Response and Rejoinders to Symposium on Why Muslim Integration Fails in Christian-Heritage Societies

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In his introduction to the review symposium of *Why Muslim Integration Fails in Christian-Heritage Societies*, Jeffrey Isaac, former editor of *Perspective on Politics*, characterizes our book as blending "empirical and normative judgments." This was indeed the main objective we pursued in writing this book: we sought not only to offer an empirical analysis of the challenge of Muslim immigrant integration, but also to think hard about the implications of this analysis for policy and for France's republican ideals. On the empirics, notwithstanding Norton's sardonic put-down that what we accomplished empirically "passes for methodological rigor among its champions," both Amaney Jamal and Abdulkader Sinno in their reviews celebrate our rigor. Both agree that our empirical strategy demonstrates that heretofore insufficiently identified anti-Muslim bias in France is sustained in a discriminatory equilibrium.

But, as was noted in the introduction, we did not stop with empirics. We offered prescriptions on what might be done to undermine this nefarious equilibrium. Alas, we did so without conducting randomized controlled trials or other policy evaluation tools that would have provided greater rigor in evaluating any policy treatments. Our goal was to infer what would be a positive equilibrium shift from the mechanisms we uncovered that sustain it. The discussion of all three reviewers focused – and in view of the *PoP* mission that political science ought better to speak to normative issues, properly so – on the one chapter of the book that offered remedies.

Both Sinno and Jamal excellently identified the problem we faced, in Sinno's formation, that it is "tricky to formulate good policy recommendations, which often deal with messy and complicated realities, on the basis of rigorous research that clinically isolates a few suspected causal mechanisms." Moreover, Sinno recognizes that we relied more on analogy (to remedies tried in other discriminatory domains) than direct evidence on policies

towards Muslims in France; similarly for Jamal, who sees the empirical work as rock solid but notes that policy recommendations are not "an easy subject to tackle." This leads to a series of serious critiques, from both of these reviewers. We address here the recommendations with which they took issue.

(1) Broadcasting of our findings – Sinno points out that this recommendation came from analogy (to professional basketball) rather than our own findings. While basketball referees became less discriminatory after seeing data showing that African Americans were penalized more harshly than Whites, the analogy in his judgment would probably not hold in France. It ignores the fact that the French government, at least up until now, "seemed more interested in marginalizing Muslims than helping them integrate." If this is so, Sinno asks, from where would these broadcasts originate? While correct about the use of analogy, Sinno perhaps underestimates the power of republican thinking throughout France. There are many in French elite society who have the interest and power to publicize our results that would challenge the current "choice of ignorance," as articulated by a senior researcher in the state statistical bureau (p. 198 of our book). Our hope was that the book would provide the evidence these elites needed to confront their own society.

(2) Muslims changing names – This was perhaps our most controversial recommendation. Sinno argues that our experiments shed no light on the returns to changed first names. He also worries, for Muslims with neutral first names, that after call back for an interview, discrimination could quickly reappear. Jamal also thinks it is "questionable at best" that the change in names could break the "cycle of discrimination" identified in the book. More broadly, although acknowledging that we demand much more from the French hosts in undermining the equilibrium than we do for the Muslim immigrants, she faults us for asking Muslims to shoulder the "burden...to constantly prove that they are not a) terrorists, b) fundamentalists, c) women haters, and/or d) religious fanatics." The facts on the ground, she points out relying on Pew Survey

data, undermine those very charges. She opines that "to make Muslim identity invisible privileges and reinforces, rather than challenges, the discriminatory equilibrium."

These critiques are important, and we welcome future research to put our recommendation to direct test. However, a few responses are in order. First, it is not quite correct to say that we had no data supporting our recommendation. As we show in our experiments, Muslim Senegalese subjects with African (but not identifiably Muslim) first names receive more generous treatment from rooted French players than those with identifiable Muslim first names. Second, there is a growing - albeit not entirely conclusive - literature on the effect of name-changes on life outcomes based on the notion that names provide signals to employers about unobservable characteristics of any job applicant. In Sweden, immigrants from Asian, African, and Slavic countries experienced an increase in earnings after a name change (Arai and Thoursie 2013). In Israel, Rubinstein and Brenner (2014) find that Israeli Jewish males born to a Sephardic father and an Ashkenazi mother (who are therefore more likely to carry a Sephardic surname) earn significantly less than their counterparts born of an Ashkenazi father and a Sephardic mother (who are therefore more likely to carry an Ashkenazi surname). And in the United States, relying on a unique longitudinal dataset of naturalization record in the US, Biavaschi et al. (2013) find that migrants who Americanized their names at the moment of naturalization in 1930 experienced gains in occupation-based earnings.

To be sure, and this is in support of our critics' skepticism on name changes, there are well-identified studies that obtain null results (Abramitzky, Boustan, and Eriksson 2017; Fryer and Levitt 2004). In accounting for their findings Fryer and Levitt (2004) suggest that minority job-seekers who are ignored by discriminatory firms get placed in institutions where they can better thrive, with the implication that in equilibrium the name should have no effect on economic success. Our data from the experimental games suggest that in France, a Muslim-sounding given name would have greater consequences than those found in Abramitzky et al (2017) and Freyer and Levitt's (2004) American data. But further research is clearly needed.

Third, we recognize the emotional trade-off between sending signals that yield social and economic benefits and maintaining naming practices that are reflective of identities that are proudly held. But, as we note (p. 227 fn. 3) from Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *Namesake*, among Bengalis in the US and UK there is a norm to maintain a different name for public and private consumption without any loss in dignity. Indeed, undermining equilibria demands the changing of expectations about others on both sides, and is not in any case without ethical dilemmas.

(3) State induced correspondence tests of firms as a regulatory device – We advocate a stricter enforcement of Article 225-1 of the Penal Code with penalties for religious discrimination administered through a public institution that would conduct audits of firms. Sinno points to a variety of difficulties in the implementation of this recommendation. This is undoubtedly true but it underestimates the range of data collection and expertise in surveys within the French administrative state that could be tasked with this important challenge.

Unlike Sinno and Jamal, several of Anne Norton's charges are misguided. Her reaction to our suggested remedies, that they "would perpetuate, even intensify, discrimination against Muslims in France" is offered without any evidence. Her charge that we "ignored racial difference" is undermined by the care we took in controlling for racial difference. Her charge that we ignored discrimination outcomes beyond France is undermined by the chapter we wrote on Yugoslav refugees throughout Europe and Arab-Americans in the Detroit metropolitan area. The unfortunate charge that the structuring of the book is in line with the "work of LePens and other anti-Semites" enters into the unproductive territory of personal attacks.

The bigger picture, and one that merits continued concern, is that equilibria are stable social outcomes; undermining them when they are discriminatory is a challenging task. Yet ignoring the discriminatory equilibrium – i.e. the "choice of ignorance" – is a violation of human rights and France's republican aspirations. If our prescriptions are misguided, likely to be ineffective, or inappropriate, it is incumbent on the policy community to do better. It is our hope that this symposium will induce the political science community, in cognizance of the clear empirical results on the fate of Muslims in Christian-heritage societies, to develop policy responses that will work to undermine the discriminatory equilibrium that blocks their success.

References:

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Abdulkader Sinno

This rejoinder to the response by Adida, Laitin, and Valfort briefly addresses some of their specific arguments. Like my original comments, it is not meant to detract from the merits of a book that sets a new standard for empirical excellence, but to continue to show how difficult it is for even excellent scholars to produce policy recommendations on the basis of rigorous empirical research.

Regarding the broadcasting of findings, Adida, Laitin, and Valfort are likely correct that advertising the effects or irrationality of discrimination (particularly if it is condemned with the moral authority of the state) could nudge corporations to discriminate less against Muslims. However, the decision to include religion in state statistics and to give weight to findings on religious discrimination is a political, not an administrative, one in France. Resistance to it is often couched in a discourse that is so anti-religious in its *laïcité* that it puts French Islam and Muslims outside the scope of the republic. There is a dearth of indications that important French political parties are interested in reinterpreting their understanding of republican ideals to make room for French Muslims who refuse to eliminate all signs of their faith, a prerequisite for the state to start advertising research findings about discrimination against Muslims qua Muslims, instead of residents of "*quartiers défavorisés*."

Adida, Laitin, and Valfort believe that their own research provides evidence to support their advice to Muslims to give their newborns neutral or French names in the hope of improving their lifetime incomes. Their finding that "Muslim Senegalese subjects with African (but not identifiably Muslim) first names receive more generous treatment from rooted French players than those with identifiable Muslim first names" is undoubtedly correct. The problem, however, is one of external validity. Both treatments in the Adida, Laitin, and Valfort experiment represent realistic personas in popular French consciousness (African Muslims and African non-Muslims). The majority of French Muslims, however, are North Africans from almost exclusively Muslim countries. While a West-African with an African, French, or Christian name would not raise eyebrows, someone with a French first name and a Maghrebin last name could inspire a more discriminatory attitude, particularly in the context of a popular far-right narrative that Muslims are an insidious threat to France. It is therefore a bit of a stretch for Adida, Laitin, and Valfort to extend their findings on native French reactions to the naming of Senegalese minority experiment subjects to the majority of French Muslims.

In their book, Adida, Laitin, and Valfort lean on an article by Duguet et al. (2010) to make their policy recommendation because this study controls for Moroccan versus French first and last name effects on callback rates (p. 152). Duguet et al. find that job applicants with Moroccan names have to submit ten times more applications than applicants with French names to get an interview. More relevantly, it concludes with the key finding that "indicating a Moroccan nationality on a résumé or having a Moroccan forename is less of a handicap than having a Moroccan-sounding surname" (p. 207). This finding suggests the opposite of what Adida, Laitin, and Valfort conclude: while some biased employers may accept a French first name as a sign of assimilation, or be distracted by it enough not to notice that an applicant is likely Moroccan, most recruiters who discriminate would not call back any Moroccan, regardless of the effort the applicant makes to assimilate. This finding suggests instead that Moroccans, and likely other French Muslims, might as well proudly stick to their culture and naming practices because the majority of discriminatory recruiters would not be mollified by their costly efforts to assimilate.

What Adida, Laitin, and Valfort show very well is that the French favor non-Muslims over Muslims, but they do not show that they are more generous to Muslims with a French first name than they are to Muslims with a Muslim first name. Their need to selectively rely on a secondary and partial finding from someone else's research confirms the point I made in the original commentary—there is no avoiding stretching findings and relying on others' scholarship to make policy recommendations when rigorous experimental research becomes narrow and costly.

Another way Adida, Laitin, and Valfort address criticism of their advice to Muslims to give their children neutral or native French names is to engage in a cursory *ad hoc* meta-analysis of other scholars' work. As one would expect, the studies were conducted using different methods and focused on minorities in other contexts. This is a sensible way to proceed, and it also suggests that perhaps, just as medical researchers sometimes do when formulating health-related advice, it may be best to root policy recommendations in meta-analyses instead of a single, rigorous, narrowly-focused study, unless the study manages to directly and comprehensively research all the issues and considerations relevant to the policy being formulated. In this case, Adida, Laitin, and Valfort find the aggregate evidence to go both ways. Perhaps that is not enough to advise members of a marginalized minority to make costly cultural and economic bets on the future.

Regarding the use of correspondence tests for auditing compliance with anti-discrimination laws, my issue is not with the capabilities of the French bureaucracy. I am questioning whether correspondence experiments are useful to test with confidence whether a single corporation is systematically discriminating, as opposed to the existence of measurable discrimination within the labor

market or within an industry. It would likely take thousands of paired applications submitted to a corporation with strategic recruiters who only call back a tiny proportion of applicants to prove statistically that the corporation is highly likely to be discriminating against a particular minority. To produce legally meaningful findings, such correspondence tests would be prohibitively costly and would have to be conducted over years for each corporation. They would only be useful, if at all, to audit discrimination by very large firms with large numbers of job openings.

Adida, Laitin, and Valfort are simply following a prevalent disciplinary practice by concluding their study with policy recommendations. Theirs also happen to be usefully thought-provoking, reasonable, and well-intentioned. Simultaneously, and also reflecting a common practice in the discipline, Adida, Laitin, and Valfort's policy recommendations are not directly and rigorously rooted in their research because the demands of empirical rigor limit the range of the findings necessary to develop useful policy recommendations. Many within the discipline have to negotiate this tradeoff between rigor and relevance, and may not be aware of its pitfalls. We therefore may need to start a conversation about how to convincingly produce policy recommendations based on our research; how to ascribe a level of confidence to our policy recommendations based on the strength of their ties to robust research; whether probabilistic social science tools can be used to meet the needs of auditors, the courts, or policy makers beyond their ability to reveal broad trends and patterns; and how to develop research designs that better balance the requirements of rigor with the need for well-supported policy recommendations.

Reference

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Amaney Jamal

While this critique is not designed to detract from the overall contribution of Adida, Laitin, and Valfort's book, I still am quite uneasy about policy recommendations that have to do with the "concealment" of one's identity. Hate crimes and discrimination against minority populations need to be addressed by taking a serious and holistic look at the institutions (both formal and informal) within majority populations that help sustain these discriminatory equilibria. Concealment or "passing" strategies might advantage those segments of the Muslim population that have the necessary endowments to "pass" (no accents, males, better education, better resources, etc.). By countering one dominant form of discrimination with the perpetuation of other plausibly inequitable solutions is debatably controversial.

Fifty Muslims were just gunned down in two mosques in New Zealand (March 2019). We don't know whether many of the Muslim victims had changed their names or not. They were targeted because they were in a Muslim gathering place. If a strategy of "concealment" is pursued, then we would lay blame on the victims for attending an apparently identifiable Muslim institution. Perhaps the mosque should not be openly identifiable? Perhaps Muslims should not gather together as Muslims? And certainly Islamic schools should not exist either? Once we go down the list of concealment strategies to "hide" Muslims, we have in essence capitulated to the extreme tendencies that wish to erase Muslims from the "West."

To be fair to Adida, Laitin, and Valfort, they would like to see a lessening of the burden of discrimination that Muslims shoulder. I worry, though, that concealment strategies are at best a divergence and at worst an exacerbating factor underlying this very unhealthy equilibrium.

Anne Norton
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The generosity of my fellow reviewers, Professors Jamal and Sinno, does not answer my critique of Adida, Laitin, and Valfort's collective claim to methodological rigor, and Adida, Laitin, and Valfort offer no response of their own. There is no defense of their substitution of one set of Muslims (Senegalese) for another (predominately Maghrebi), a strategy that ignores the time and duration of immigration, and the colonial and postcolonial historical context in which the immigrants and the receiving population operate, and effects the erasure of Maghrebi Jews. Nor do the authors answer the objection that their category "rooted French" is employed inconsistently. Many Muslims have been in France for generations and satisfy the authors' criteria for rootedness, yet "rooted" is employed as if synonymous not only with "non-Muslim" but with "Christian heritage." The authors also hold to an indefensibly linear model of integration: assimilation is not —and never has been—a one way street. Immigration alters the receiving as well as the arriving populations.

My contention that the structuring of the book is in line with the "work of the LePens and other anti-Semites" is not a personal attack; it is a political one. There are at least four ways in which this is the case. 1) The use of the term "Christian heritage society" for the *République Française* is a significant concession to a long campaign directed at Jews as well as those of Arab descent. 2) Adida, Laitin, and Valfort accept the language of host and guest that reads the state as a domestic space belonging to the host, over which the host has authority and into which entry may be justly given or denied to the guest. This misleadingly implies prior arrival, as well as presenting a normatively suspect criterion for a legitimate claim to inclusion. 3) The authors refuse to consider the history of French colonial and postcolonial domination in the Maghreb as relevant to the question of Muslim integration. 4) The model of "discriminatory equilibrium" that Adida, Laitin, and Valfort employ is both methodologically and normatively troubling. Their reductive binary casts "Muslims" against "French": a construction that denies that Muslims are or ever could be French. France itself has been, at its best, more accepting.

I have not dressed this up with protestations of regard or by drawing attention to moments of agreement. These exist, to be sure, but these issues are too important to give time to that, and in any case, I was educated at Chicago.