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This paper draws on an ongoing study, The Muslim Milwaukee Project, and examines the collaboration between three faculty members and Muslim leaders in Milwaukee to design and implement a demographic survey of the Muslim community in the city. By providing a case study from a mid-sized city in the USA, as well as examining the ethical and methodological questions that arise when studying Muslims, we intend to address an apparent breach in the literature on Muslim geographies. By examining the positionalities of the participants and the particular knowledge production that came about through the collaboration, we shed light on power relations and exclusionary practices, as well as the political nature of working within and against Islamophobia. The collaboration laid bare the immediate effects of anti-Muslim discourse on Muslims’ everyday lives, and that alternative geographies of Islam challenging anti-Muslim discourses will need to produce fruitful strategies of inclusion not only with the majority of non-Muslim society, but also within the Muslim community itself. As such, this paper engages in questions of significance to scholars committed to collaborative and participatory research broadly.

Key words: Muslim geographies, collaborative research, positionality, knowledge production, Islamophobia, Muslims in the USA.

Introduction

This paper responds to recent scholarship on alternative geographies of Muslims in the West and to recent work on the process of disturbing dominant Orientalist ideologies. Dunn and Kamp (2009) have argued that one point of departure is a focus on the agency and activities of Muslims in the West, as they occupy a space in between the Western and Islamic worlds. They suggest that Western Muslims may be the key to successfully contesting negative stereotypes of Islam in that they can mobilize their hybrid identity to understand, describe, and argue for the positions, needs and desires of Muslims living in the West. They can both understand their own communities and help to present the realities of those communities to
the majority community—which is often ignorant about and fearful of Muslims.

This paper describes the collaboration between three faculty members of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) and a coalition of Milwaukee Muslim community leaders, as part of a larger ongoing study, *The Muslim Milwaukee Project*, to design and implement a demographic survey of the Muslim community. Primary aims of the survey were to help the Muslim community learn about itself for the purposes of planning and community building, and to provide research data for the faculty members interested in writing about the community. We discovered that most Muslim community leaders are very much interested in actively educating themselves and the public about their own community as a way of organizing their community and dispelling stereotypes. At the same time, however, we realized that some community leaders were not interested in revealing certain aspects of diversity in the community, as it might represent unflattering divisions within the community. We understand this hesitation as a clear result of the impact of local experiences of Islamophobia and discrimination, resulting in a cautious attitude toward interfacing with the general public. Dealing with this hesitation has been a problematic aspect of the study and one that convinces us of Dunn and Kamp’s (2009) proposition that challenging Islamophobia and constructing alternative geographies of Islam must be both an academic and political endeavor (see also the contributions in Phillips 2009a). This explains our title, ‘Researching within and against Islamophobia.’ Working with a community that must deal with bigotry on a regular basis has a concrete impact on the research process. The cultural, social, and political contexts within which we are working are permeated by anti-Muslim discourses.

Since Islamophobia takes many different expressions—everyday discrimination and/or harassment, a local chapter of *Eagle Forum* opposing a local mosque project, Islamophobic rhetoric circulating in local and national media—we are not merely working against it, but we know that whatever we research and publish might be turned against Muslims. As one of our Muslim partners expressed it, ‘no matter what we say, they’ll turn it against us.’ Through *The Muslim Milwaukee Project*, we hope to address a salient breach in the existing literature on American Muslims within the social sciences broadly by studying the Muslim population in Milwaukee, a mid-sized city in the Midwest with a significant and growing Muslim population. There is a large body of literature on Muslims in the USA, their immigration history and incorporation in the social and political fabric of American society, and the process of Americanization (see e.g. Bukhari, Nyang, Ahmaad, and Esposito 2004; Haddad 2010; Haddad and Esposito 1998; Leonard 2003). In addition, there are several studies and surveys that examine the conditions and demographics of Arabs and Muslims in the metropolitan cities of New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago (Cainkar 2009; GhaneaBassiri 1997; Schmidt 2004), as well as areas with a large Arab population such as Detroit (Abraham and Shryock 2000). Considerably less scholarly attention has been given to smaller cities in the Midwest. In addition, our study demonstrates the diversity of the category ‘Muslim.’ Similar to other larger American cities, the Muslim community is quite diverse ethnically, racially, culturally, and religiously, including secular Muslims as well as ‘unmosqued’ Muslims (Leonard 2003). Furthermore, ‘Muslim’ is not always a religious category, but may have primarily political, cultural, and national meaning.
This paper also contributes importantly to the geographical research on Islam and Muslim identities in the USA. Parallel to the growth of geographical research interest in religion, there is a substantial body of work that has been produced in the last ten years on Muslim geographies—the geographical analysis of Muslim populations—their places, identities, communities and societies—at various local, national and transnational scales (Kong 2009: 171). There has been, in particular, a growing interest in the Muslim communities and identities in the West and in particular Britain (Hopkins and Gale 2009; Phillips 2009a). Interestingly, as Gale (2007: 1031) observes, the geographical research on Islam is ‘geographically uneven.’ While there has been much attention to British Muslim geographies, there is a dearth of research on Muslim geographies in the USA (for important exceptions, see Falah 2005, Kwan 2008, and the work of Nagel and Staeheli 2008 and Staeheli and Nagel 2006, though their work focuses on Arabs and not explicitly on Muslims) (Gale 2007; Kong 2009: 172).

The literature on Muslim geographies has covered a broad range of topics such as Muslim femininities (Dwyer 1999), Muslim masculinities (Hopkins 2006), the politics of veiling (Gökarkin sel 2009; Secor 2002), integration and assimilation discourses (Ehrkamp 2006), and the planning and building of mosques (Gale 2005). A few important recent edited volumes within this growing field look at Muslim geographies through a feminist lens and with a focus on gender (Aitchison, Hopkins, and Kwan 2007; Falah and Nagel 2005).

Despite the expanding research on Muslim geographies, thus far little geographical work has critically explored and reflected upon the political and ethical issues involved in researching on Muslims. Hopkins and Gale (2009) have called for further scholarly attention to the methodological issues involved in conducting research on and with Muslims, and the positionalities of the researchers and how these are understood and negotiated throughout the research process (Hopkins and Gale 2009: 229). In this paper, through a detailed ethnography of the research process, we aim to demonstrate the complicated and messy nature of collaboration with and among Muslim communities. Throughout the partnership, salient questions arose: How can we research against the phenomenon of Islamophobia? What does it mean to study a group that feels utterly vulnerable and protective? How are our own positions and knowledge as scholars influenced by local politics reflecting power hierarchies within the Muslim Milwaukee community itself? By offering a reflective and critical account of the partnership with Muslim community leaders, the participants’ positionalities, identity politics, and the politics of knowledge production across differences, we intend to contribute to the meager literature on Muslim geographies in the USA.

**Muslim geographies of contention and collaboration**

In 1997 the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, a commission set up by the Runnymede Trust in the UK, produced the document *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* (Runnymede Trust 1997). Their definition of Islamophobia highlights the distorted view of Islam as not only an inferior ‘Other,’ but also as a monolith, static, and unresponsive to change. It also encompasses the notion of Islam as a political ideology rather than a religion—an ideology engaged in a ‘clash of civilizations.’ Finally, it mentions anti-Muslim hostility as
natural or normal. The definition touches upon a few salient, interrelated aspects pertaining to racism in general such as essentialism (overlooking heterogeneity and context, be it personal, geographical, historical, social, cultural, or political), categorical thinking, superiority, and the assertion of a taken-for-granted ‘truth’ legitimizing social and political discrimination and injustice. Clearly, the term has shortcomings as it is applied to different forms of discourse and practice (Shooman and Spielhaus 2010). Nevertheless, as this paper will lay bare, Islamophobia has real effects on people’s everyday lives as well as political organizing and activism (Love 2009; Mansson McGinty forthcoming).

As evident from the recent controversies and discussions around the ‘ground zero’ mosque and the congressional hearings addressing Islamic radicalization and homegrown terrorism, ten years after September 11, 2001, the political debate on Islam and Muslims in the USA remains highly charged and polarized. Perhaps the most recent example of the intensity of this polarization has been the controversy over the reality television show, *All-American Muslim*, which was attacked by the prominent Islamophobes such as Pamela Geller for ‘failing’ to include militant Islamist characters. Likewise, on a local level, Muslims in Milwaukee have experienced similar public expressions of Islamophobia with regard to the debated mosques to be built in Brookfield, a northern suburb of Milwaukee, and Sheboygan, a small town 50 miles north of Milwaukee (Johnson 2010, 2012). In the face of anti-Muslim sentiments, knowledge and representations that contest simplistic and homogenizing portrayals of what is the most racially diverse religious group in the USA (Younis 2009) are certainly important.

Much of the geographical work on Muslims in the West has focused on contestation, politics, and conflict (Kong 2009). However, in his work on Muslims’ participation in anti-war and anti-imperialist politics in Britain, Phillips (2009b) cautions us against merely understanding these geographies through spaces of conflict. Demonstrating the messiness on the ground, something the present project can attest to, he shows the complexity of the collaboration and dialogues between Muslims and non-Muslims in the context of the anti-war movement. Drawing on Phillip’s observation, we elaborate in this paper on the parallel spaces of hope and contention that characterize the project (Phillips 2009a, 2009b). While the project generated fruitful discussions and contacts, it was also an endeavor that brought forward conflicts, tensions, issues of power, and control, thus reflecting the vulnerability of a stigmatized and discriminated-against religious minority, as well as precarious situations, sometimes, we as academics found ourselves in.

Through our ethnographic account and analysis of the collaborative research process we undertook with several Muslim community leaders, we aim to show how our research was concretely shaped by not only the various uneven power relations involved (between ourselves and the Muslim community leaders, and among and within the Muslim communities themselves), but also by agreement and consensus. Thus, the immediate and on the ground experience of conversation, negotiation, and debate further complicate crude identity categories and the binary language of Muslim versus non-Muslim (Phillips 2009b: 516).

In order to address these various themes and questions, our discussion is organized in the following way. First, we present background on the city of Milwaukee and *The Muslim Milwaukee Project*. Second, we elaborate on collaborative research, reflexivity, and
positionality in the context of Islamophobia. Third, we present the participants’ and our own positionalities through a detailed description of our first meeting with all the community leaders. Fourth, we discuss silences and absent voices and perspectives. And finally, we explore the extended negotiation process that led up to the final versions of the household and individual surveys. Throughout this process several questions emerged: What did the participants want to find out from the survey? What kinds of information were we interested in obtaining? What kind of knowledge would the questions generate? And, importantly, how could this knowledge be used or misused? Thus, the negotiation process sheds light not only on the lives and concerns of Muslims in Milwaukee, but also on the experientially and materially grounded politics of inclusion and exclusion. These questions also explore in depth the participatory ethics that acquires us to reflect not only on positionality, but also on our own level of involvement, motivations for doing research and methods used (Hopkins 2007; Pain 2004). As such, this paper touches on salient questions not inherent in this particular partnership alone, but also of interest for scholars involved in community and participatory research with minority groups at large.

Milwaukee and *The Muslim Milwaukee Project*

Milwaukee is the largest city in Wisconsin and is located in the far southeastern part of the state on the shores of Lake Michigan. According to the 2010 Census, the population of the city is 594,833. Although Milwaukee exhibits considerable racial and ethnic diversity, it is also highly segregated (Otto 2004: 142; Quinn and Pawasarat 2003). A recent Brookings Institution study ranked Milwaukee as one of the most racially segregated city in America, placing it ahead of metropolitan areas historically associated with high levels of segregation, including New York City, Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland (Tolan and Glauber 2010).

The Muslim population of the city appears to be a relatively small but socially active segment of the population. Muslims have lived in the Milwaukee area in some numbers for over fifty years, but this population seems to have grown notably since the 1990s. Othman (1998: 88) notes the development of an Arab-Muslim settlement during the 1990s in the area around the Islamic Society of Milwaukee (ISM) on the south side. Currently, the Muslim population of Milwaukee is represented by eight primary religious institutions that are located on the north, northwest, south, and southeast sides of the city. Notably, there are no public, central mosques or gathering places for Muslims in or near the city center.

Like the American Muslim population nationally, the Muslims in Milwaukee are a very diverse group with respect to ethnic and racial background. The initial findings from *The Muslim Milwaukee Project* household survey confirm this. In another paper, we discuss the ethnic and racial diversity of the community, and the various ways the respondents of the household survey negotiated ethnic and racial categories (Sziarto, Mansson McGinty and Seymour-Jorn 2012). The Muslim population is largely Sunni, which is reflected in the fact that six of the eight institutions are Sunni organizations. The two largest and most active Muslim institutions in the city, the ISM and the Islamic Da’wa Center (IDC), are also Sunni. Both organizations have a web presence that clearly states their missions within the community. The ISM declares its mission in terms of broad service to the Muslim
community and integration of Muslims within the larger society: ‘... to serve the religious, educational, and social needs of our community and to promote good citizenship; to advocate for social justice, to build relations with other communities and to assist those in need ...’

The mission statement of the IDC differs in the sense that it focuses almost entirely on the service element of the mosque to the needy in the community, including the African-American and other converts who reside on the west and north side of the city. The IDC mission statement references a wide gap between the rich and the poor in the nation and in the Milwaukee area, as well as within the Muslim community, and it invites Muslims to fulfill their religiously prescribed duty to help the less fortunate in the community, thus helping the entire Muslim community to prosper.

The Muslim Milwaukee Project is not one that came about organically on the ground due to transformative politics or ‘broader understanding of togetherness’ (Phillips 2009b). Rather, the project was initiated by three Muslim leaders, including the founder and president of the IDC, who contacted the university since they lacked the expertise and the technical resources to conduct and process a survey of this magnitude. The founder and president of the IDC is an older man of South Asian ancestry with a kind and humble demeanor. At our very first meeting with the IDC’s leadership, we learned that a large-scale survey of the Muslim Milwaukee community was a long-held dream of the founder. The youngest IDC leader, a second-generation American Muslim, also of South Asian descent, had been a student of Anna and Caroline a few years before. He was then in a leadership position within the mosque and occupied an important post at one of the larger hospitals in the city. Since he had taken a couple of our classes, he knew not only about our research interests, but also that we were to be ‘trusted.’ This history set the friendly and relaxed tone of the meeting that took place at a coffee shop on campus. At this meeting, we also observed that their primary goal was to gain information about the community that would aid the larger Muslim community in plans for the development of schools, mosques, community centers, and other programs. The third leader, an African-American man, was very enthusiastic about the project and informed us in particular about the social needs of the community that they serve (Muslims as well as non-Muslims). The project was thus spearheaded by the Muslim community in the interest of self-knowledge and community development. The founder, who holds a doctoral degree, also recognized the mutual benefit to the scholars who might improve their own knowledge of the community and publish the results of the surveys in scholarly journals.

In the initial stages of the project, the UWM Office of Development was involved in attempting to secure private donors to fund the demographic survey. Thus, initial conversations with the community leaders also involved the Development personnel. Unfortunately, and despite best intentions on the part of all parties, this route of funding never bore fruit. The faculty members’ receipt of a Research Growth Initiative (RGI) award from UWM changed this situation dramatically. The RGI award provided course releases for the faculty members and funding for costs associated with the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research (hereafter CUIR) at UWM, which had agreed to do the printing and initial statistical analysis of the surveys. It also allowed the faculty members to establish themselves as the prime contact with the community leaders, and to bring not only
expertise but also funding to the collaboration. Once we had obtained funding for the project, we, the three faculty members, began to contact the other Muslim organizations in the city to form a ‘working group’ that would collaborate on the content of the surveys.

Early in the process we determined that we would need to implement the survey in two phases, the first being a ‘household survey’ that would collect information about the household unit, and the second being an ‘individual survey’ that would collect data about individual circumstances, experiences, and preferences. Early meetings with the working group involved representatives from the IDC and the ISM and focused around the design of the household survey. The ISM appointed a committee to work on the survey, and at least one member of this committee attended all the working group meetings. Leaders from the IDC attended the working group meetings on behalf of their own organization and also pledged to communicate with the other smaller mosques in the area. Although we sent out invitations to the imams and leadership of the other mosques, along with electronic drafts of the survey, they attended only the final meeting in the summer of 2011, during which the household survey was finalized.

Former faculty associations with the community were crucial for the advancement of the project. Both Anna Mansson McGinty and Caroline Seymour-Jorn were active participants in a 2007–2008 project that was spearheaded by the founder and director of the Milwaukee Muslim Women’s Coalition. This project, *Combatting Islamophobia*, consisted of a series of seminars designed to promote understanding between Muslims and the larger community, including seminars to inform local educators, media professionals, and law enforcement officials about Islam and Muslims. Throughout the years, we have established a very good relationship with her, and it was apparent that she was also highly regarded by her male colleagues within this project as well. The relationship has developed through various situations and roles besides these two collaborative projects, such as participating in the same reading group, inviting her to one of our classes on campus, as well as exchanging experiences of motherhood and parenting.

**Collaborative research, reflexivity, and positionality**

Our partnership rests on a tacit, shared understanding that we all shared a common ground in anti-Orientalist efforts and politics (cf. Phillips 2009b). Overall, this partnership has thus far been a productive and interesting project that we are grateful to be part of, and in which we have learned a great deal. Nonetheless, there were significant differences and disagreements that inevitably shaped the discussions, which we will elaborate on. This focus on differences (such as religion and gender) should not overshadow the overall relationship of trust, respect, and commitment that the group has developed as a whole and some significant shared positionalities (such as many of us being professionals, academics, parents, and individuals committed to social liberal, anti-Islamophobic, and anti-racist politics)—positionalities that have facilitated the project and allowed us to continue the partnership.

In the early stages of the project we realized, however, that despite our common aspiration—to get a better grasp of the number of Muslims in the city and the demographic makeup of the community—we all had various differences that shaped the research process in several ways, some of them unexpected.
We often had divergent ideas of what questions to ask, and how to phrase particular questions. Some issues, such as health care and sectarian affiliation, unexpectedly became contentious, reflecting certain hierarchies as well as divisions within the ‘Muslim community’ itself. In addition, the fact that the project was the initiative of the IDC influenced much of the discussions and our positions throughout them. While we as faculty members had received a university grant to fund the project and were in charge of the logistics of the survey design (with support from the CUIR), we primarily approached the study as belonging to the Muslim community and tried to proceed on their terms. We were acutely aware that the success of the survey would depend on the leaders’ full participation and approval. The faculty members and community leaders were all partners in this project with the general and underlying understanding that we were all working against Islamophobia, and wanted to know more about the Muslim communities. At the same time there was a power differential in which we were the ‘researchers,’ while our community partners were not only fellow researchers but also the ‘researched.’ Thus in our case, unlike in some feminist research, we were in no way the ‘researched,’ and therefore not ‘between’ researchers and researched (Nast 1994; Rose 1997). Instead, our community partners occupied roles ‘between,’ which shaped the research in significant ways.

We proceed with our reflections on how the participants’ positionalities shaped the knowledge production with full awareness that such reflections can never be transparent. Human interactions and our differing identities and positionalities are complex and dependent on various conditions, making it difficult to fully understand the impact of the researcher’s or other participants’ positions (Rose 1997). We also acknowledge that personalities and personal characteristics influence collaboration and fieldwork experiences as much as positionalities (Moser 2008). Thus, the complexity of identities suggests the predicament in understanding an individual’s position in any social category (female, ‘white,’ middle-class, etc.) as monolithic. Moreover, we understand that because our interactions and relationships with most of the Muslim leaders have been on a formal and professional level, the positionalities (male, Muslim, African-American, etc.) discussed here remain ‘external meta-categories’ (Moser 2008: 383).

The extensive discussion on the reflexive turn in geography goes beyond the scope of this paper. We agree with some of the critique that has been directed to the ‘privileged and self-indulgent focus on the self’ (Kobayashi 2003: 347), particularly when detached from the social conditions being studied. Instead, we wish to focus on the relationship between positionalities and the project’s production of knowledge in order to ‘highlight various forms of inequality, challenge power relations and appreciate the complexity of social relations’ (Hopkins 2009: 8). We aim to follow the lead of Nagar and Geiger in attempting ‘to produce knowledges across multiple divides (of power, geopolitical and institutional locations, axes of difference, etc.)’ (2007: 268) in ways that, rather than augmenting the power of the privileged, support politics of social and cultural change to benefit the less privileged. Thus, this paper does not primarily attempt to describe the identities of our collaborators, but rather look at the negotiation processes of collaboration and the knowledge production within a particular partnership, as seen from our perspective.

Our Muslim partners come from diverse backgrounds with respect to ethnic and racial identities, and also age and socio-economic
background. The discussion here has to remain rather vague with regard to the specific identities and biographical details of each individual collaborator so as not to compromise the participants’ confidentiality. Reflecting the diversity of Muslim Americans nationally, the Muslim collaborators are of different ethnic and racial backgrounds including Pakistani, Palestinian, Indian, Egyptian, and African-American. Some of them arrived to the USA as young children, whereas others were born here. They are all male, with one exception, and as leaders of mosques and Muslim organizations many of them are highly educated. This male dominance in leadership can be seen in many different faith traditions. While much of the leadership within the American Muslim community is composed by men, this is changing. One reflection of this is the increase in female-led organizations as well as the number of female board members, as can be seen by the presence of a few women on the ISM’s Board of Directors (cf. Haddad, Smith, and Moore 2006). A couple of them are lawyers, one is a professor in the natural sciences, two obtained graduate degrees in biology and business, and another has worked as a firefighter. The only woman is a founding and leading member of a local Muslim women’s organization, and is a dynamic and respected person within the larger community for her engagement in community outreach and interfaith dialogue. As stated above, we already knew her from previous engagements, and she has remained a very close and important conversation partner. In their position as leaders, our collaborators were all involved in various civic engagements, and community outreach to inform the public about Islam and Muslims in the USA, as well as social services for their community members such as food drives and health clinics. The two lawyers have been engaged in debates on civil liberties and have challenged the civil rights violations of Muslims, particularly post-September 11. Thus, they are very active and visible representatives of the community, serving their members in various capacities.

Certain aspects of the three faculty’s positionality were apparent from the start of the research process. We are ‘white,’ female, and academics. None of us are Muslims; in fact, none of us are particularly religious. Thus, we were certainly positioned as ‘outsiders’ in relation to the community of Muslims, and this difference mattered in different ways. First, while we as academics approached the project as one of academic, social, and political importance, some of our Muslim partners perceived it as integral to their religious faith and identity as well. Collaborating with people who are driven by faith triggers personal reflections about one’s own faith, or lack thereof, reflections we shared with each other, and the significant ontological difference between social scientific approaches to religion and our collaborators’ approach to their own faith, as well as to the survey.

Just prior to the distribution of the survey to the mosques, an email was sent out to the whole group—‘May Allah be pleased with this effort and reward those involved and those who participate.’ The survey and the project as a whole were blessed and defined through religious language, reminding us not only of our own secular position in relation to the project, but also of its religious significance to our collaborators. The blessing sent by email, probably inspired by the impending holiday of Ramadan, placed the project within a realm other than the scholarly one through which we understand The Muslim Milwaukee Project and our own role in it. In such situations, we were encouraged to reflect on what degree we as academics, trained within the social sciences of geography and anthropology, approaches faith and are able to ‘study religious phenomena
without subjecting them to reductionist arguments about ideologies or identity’ (Bailey, Brace, and Harvey 2009: 257).

However, as the project emerged and progressed, we came to realize that this difference was not necessarily conflictual, and that different positionalities, while not overlapping, could be of parallel nature. Indeed, religious belonging was not always the most important difference shaping interactions in any of the project meetings. Other crucial similarities and/or differences included educational background, gender, sectarian affiliation, ethnic and racial identities, connections to and/or affiliation with a mosque and/or community center. Furthermore, over time, and in different places, relationships among project members developed and changed.

Most of the meetings of the full project partners group took place in the evenings after work hours, and they were mostly professional in their spirit and tone. The discussions focused mainly on the surveys and questions, rarely sidetracking to other personal or professional questions. Consequently, our positioning as ‘outsiders’ (non-Muslims) to the community and theirs as ‘insiders’ were rarely challenged. And, overall, we experienced these positions as quite prominent throughout the collaboration. Furthermore, our position as outsiders was at times reinforced by a few of the Muslim leaders’ presumptions about our lack of knowledge about Muslim lives and identities (despite our work and research specialties). Importantly, the politics of knowledge production were already shaped, even as we began, by our knowledge of the Sunni community—and lack of knowledge of the other communities in the area. Even the two of us with expertise on Muslims in Milwaukee learned considerably more about the Ahmadiyya and Turkish/Bosnian communities during this project. The dominance of the Sunni-oriented centers also interestingly shapes the local media’s representation of the ‘Muslim community.’ As a majority of articles in the local newspaper *Journal Sentinel* indicate, it is most often the ISM that is asked to give ‘the Muslim perspective’ on various Muslim-related issues.

Being present at different Muslim community sites and events repeatedly, over time, changed our positionalities and gave us more knowledge of the diversity within the different community centers. We rotated the location of research partner meetings among several of the centers. We did survey participation recruitment and collection, with a few of the leaders, at the midday prayers at one mosque several Fridays in a row. Each of these practices meant spending time with one or more community leaders, and thereby appreciating each other’s commitments and personalities. Furthermore, at the one mosque in particular, through repeated visits, we were able to answer many participants’ questions about the survey, and listen to their criticisms of particular questions. We were also able to witness the income diversity of the community members, hear more about community service projects, and listen to people’s stories of discrimination by and frustration with ignorant and Islamophobic Americans. Our patient listening to community members may have demonstrated our commitment to community leaders. We have also made commitments to present research findings and continue research at several of the community centers. As such, we can also be understood as ‘insiders’ together with our Muslim partners in our anti-racist and anti-Islamophobic efforts vis-à-vis a larger majority society that in general knows very little about the Muslim community, reminding us that one is rarely fully an insider or fully an outsider, but often both depending on context (Hopkins 2009; Mullings 1999; Nast 1994).
All of the above entailed a delicate balance between our own research interests as academics, on the one hand, and the effort to make sure that the community collaborators felt comfortable and in control of the survey, and found us trustworthy partners, on the other hand. In the next sections, we discuss differences in positionality that we saw as shaping the research. Furthermore, there were silences of which we did become aware, and we discuss our efforts to address them. There were also silences that, because of their locally sensitive nature, we cannot discuss in this paper. Finally, there are certainly silences that we have yet to recognize; we hope that further research, collaboration, and scholarly exchange will aid us in realizing at least some of these.

Our first meeting

We—Anna, Caroline, and Kristin—arrived at the IDC for our first meeting with the Milwaukee area Shura Council on 15 June 2010. This center is located in north Milwaukee, a part of the city that has faced some of the worst deindustrialization and resulting poverty in Milwaukee in the last two decades. In the parking lot, we met up with a member of the UWM Development staff. It was she who had put us in touch with the leaders of the IDC, with whom the idea of the survey had originated. While we had had meetings with the leaders of the IDC before, this was our first visit to the Center, and our first meeting with members of the Shura Council, composed of leaders from the various Sunni mosques.

We received a warm welcome from one of the leaders of the IDC and by a few women socializing in the main entrance. We were shown into a larger room, which we suspected was often used as a prayer hall. We were given seats behind a table, so we sat down, took out the copies of our project summary, and waited. It was a time of some awkwardness for all of us, and some of this would persist throughout the meeting.

Members of the Shura Council arrived gradually. The leaders of the IDC were there, including the president, the executive director, and the director of outreach we had already met, and the Imam, whom we met for the first time. We learned that one of the IDC leaders also directs another Muslim organization that works to alleviate poverty in Milwaukee. We met another imam, and learned that his mosque was new in the area. Then the religious director of a large Muslim community center arrived. His colleague from the same center was late, but we began with introductions. As we went around the room and introduced ourselves, it became apparent that there was a particular spatial arrangement of gender going on: all of the members of the Shura Council, behind their table, were male; we three researchers and our university colleague, behind our separate table across the room, were all female. This arrangement meant little at first, but would become more significant as we discussed the survey.

The first concern raised by Shura Council members was that their community might be hesitant to participate. They are understandably concerned about confidentiality, about the possibility of their information being shared with Immigration and Customs Enforcement or other agencies, and about possible reprisals if they reported discrimination. Thus, an early question was, how do we ensure participation? This concern was expressed in different ways by different Council members. A few Council members noted that community members would not know how the survey could benefit them, and so information and promotion would be necessary. These Council members had clear ideas about a few problems in the
community that they wanted to know more about, to enable their mosques to assist people better. One mentioned health problems among women, and that women might be reticent about going to the doctor—and that it would be helpful to know what health problems women were facing, and why they do not seek medical care. Another mentioned the need to know where people lived, and how many children there were, to predict community needs for mosque spaces, religious education for children, and ensuring adequate K-12 education, public or private.

The conversation thus began with most of the Shura Council members voicing curiosity and concern for their communities. This concern took several forms, some more open to research, some less. One member in particular was concerned about protecting the community’s privacy, and how his and his community’s fears would make participant recruitment impossible. He mentioned a researcher from another university, who was not able to recruit enough participants for a (medical) research project. The members of the mosque, he said, were justifiably suspicious of research. Would researchers report them to Immigration and Customs Enforcement and/or the Department of Homeland Security? Could the data collected be used against individuals or the community? Kristin replied that first, the survey would be anonymous, and second, that the researchers had worked with the Muslim community (Anna and Caroline) and undocumented immigrants (Kristin), and were committed to protecting research participants. But this board member had had no interaction with Anna or Caroline during their previous community project, and seemed to find Kristin’s assurances lacking.

In response to our offering to visit the mosque as needed to explain the survey’s purpose and how anonymity would be ensured, one of the leaders said we would be taken more seriously by the community if we brought a man with us to the mosques and community centers when promoting and distributing the survey. We were taken aback by this comment, for none of us had experienced a situation with any of the other research partners in which our gender, in combination with our non-Muslim status, and abilities as researchers were so explicitly addressed (and deemed inadequate). None of the members of the Shura Council present followed up on this remark or expressed any similar ideas. We realize that this comment can be understood in various ways. The leader might have had a particular conservative portion of the community in mind, and wanted to forewarn us on this point. Similar comments about community members bringing traditional views on women to the USA had been made by the woman on the team in other contexts. The reason for us mentioning it here though is not so much trying to understand why he said this, but rather that this statement made us particularly sensitive to gender dynamics in the group and in our initial interactions with the community while distributing the survey as non-Muslim women. We found no way to verbally contest this remark and challenge to our ability to conduct the research at this or subsequent meetings. Instead, we contested it by continuing our work on the survey, by maintaining positive relations with other members of the Shura Council, especially those whom we already knew and with whom we had established some trust, and by reflecting among ourselves about the various dynamics among ourselves and the various research partners. On reflection, we can claim that we have not found our gender to compose a barrier in our exchanges and contacts with Muslim community members.
Silencing precarious inquiries

Sectarian divisions

Much of the work on Islam and Muslims in the USA puts strong emphasis on the diversity of the Muslim American community, nationally, ethnically, racially, and ideologically, not only to describe corresponding ‘reality,’ but also to counteract prevalent public notions of Muslims as a homogenous religious category (Haddad 2004; Haddad, Smith, and Moore 2006; Leonard 2003; Schmidt 2004). Muslims themselves often stress the complex and diverse nature of their communities in efforts to challenge essentializing anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim representations (Dunn and Kamp 2009). Given these counter-discourses to Islamophobia, we were given a surprise at our first project meeting to discuss the first draft of the survey. As we negotiated to develop a survey that all the community partners would feel comfortable distributing in their mosques and community centers, a few issues were immediately silenced. Two of these that created potential problems for the validity of the survey were silences around sect and gender.

Since one of the religious leaders had previously announced that he was mostly interested in gaining insight into basic community demographics, referring to the U.S. Census and a recent Pew Research Study, we were surprised when the same leader firmly asked us to remove one of the first questions of the survey about religious affiliation (see Figure 1).

We had designed this question to include as many sects as we thought had adherents in the Milwaukee area, and to allow multiple affiliations. We had not included Nation of Islam, as we felt sure that many of the community leaders who had been convened, and who are all linked in the Sunni Shura Council in Milwaukee, would not be likely to want to include Nation of Islam in the survey. Indeed, we three researchers were not at that point sure how to address the issue of the relation of the Nation of Islam to the ‘community’ that the partners envisioned surveying. As a result, we were not satisfied with the question ourselves, but were hoping to learn more to be able to phrase it better.

At this meeting, the first response from a few community leaders, as they read the question, was to laugh at the mention of so many sects. With respect to the Wahhabi category, one leader laughed stating that if there were any Wahhabis in the area they would never self-identify as such. In particular, the mention of the Ahmadiyya elicited comments suggesting it did not make sense to include this community. However, one person pointed out that the Ahmadiyya were active on the UWM campus, and that since we intended to spread word of the survey through Muslim student

![Figure 1](https://example.com/figure1.png)  
**Figure 1** Original question on sectarian affiliation.
associations, this comment suggested that their omission would be a problem. Then a community leader suggested wording of the question so that the sects be listed in alphabetical order. Another person spoke up and said that his organization was, ‘trying to downplay internal divisions.’ This surprised us as we thought that the leader of a large mosque would find this information useful for community building purposes. Instead, he saw himself as serving in his own words, ‘an umbrella organization,’ which is trying to underplay sectarian divisions and schisms. Further conversation seemed to suggest that some community partners preferred to have no questions about sectarian affiliation. Still, a few partners suggested another direction entirely: one person asked about the possibility of outreach to the Ahmadiyya; another mentioned the Nation of Islam, and pointed out that a few teachers at a Milwaukee Muslim school and mosque were Nation of Islam. Thus, this exclusive approach was not shared by everyone at the table. Two leaders from the IDC at separate occasions had mentioned the Ahmadiyya and Nation of Islam as communities composed of self-identifying Muslims. While this particular opinion, of not including all sects that self-identify as Muslim, was not necessarily shared by everyone, it was not disputed. One possible interpretation of this is that the opinion was articulated by one of the leaders from the largest mosque, reflecting internal power hierarchies within the group of Muslim community leaders.

We three researchers did not speak up for or with any of these perspectives at the time. We felt—especially at this particular meeting—that we wanted to understand concerns and resistances to certain questions, and so were not ready to argue for a particular question. We did not want to push any approach since we were afraid that some of the participants would leave the table. What we did not fully realize at the time was that this issue was going to shape data collection for months to come.

Thus, despite some leaders’ refrain that accurate numbers of Muslims in Milwaukee were needed, smaller groups like the Shia and Ahmadiyya communities were not addressed and included in the plan for survey distribution and collection. Further, in these discussions there was practically no mention of secular Muslims, and only occasional mention of those Muslims not affiliated with mosques, the so-called ‘unmosqued’ and other ‘invisible Muslims’ (Leonard 2003: 43). This point further demonstrates the limitations with approaches that use mosques as the primary entry point when researching Muslims (ibid.: 43). We worked to remedy this omission over the next several months. We had already discussed how to reach out to secular Muslims, and, thanks to Caroline’s contacts, were assisted by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. We also collected surveys at the Islamic Resource Center, which offers Arabic classes, story times for children, speaker’s series, and exhibitions. Anna and Caroline turned to prior contacts to inquire about these communities, and all three of us looked for contacts through the Muslim Student Association. Not only did we find that there was an established Ahmadiyya community center—more than only campus activism—but also a Shia Muslim religious organization and center. We also learned of a mosque and center whose congregation was mostly Turks and Bosnians (not only recent immigrants, but also second and third generation), who, though Sunni, preferred to practice their religion together, but separately from the Muslims whose national origins were elsewhere. Thus, not only sectarian divisions but also differences of national origin shape the Milwaukee Muslim ‘community.’ One large mosque is known as ‘the Palestinian mosque’ to other groups, and
several other mosques have largely South Asian congregations, though a few also include African-American Muslims. These divisions and differences, and the way they become silenced—by some of the community partners, and not raised again by us—meant that it would remain our task to ensure these groups were included in the survey as well.

There are various reasons for why community leaders would like to put up a unified front. In order to protect the community, leaders tend to under-communicate tensions and disputes. Also, as part of identity politics—in this case, the effort to politically represent and mobilize a group that is discriminated against in the face of contemporary Islamophobia and Orientalist politics as expressed through ‘war on terror’—one strategy is to present religious unification and commonalities over conflict and divergences. In reaction to stigmatization, Muslims themselves essentialize collective identities as part of political strategy (cf. Werbner 1997). While we were troubled to see the question go, the significance of history and long-standing conflicts and debates among Muslims should not be undermined from the perspective of non-Muslims. The Muslim leaders’ dismissal of the question on sectarian affiliation can be understood in the context of the history of Muslims’ relationship with the Ahmadiyya, a sect that has been much debated and contested globally. One significant reason for the disputed status of Ahmadiyya Muslims, or Ahmadis, as Muslims is that the founder of the movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, near the end of the nineteenth century in colonial India declared himself to be a prophet—a manifestation of blasphemy from the perspective of Sunni Muslims who believe Prophet Muhammad was the last and final one, the ‘seal of the Prophets.’ For example, in 1974 Pakistan declared that Ahmadis were non-Muslims. Interestingly, when Ahmadi missionaries arrived in the USA in the 1920s they established a close relationship with African-American Muslims (Leonard 2003: 39). The fact that there are established communities today of African-American Ahmadiyya Muslims could explain why a couple of the leaders from the IDC, which serves a large community of African-American Muslims, appeared to be more inclined to define Ahmadis as Muslims and willing to include the question.

At the time of writing this paper, we are still reaching out to leaders of the minority communities to discuss survey distribution. In our conversations with the Ahmadiyya community, the rifts were confirmed—the Ahmadiyya leaders have indicated interest in participating on the condition that the logos of the Sunni mosques are removed from the cover letter of the survey.

Throughout the following meetings we thus sensed a need to downplay any kind of difference and tension within the ‘community.’ As a consequence, compromises (on our part for the sake of conflict-free collaboration and success of the survey) led to silences.

### Connection to country of origin

Frequently, concerns about ‘how can this information be used against us’ influenced the discussions and the final versions of the surveys. One of the areas we as academics were interested in exploring in the individual survey was Muslims’ connections to other places in the world due to people’s migration history. Two questions that were eventually removed from this section (to our disappointment) after extensive discussion were: ‘How connected do you feel to your country of origin?’ and ‘If you have visited your/family’s country of origin, how comfortable do you feel there?’ The main reason for cutting particularly the first mentioned question was
that if the responses came back indicating that Muslims in Milwaukee feel very connected to their home country this would be material for potential ‘bad press.’ One of the leaders said he could only imagine how media would potentially distort such a ‘fact’ and as a result misrepresent Muslims as more connected to their country of origin than to the USA, perpetuating an Islamophobic notion of American Muslims as unpatriotic and not really Americans. Here the negotiations over questions were driven by the speculation and fear of what kind of ‘knowledge’ the survey could potentially produce. Although understandable, this results in an unfortunate defensive position vis-à-vis the powerful discourse of Islamophobia that might not necessarily trigger efficient long-term identity politics and strategies (Mansson McGinty forthcoming).

Gender

Another silence that would shape the survey in unexpected ways had to do with gender—in particular, gender in relation to the notion of ‘head of household.’ The issue of gender and ‘head of household’ arose only gradually, in part because of our struggle with survey design. When we began, we hoped to do one survey. The community partners wanted demographic information; we as academics wanted to ask questions regarding community engagement, discrimination, family migration history, and religious practice. The struggle to frame questions so that they would be acceptable to the community partners for some time obscured a more serious problem with the survey: some questions took the household as a unit of analysis (e.g. household income); others as the individual (religious practice). Eventually, we divided the questions into two surveys to resolve this problem. Once we had a more clearly targeted household survey, the problem of the definition of ‘head of household’ became clear.

Early on in discussions of the survey, several people voiced worries about two adults in any household filling it out, especially if the survey was to be distributed in multiple sites, over a few weeks. But the other question that came up was whether to have a question that asked about household structure, and if so, how to design it. One community partner suggested that we format the survey like the U.S. Census. This suggestion was very helpful, in that the U.S. Census format asks the survey respondent ‘Person 1’ to identify each household member’s relation to her/him. This design appealed to us, and one community partner had mentioned wanting to be able to identify how many households were headed by a single female. However, when we brought that design to the next meeting, it was deemed too cramped on the page.

The resolution, to which no one objected, was to collect data on ages, in order to know numbers of children and adults in each household. A few community partners had insisted that knowing about ages of children was important to planning for youth educational needs, with which we very much agreed. Our advisor at the CUIR suggested that we might even consider a table format for a section to collect data on children in the household and what kind(s) of school(s) they attended and why, but that design seemed even more crowded on the page and even forbidding to a potential survey participant. We simplified the question about household structure to ask for ages of people in the household, and how many people in the household were female, and the design of this version was much more acceptable to the community partners (see Figure 2). However, the household survey would no longer link the ages with the genders
of people in the household, nor did it capture
the relationships of the people in the house. Therefore, it would not be able to identify
single-mother households.

Furthermore, in early versions of the survey, we wanted to ask a question about whether
women covered—that is, did they wear some
version of hijab. To some extent, we wanted to
ask this question because of the large literature
on hijab that addresses the meaning of hijab in
relation to Muslim women’s supposed oppres-
sion, and/or their activism and empowerment
(Dwyer 1999; Karim 2009). Furthermore, we
were also interested in asking a question about
hijab as a basis for later interviews with Muslim
women regarding their experiences of discrimi-
nation because of their wearing hijab. We did
not want only to focus on women, however. We
also drafted a version of the question to ask
about modest dress, to which men could also
reply. However, by wording the question to
apply to women or men, it became vague. Further, we included the question in a section
on religious practices. This section also asked
how often the respondent attended mosque,
how often she/he prayed, and whether she/he
observed Muslim dietary restrictions (halal and
zabiha).

When we brought this version of the survey
to the community partners, most of them
disliked most of this section. They found these
questions to be gathering knowledge of interest to us as academics, but not of interest
to them as community leaders. It took a few
more meetings to negotiate some versions of
these questions, and then all of them were
included in the individual survey.

Further, the question regarding modest dress
was rewritten, to ask only women about hijab,
and moved from the section on religious practice to the section on experiences of
discrimination, thereby changing the whole
context in which the question would be
understood. This change accomplished two
things: it aimed to diminish the question’s
religious import, which might have been
understood in a normative way by respondents.
That is, some Muslim women, reading the
survey question, ‘Do you wear hijab?’ after and
before other questions about religious practice,
might take it as suggesting that hijab denotes
ideal Muslim practice. In that version, questions
on discrimination appeared far later in the survey, and did not link covering and discrimination well. By including the question in the discrimination section, the survey still collected data on women wearing hijab, but also asked them to consider whether they experience discrimination based on that. This change was an example of how collaboration in many cases led to a far better survey than we might have designed on our own. Nevertheless, with the final version we will not be able to find out about Muslim men’s practices of ‘modest dress,’ and whether those practices shape their experiences of discrimination.

Conclusion

We have come to understand this collaboration as a complicated and multifaceted project. Despite, and parallel to, the positioning of us as researchers, non-Muslims, and ‘outsiders,’ The Muslim Milwaukee Project simultaneously challenged Orientalist discourse of ‘us and them’ (insider/outsider) in our joint effort to make the Muslim community more visible. Furthermore, it challenged the notion of the Muslim Other as a monolithic identity category. The project also showed the participants’ multiple positionings vis-à-vis each other. Through our many conversations, meetings, and email correspondences, as well as our increased visibility in the community (particularly at the ISM where we, together with one of the leaders of ISM, actively distributed surveys and encouraged people to complete them after the Friday prayer), the collaboration demonstrates the breaking down of otherness and crude binaries. Our experiences from this civic engagement also bear witness to the political nature of such collaboration. The knowledge production was shaped by various influential factors—the fear and experience of Islamophobia, the fact that the survey was conducted by non-Muslim researchers, and internal power relations within the Muslim community itself.

From our perspective, The Muslim Milwaukee Project aims to provide the Muslim communities with information about their members’ ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds, occupational and professional backgrounds, levels of education, community contributions, experiences of discrimination, and the role of religion in people’s lives. As one of the Muslim leaders stated during one of the meetings, ‘knowledge is power.’ However, by excluding the voices of ‘other’ Muslims, the knowledge that some of the leaders sought to explore through the project was partial and limited to the communities that they served and to their own members. This kind of exclusion, the lack of interest in, or fear of including other denominations, demonstrates both vulnerability within the national and the local political landscape, and how global political and religious conflicts translate into local tensions and relations. Further, it not only narrowed down the definition of ‘Muslim’ in the name of the project The Muslim Milwaukee Project, but also demonstrated to us the non-existent partnerships and connections across sectarian differences. While the partnership confirmed Muslim collaboration and mobilization across ethnic and national identities (the Muslim participants were of different ethnic and racial backgrounds including Pakistani, Palestinian, Indian, Egyptian, and African-American), stark borders were drawn between different Muslim sects.

While knowledge is power, power produces knowledge. Not only were voices silenced, evidenced by the final and accepted drafts of the surveys, but also some Muslim leaders had power to control the outcome of questions, and thus what kind of knowledge the surveys will produce. These leaders also demonstrated power in granting us access to
their communities. Without their collaboration and support, this project could not have been undertaken.

For our Muslim partners, the support for various questions emerged out of the immediate and situated experiences and needs on the ground. We realized early on that the question of health care and insurance was one of the most important ones for some, while others saw it as a candidate for possible cutting if space was getting short. The leaders who saw themselves as serving poor and underserviced communities and neighborhoods articulated a desire to address the mundane realities of their members’ everyday lives, and develop their own approaches for assistance (cf. Sardar 2009). Thus, the survey could be understood as part of jihad, a social and religious struggle for justice and the betterment of community.

The collaboration and dialogue with the various Muslim leaders laid bare the concrete workings and immediate ramifications of Islamophobia. Working within and against Islamophobia reveals the immediate and palpable effects of anti-Muslim discourse on Muslims’ negotiations of their everyday lives. It brings to bear Muslim community leaders’ constant fear of misrepresentation and their strategies to counter-act it. Through a process of self-censoring, questions reminiscent of concrete sectarian discord, and questions that could trigger potentially damaging information, such as Muslims’ strong connection to country of origin, were discarded. Muslim self-representations are here ‘driven by the common currency of negative stereotypes,’ which only ‘raises problems for Muslims themselves’ (Sardar 2009: 24–25). Rather, further echoing Sardar, for effective approaches toward Islamophobia, self-representations ‘must be a proactive strategy that develops new channels and terms of communication’ (ibid.: 25).

Hence, collaboration raised questions regarding how to think about producing alternative geographies of Muslims in the context of Islamophobia. Effective alternative geographies of Islam challenging anti-Muslim discourses will need to produce fruitful strategies of inclusion not only with the mainstream society, but also within the Muslim community itself. There exist two predominant discourses: the hegemonic discourse that insistently links Islam to terrorism, and the primary counter-hegemonic discourse presenting ‘middle class and mostly mainstream’ Muslims (e.g. All-American Muslim, as well as, to some extent, Pew 2007). But by alternative geographies of Muslims, must we mean one, unified counter-hegemonic alternative geography? Is that necessary to counter Islamophobia? We would argue no. Rather, to pursue political, social and economic change for the less privileged, we must produce geographies of Muslims that not only counter Islamophobia, but also address the needs and struggles of the most marginalized Muslims. Indeed, it is the most marginalized Muslims—the low-income, the single-parent families, the minority sects, and so on—who may be the most vulnerable to acts of Islamophobia. The partnership with Muslim community leaders has made us more receptive to both internal as well as larger political workings that can have exclusionary effects. In our future research with Muslim communities in Milwaukee, while conducting individual surveys as well as individual and focus-group interviews, we will be particularly attuned to the less visible Muslims by working through organizations beyond the mosques and major community centers.

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Notes

1. The Eagle Forum is a socially and politically conservative interest group in the USA founded in 1972.

References


Faire des recherches au sein et contre l’islamophobie: un projet collaboratif avec des communautés musulmanes

Cet article fait usage d’une étude continue de titre «Opération Milwaukee Musulman» en examinant la collaboration entre trois professeurs d’université et des leaders de la communauté musulmane de Milwaukee qui vise à entreprendre un recensement de la population musulmane de la ville. En fournissant une étude de cas d’une ville moyenne des États-Unis ainsi qu’en examinant les questions de méthode et d’éthique suite à la recherche sur les musulmans, nous voulons nous adresser à une lacune apparente dans la littérature sur les géographies musulmanes. Nous illuminons des rapports de pouvoir et des pratiques d’exclusion ainsi que la nature politique de travailler au sein et contre l’islamophobie à partir des positionnalités des participants et de la mode de production des connaissances de la collaboration. Cette collaboration a dévoilé non seulement les conséquences immédiates du discours antimusulman sur la vie de tous les jours des musulmans, mais aussi la prise de conscience qu’il faudra que les géographies alternatives dans lesquelles l’Islam peut contester les discours antimusulmans puissent produire des stratégies d’inclusion avec la société non-musulmane elle-même. Cet article s’adresse donc aux questions importantes pour les chercheurs/uses consacrées aux communautés et à la recherche participative plus largement.

Mots-clés: géographies musulmanes, recherche collaborative, positionnalité, production de connaissance, islamophobie, les musulmans aux États-Unis.

Investigando entre y en contra de la Islamofobia: Un proyecto colaborativo con comunidades musulmanes

Este artículo lleva de una investigación en desarrollo, El Proyecto de Musulmanes en Milwaukee, y se examina la colaboración entre tres profesores y líderes musulmanes en Milwaukee para diseñar e implementar un estudio demográfico de la comunidad musulmana en la ciudad. Proveyendo un caso práctico de una ciudad de tamaño medio en los Estados Unidos, además de examinando las cuestiones éticas y metodológicas que se aparecen cuando se estudia musulmanes, pensamos dirigir una brecha aparente en la literatura de geografías musulmanas. Al examinar las posicionalidades de los participantes y la producción de conocimiento particular que apareció a través la colaboración, aclaramos las relaciones de poder y practicas excluyentes, además de la naturaleza política de trabajar entre y en contra de la Islamofobia. La colaboración se reveló los efectos inmediatos de discursos anti-musulmanes en las vidas cotidianas de los musulmanes, y que las geografías alternativas de Islam retando los discursos anti-musulman necesitan producir estrategias productivas de inclusión no sólo con la sociedad no-musulmán, pero entre la comunidad musulmana también. Es decir, este artículo se involucra en cuestiones de significativo a escolares entregados a la comunidad y a la investigación participativa ampliamente.

Palabras claves: geografías musulmanes, investigación colaborativa, positionalidad, producción de conocimiento, Islamofobia, musulmanes en los Estados Unidos.