Plenary Address

A Critical Reflection on the Link Between Racism and Disaffection

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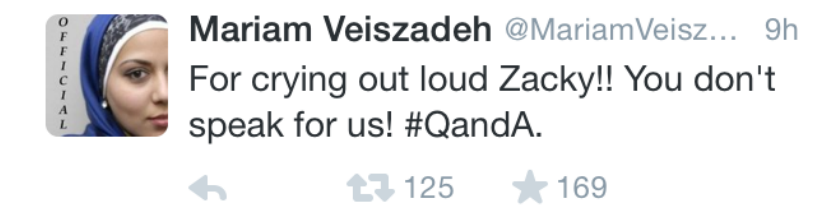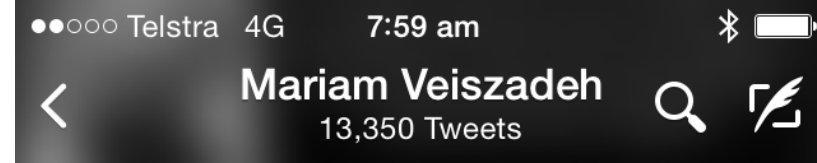K.Dunn@uws.edu.au

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1. The issue

- Islamaphobia (the evidence is clear).
- Experiences of racism: Muslims in Sydney
- Islamaphobia → Disaffection?
- Disaffection → Violent extremism?
- Evidence? Confirming stereotypes?
- Hopes and aspirations of ordinary Muslims.
- Community policing for countering violent extremism in NSW?
- Conclusions.

2. The literature, debate & its limits

Unsubstantiated assertions of Muslims 'not fitting-in'.

Two problematic types of scholarship:

1. Muslim incompatibility with `western values', focussing on radicalisation.

2. Muslim disaffection through social exclusion.

What does the empirical research actually show?

An alternative analysis (with an evidence base): ordinary lives within a western cosmopolitan society

The 'ordinariness of Australian Islam' research project, 2011-

3. Islamaphobia (social distance)

Table 1: Social distance towards Muslims, state surveys, Australia, 2001-2008, n:12512.

	% of Central Western Sydney' Statistical Sub-Division respondents	Total NSW survey %	Total Australia survey%
Anti-Asian[11]	36.2	27.2	23.8
Anti-Indigenous[11]	36.2	28.8	27.9
Anti-Italian[11]	12.6	12.0	11.0
Anti-British[11]	10.2	8.1	7.8
Anti-Muslim[11]	**61.4**	**54.4**	**48.6**
Anti-Semitic (Jewish)[11]	28.3	24.4	23.3
Anti-Christian[11]	7.1	8.8	9.7

Note: Question Wording: "In your opinion how concerned would you feel if one of your close relatives were to marry a person of ...X background / faith? Response options: Extremely concerned; very concerned; somewhat concerned; not concerned

3. Islamaphobia (prejudice), cont.d

Islamaphobia: a cloak for hate talk and hate crime.

Arab and Muslim Australians: "vilified daily in our streets" (Anti-Discrimination Board NSW, 1990:10).

"a hostile and threatening environment" for Australian Muslims (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), 1991:145-53).
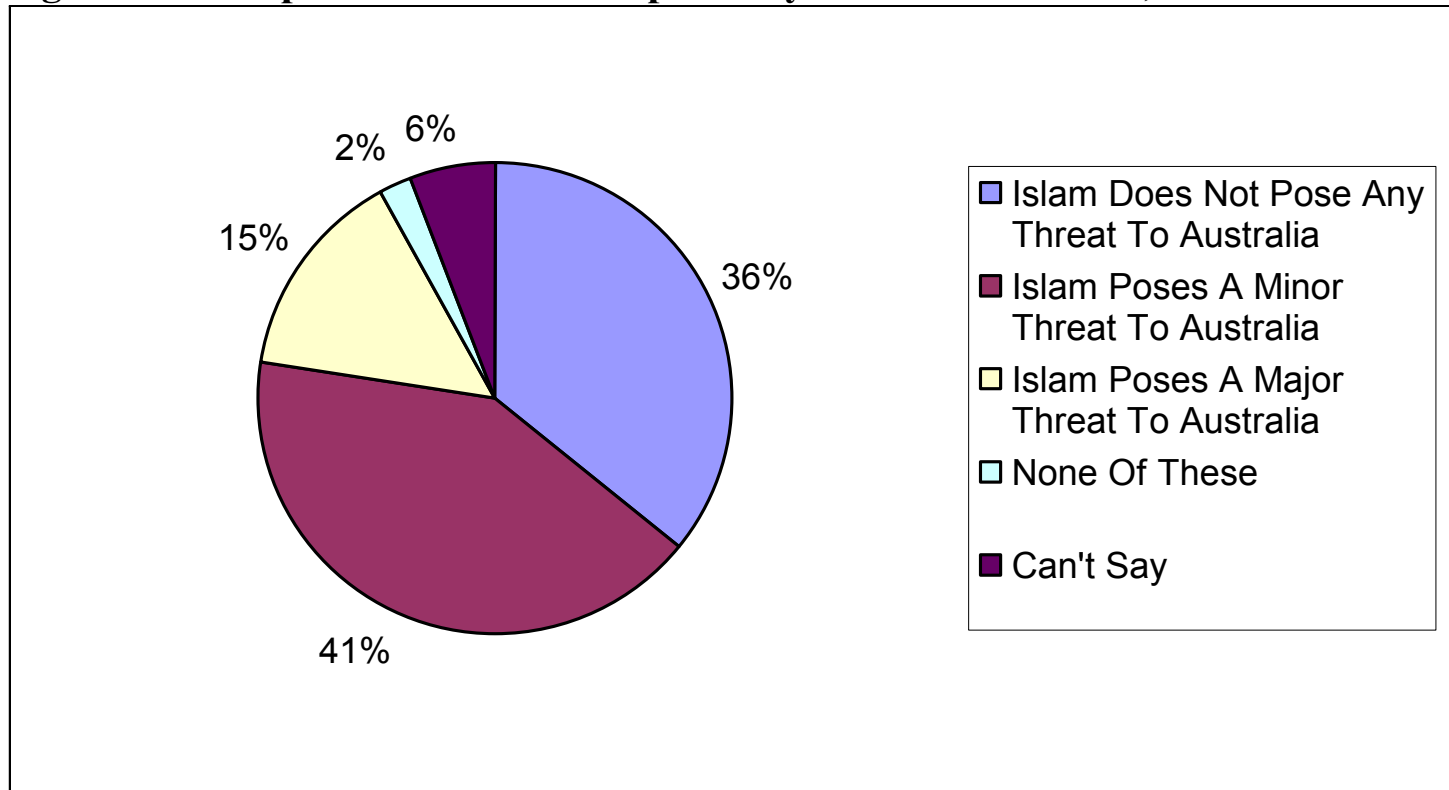

Experiences of discrimination, verbal abuse and violence "happens so often and goes unnoticed, therefore we have learnt to accept this sort of bad behaviour" (quoted in Racism Monitor Browning *et al*., 2003:7).

Since 2001, women have borne the brunt of Islamaphobic violence and intimidation (Ismaε project, HREOC, 2004).

3. Islamaphobia (threat perception), cont.d

Figure 1: Perception of the 'threat' posed by Islam to Australia, June 2003.

Legend:
- ☐ Islam Does Not Pose Any Threat To Australia
- ☐ Islam Poses A Minor Threat To Australia
- ☐ Islam Poses A Major Threat To Australia
- ☐ None Of These
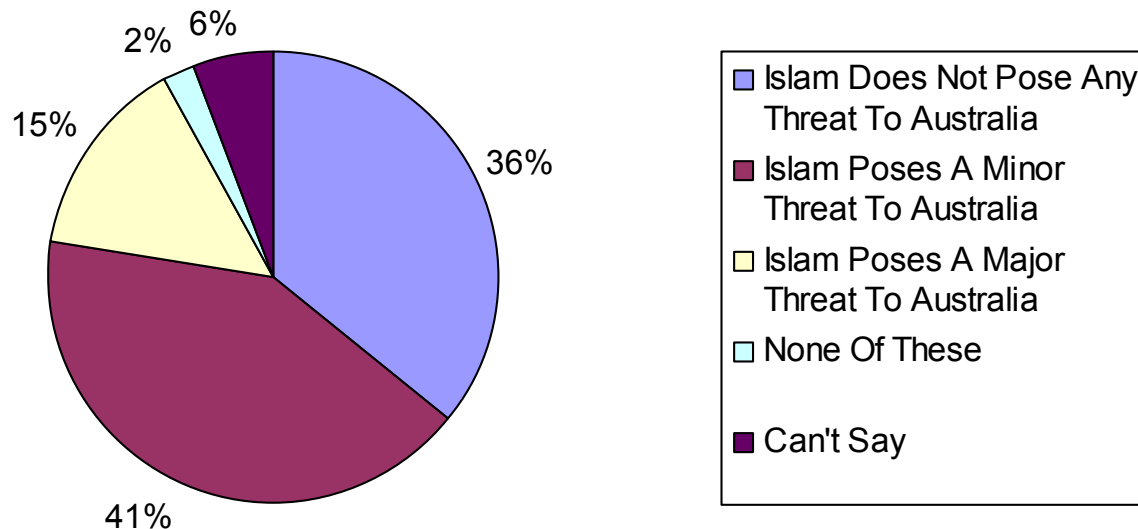- ☐ Can't Say

Pie chart values: 36%, 41%, 15%, 2%, 6%

Source: Attitudes Towards Islam Survey, Roy Morgan Research, Commissioned by Australia-Indonesia Institute. Question wording: Thinking now about Islam and Australia, which of the following statements best describes your views? (options were first three responses of legend above), n:1311.

41.5% thought Islam posed a minor threat to Australia.

A further 15% perceived a major threat.

3. Islamaphobia (threat perception), cont.d

41.5% thought Islam posed a minor threat to Australia.
(A good deal of low level community apprehension regarding Islam).

A further 15% perceived a major threat.
(A significant minority perceive a major threat).

3. Experiences of racism: Muslims in Sydney

Islamic Sciences and Research Academy / UWS Partnership Project on the attitudes and experiences of a wide array of Australian Muslims.

To gather empirics on the normality, integration, and ordinariness of Australian Muslims.

Two surveys: one by telephone, one face-to-face.

n:345 total completed sample

Latter delivered by members of the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy at community events, festivals and mosques.

3. Experiences of racism: Muslims in Sydney

Table 2: Experiences of racism, Sydney Muslims and Australia

Place of discrimination*	Sydney Muslims % (n: 345 2011-2)	Total survey respondents % (n: 12512 2001-8)
In the workplace	61.2	17.5
In education	59.7	16.6
Type of discrimination**		
You are called names or similarly insulted	62.6	27.0

Question wordings: *How often have you experienced discrimination because of your own ethnic origin / religion in the following situations? **How often do you feel that because of your own ethnic origin ...
***Percentage 'Yes' are those who answered any of: Very often; Often; Sometimes, and; Hardly ever.

Muslims have a high experience of racism (two-thirds)

3. Experiences of racism: Muslims in Sydney

Table 3: Rates of experience of racism in the workplace, Sydney Muslims, 2011-12

	Non-valid	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
In the workplace	10.2	**27.3**	24.6	22.5	12.8	2.7

Question wording: How often have you experienced discrimination because of your religion in the following situations?

One-third had never experienced racism.
Only about 15% experienced racism frequently.
For about half racism happens infrequently.

The majority of Australian Muslims do not endure a daily experience of racism, and few could be said to have become disaffected as a consequence.

4. Hopes and aspirations of ordinary Muslims: Perceptions of Muslims in Australia.

Mistaken assumptions about 'clashes' and 'problematic hyphens'.

Table 4: Sense of belonging, Sydney Muslims, 2011-12 (n:345).

	% Yes/Agree*
Belonging	Sydney Muslims
I feel I am an Australian	72.2%
It is important to me that my children are/would be fully accepted as Australians	**81.7%**

Seventy-two percent felt comfortable in identifying themselves as Australian

4. Perceptions of Muslims in Australia, cont.d

Sixty-eight percent felt comfortable in identifying themselves as Australian

Mistaken assumptions about 'clashes' and 'problematic hyphens'.

Hopkins' (2008) example of a 'blue square'.

Most Australia-born Muslims "feel at home only in Australia" Cleland (1993, p.vii) .

Table 5: Attitudes about Muslims' integration in Australia, Sydney Muslims, 2011-12 (n:345).

	% Yes/Agree*	% Disagree
Belonging		
Islam is consistent with Australian norms and society	**59.7%**	14.8%
Relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia are friendly	43.8%	17.1%
There is trust between Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia	29.6%	32.8%
The Australian media's portrayal of Muslims is unfair	**84.3%**	4.9%
Media reports impact on non-Muslims' views of Muslims	**83.2%**	4.6%

Only about 15% see an inconsistency between Australian society and Islam.

Strong critique of media influence on non-Muslim attitudes.

4. Perceptions of Muslims in Australia, cont.d

Survey of non-Muslim Victorians (n:600) found that 60% felt that the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim Victorians was generally friendly (Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria (IWWCV), 2008, p.11).

The majority of Muslims in Australia are very comfortable with being both Muslim and Australian.

The dangers of generalising from the exceptional cases of disaffection.

Table 6: Important issues for ordinary Sydney Muslims, 2011-12.

	Ranked 1		Ranked 1-3	
	n	%	*n*	%
Education	201	**58.3**	311	**90.1**
Employment	71	20.6	255	**73.9**
Inter-faith relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia	58	16.8	178	51.6
Crime rates/changes to safety and security	23	6.7	119	34.5
International affairs and conflicts	10	2.9	56	16.2
Transport	5	1.4	41	11.9
Environmental issues	8	2.3	48	13.9
Animal rights	9	2.6	25	7.2

5. Ordinary desires and needs

Question wording: Which of the following issues are important to you and your family? Please rank from 1 to 8 (where 1 is the most important).

4. Hopes and aspirations of ordinary Muslims

Education and employment primary issues of Muslim families.

Inter-faith relations were secondary issues.

International affairs and conflicts not prominent.

Adopting an 'everyday multiculturalism' perspective draws our research attention towards the ordinary (unproblematic) lives of Australian Muslims.

4. Hopes and aspirations of ordinary Muslims

The evidence for widespread disaffection?

Too much research has sampled at the deeper-end of disaffection and reproduced a discourse of non-integration.

No compelling empirical evidence in Australia to support the case for widespread vulnerability to violent extremism among Muslims, nor is there any evidence to suggest widespread alienation.

5. The NSW Police Force: Community Policing for counter terrorism.
Muslim community views

- The initiative had direct contact with the communities, it was public, and it involved aspects of partnership and relations of depth.
- The initiative was within the community policing paradigm.
- There was strong community awareness of the programme, and a majority saw it as successful.

Full reference and access

Trust

Table 8: Levels of trust in the community liaison officers from the Counter Terrorism Unit, and with officers from the Australian Federal Police, Sydney Muslim respondents, 2011.

	Community liaison officers from the NSW Counter Terrorism Unit		Australian Federal Police officers	
	n	%	*n*	%
A lot	14	42.2	8	24.2
Quite a bit	10	30.3	17	51.5
Not much	5	15.2	7	21.2
No response	4	12.1	1	3
Total	33	100	33	100

Source: UWS survey on NSW Police Counter-Radicalisation Community Engagement Initiative, 2011.
Question wording was: "How much trust do you have in the NSW Community Contact Officers? / Federal Police officers?"

Strong levels of trust between community liaison officers from the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command and the members of the Sydney Muslim communities.

Willingness to co-operate

Table 7: Willingness to cooperate with the community liaison officers from the Counter Terrorism Unit, Sydney Muslim respondents, 2011.

	n	%
A lot	19	57.6
Quite a bit	8	24.2
Not at all	1	3
No response	5	15.2
Total	33	100

Source: UWS survey on NSW Police Counter-Radicalisation Community Engagement Initiative, 2011.
Question wording was: "How willing are you to cooperate with Community Contact Officers?

Over half of the respondents (58%) selected the strongest level of commitment to co-operation.

Most of the rest selected the "quite a bit" option to reflect their willingness to co-operate.

Robust indicators of community confidence in this branch of the NSW Police Force.

Community evaluation

Table 9: Community assessment of the NSW Police Counter-Radicalisation Community Engagement Initiative, Sydney Muslim respondents, 2011.

	Has the initiative has been successful?		Will it be successful in the future?		Is it appropriate and effective?	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Yes	22	**66.7**	22	**66.7**	13	39.4
No	3	9.1	3	9.1	10	30.3
No response	8	24.2	8	24.2	10	30.3
Total	33	100	33	100	33	100

Source: UWS survey on NSW Police Counter-Radicalisation Community Engagement Initiative, 2011. Question wordings were: "Do you think the initiative has been successful so far?; Do you think the initiative will be successful in the future?; Do you think that the initiative is the most appropriate and effective means of dealing with radicalisation in your community?".

Two-thirds stated that the counter-radicalisation community engagement initiative had been successful.
The same proportion said it would continue to be successful into the future.

Community recommendations on the initiatives and for improved relations

Table 10: Community views on which areas of the NSW Police Counter-Radicalisation Community Engagement Initiative need improvement, Sydney Muslim respondents, 2011.

	n	%
Co-operation	11	33.3
Accessibility	5	15.2
Information	5	15.2
Multiple strategies	4	12.1
Marketing	4	12.1
Management	3	9.1
Number of staff	2	6.1
Training	2	6.1
No response	6	18.2
Total	33	100

Source: UWS survey on NSW Police Counter-Radicalisation Community Engagement Initiative, 2011.

Question wording: "What areas of the initiative do you think need improvement?"

Community recommendations on the initiatives and for improved relations

Broadening of the scope of the engagement and the need for more promotion of the initiative.

"If they promote, so that people know them."
"Show their appearance in community. They will continue to get close to the public, people from different backgrounds. Helps a lot."
"Only if there is more involvement of the community."

On the right track, doing well, but need to do more of it.

Stage II: Resilience
The extent to which the relations are resilient to signature events, arrests and media sensations.

6. Conclusions and thoughts

Widespread anti-Muslim feeling.

Presumed relation between Islamaphobia and radicalisation?

Experiences of racism and discourses on un-belonging.

Evidence for widespread disaffection?

Impediment to community policing counter-terror?

Some ways fwd: reporting on the ordinariness of Australian Muslims; documenting the issues; demonstrating the (longstanding) presence of Australian Muslims; articulating the diversity of Islam in Australia