japanese Americans much more directly and visibly marginalized a group whose identity was perceived to overlap with that of the external enemy at the time. Members of that group were thus identified as a potential threat to the safety and well-being of the nation and thus subjected to discrimination for the duration of the war. As of 2012, Gallup Poll surveys indicated that the only religious identification that U.S. voters reported being more opposed to voting for in a presidential election than a self-identified Muslim candidate (4 in 10 would refuse) is a self-identified Atheist (4.3 in 10 would refuse) (Jones 2012). The month of Ramadan in 2012 witnessed an outbreak of violence against Muslim Americans and Arab Americans in the United States (seven mosques attacked, one Muslim cemetery desecrated) that had not been seen since the months immediately following September 11, 2001, or the weeks following the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, when many initially
supposed that Muslim terrorists were responsible for the attack (Amer and Basu 2012). See further Elver 2012a; Goldman and Apuzzo 2011, 2012.

25. Schmitt 2014: “American law enforcement and intelligence officials say more than 100 Americans have gone to Syria, or tried to so far. That number of Americans seeking to join militants, while still small, was never seen during the two major wars fought in Afghanistan and Iraq after the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. . . . But when Homeland Security Secretary Jeb Johnson showed up recently at the Noor Islamic Cultural Center [in Dublin, OH] to offer a sympathetic ear and federal assistance, he faced a litany of grievances from a group of mostly Muslim leaders and advocates. They complained of humiliating border inspections by brusque federal agents, F.B.I. sting operations that wrongly targeted Muslim citizens as terrorists and a foreign policy that leaves President Bashar al-Assad of Syria in place as a magnet for extremists.”

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