Online and Offline Advocacy for American Hijabis: Organizational and Organic Tactical Configurations

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Abstract This paper outlines the divergent tactics of two groups of American Muslim collective actors, which are conceptualized in terms of organizational and organic, in addressing the issue of hijab and discrimination in the workplace. The organizational form, represented by the Council for American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), uses highly publicized awareness campaigns to promote civil rights, while the organic form, represented by the hijabi fashion community, tends to opt out of drawing attention to the discrimination that is commonplace in their dealings with other Americans. The term organic is employed to demarcate the differences between structured grassroots and nonhierarchal collective action carried out through the Internet. A qualitative content analysis of seven hijabi fashion blogs is conducted to cull thematic continuities among these bloggers and their commentators in regard to a few well-publicized campaigns against hijab discrimination launched by CAIR and other discussions of discrimination in workplace. The paper argues that the tactics of the organic form of collective action develop discursively through discussions on these websites about how hijabis can navigate various situations, grounded in a shared sense of identity and context. These tactics are customized for experiences of hijabis "on the ground" as opposed to the organizational tactics, which model the successes of other civil rights organizations. The paper concludes by suggesting that the organizational tactics might be more effective, in the context of the continued expansion of Islamophobia in the American culture, if American foreign policy and mainstream media did not continue to promote the connection between Islam and extremism.

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1 Introduction

CAIR, the Council for American-Islamic Relations, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the rights of all Americans but focuses particularly on furthering the rights of American Muslims. Similar to other civil rights organizations, CAIR encourages Muslim solidarity through engendering a collective identity and advocating for the rights of Muslim Americans. The organization publicizes cases of infringement on the rights of Muslim Americans, such as workplace discrimination, which will be the focus of this paper. Unlike the social norm of laïcité in France, in the United States, Americans ostensibly have the right to express their religious beliefs in public spaces, including public schools and places of employment. Nevertheless, Muslim women in hijab, the Muslim headscarf, often face discrimination due to their conspicuous religious apparel. One might expect that the discrimination to which hijabis, women in hijab, are subjected would enhance their solidarity, but counter evidence was observed.

While conducting the content analysis for a paper on American sexuality and hijab, several comments were found on a popular American hijabi fashion blog, HijabTrendz, about the case of Imane Boudlal being suspended from her job as a hostess at a Disney restaurant for refusing to remove her headscarf. The comments of the blog's author, Miriam Sobh, and other interlocutors on the blog were largely unsupportive of Boudlal's plights (Sobh 2010).

Boudlal's suspension was taken up by CAIR, but the fact that many commentators on the hijabi fashion blog expressed more solidarity with Disney than with a fellow Muslim sister suggests that perhaps there was a schism between the tactics that the civil rights organization employs to promote the rights of Muslim Americans, hijabis in particular in this case, and how the population it was attempting to represent believes that it can best protect the rights of hijabis. In other words, some of the hijabis did not appear to favor the protection of Boudlal's workplace right or the amount of notoriety the case was receiving due to CAIR's campaign.

This paper will take up the issue of collective action tactics and how organizational actors' strategies might differ or contradict those of organic, online collectives. The chapter will begin with a review of literature connected to collective action tactics. Secondly, it will describe some of commonalities and differences between CAIR and the hijabi fashion blog community, mostly in relation to how they frame their movements and their target populations. Thirdly, it will attempt to explain the discontinuities related to their tactics in promoting the rights of hijabis in the workplace. Finally, the chapter will offer some concluding remarks about why the tactics of the organic collective actors make intuitive sense in the context of Muslims living in the United States, despite the obvious importance and necessity of CAIR's mission and efforts.

2 Framing Organic and Organizational Collective Action

It is necessary to begin by conceptualizing the terms organizational and organic. Both groups of collective actors broached in this chapter are grassroots movements because they arose to address the stigmas attached to a minority population in the American culture. CAIR addresses civil rights abuses and discrimination, while the hijabi population emphasizes their exclusion from the popular American culture in terms of the limitations of modest dress options and the prejudice they endure because of their hijabs. Grassroots initiatives gain momentum spontaneously through community mobilization, but there are evident distinctions between hierarchically structured organizational configurations and self-organized, networked forms of mobilization.

The conceptualization of organic used here draws upon the theory of "organic solidarity" outlined by Durkheim. Durkheim employed the term organic solidarity in regard to less hierarchical configurations involved in the division of labor as societies evolved into more complex forms (Durkheim 1984), but the terminology can be applied to other situations in which independently functioning interlocutors spontaneously engage in interaction without organizational constraints. Although there may be more or less influential members in organic collectivities, there is no predetermined leadership, mission, or top-down directives in regard to the tactics employed by the actors. The organic configuration persists simply because of the mutual benefit it offers to the collective actors involved.

However, one may question if it is possible for a loosely configured, organic collective to actually utilize collective tactics, and why it is important to consider these tactics in the first place as opposed to other aspects of collective action, such as frames and collective identity. Since the main distinctions between the two forms of collective action discussed here are their structural configurations, organic and organizational, and the tactics that they use to address the problematics of hijabs in the workplace, the exploration of collective action tactics is of central importance to this chapter.

Wilson (1973) claims that movements are often remembered more for their tactics than their missions. Jasper (1997) stresses the importance of tactics through his discussion of the major distinctions between forms of collective action: activist, organizational, and tactical. The tactical repertoires of collectivities not only inform the ways in which collective actors mobilize, recruit, and protest but they oftentimes relate to the identities of the collective actors and self-representations of the movements. Collective actors may share similar identities, advance comparable frames, and address the same audiences but be viewed as highly divergent simply in relation to their preferences of tactics.

The relative radicalism or moderateness of the collective action impacts the organizations' or groups' acceptability in the mainstream and, therefore, the extent to which their diagnostic and prognostic frames are integrated into the beliefs of the larger society. For example, McAdams (1982) points out the mainstream acceptance of nonviolent activism during the Civil Rights Movement lessen the

effectiveness of more militant strategies proposed by other groups, like the Black Panthers. Similarly, environmental movements, such as the Sierra Club and Earth First!, both aim at promoting environmental protection, but their strategies contribute to how they are perceived by prospective recruits and the mainstream. The campaigns conducted by Earth First! are often considered too radical to be accepted by the mainstream society. Hence, the legitimacy of collective actors is strongly connected to how they execute their collective action. Both groups examined here ascribe to moderateness in their political and religious philosophies; however, this may not ultimately sway their legitimacy in the eyes of mainstream Americans because affiliation with Islam is often perceived as synonymous with extremism.

The perceived extremism associated with Islam and its widespread rejection by the mainstream make collective action through the Internet more attractive to some Muslims in terms of self-preservation. Two issues are particularly relevant to hijabis. Firstly, Chong (1991) claims, in reference to civil rights movements, that part of the success of collective action has to do with the extent to which the tactics of collective actors lend to the notoriety of the movement. However, if the intent of the collective action is not to gain notoriety but to form a support network, the component of notoriety is unnecessary—hijabis tend to get enough unwanted attention without affiliating with a movement. It is also possible that when collectives form online, one of the overarching aims for doing so is to allow them to remain less noticeable. Secondly, McCarthy (1987) claims that prospective collective actors that lack infrastructure and opportunities for everyday interaction can develop collective identities, which facilitate network ties. These ties can blossom into communities through the Internet, forming the "counterpublics" advanced by Fraser (1992). Though it is the fastest growing religion in the United States, considering the scarce number of Muslims in general, this type of hijabi network would be much less likely to develop without the Internet. Hijabis interested in modest fashion would not likely be able to find mutual support in their local communities, even through the local masjid, so they go online to find it.

The hijabi fashion community can best be characterized as a support network, similar to those theorized by Smith and Stevens (1999), in which hijabis engage with each other to mitigate the stress associated with the rampant Islamophobia in the American culture. However, returning to the question as to how the hijabi collective actors formulate their tactics, the network serves the dual purposes of lending support and the space to discuss how to navigate more pragmatic issues. Through sharing their realities with other hijabis, they are able to reaffirm their experiences with discrimination despite the supposed tolerance of America, so they gain a better sense of the context in which they live. After they develop this shared sense of context, they are able to discursively explore tactics for dealing with various situations. For example, a question posed on one of the websites was whether or not there were work options that would be unsuitable for hijabis—jokingly, some women suggested Hooter's might not be a practical employment option (Sobh 2009). While a comprehensive consensus on issues related to the hijab in the workplace did not develop within these discussions, their strategies for dealing with discrimination stood in stark contrast to CAIR's tactics.

The theoretical position of this paper is that, though the identities, frames, and target populations of the organizational (CAIR) and organic (hijabi fashion community) movements converge on multiple levels, the tactics that they employ are markedly distinct. Perhaps the tactical differences can be allotted to the experiences of those "on the ground" in contrast to an organizational form that has modeled similar longstanding organizational forms. The organizational form promotes civil rights through the widespread publicizing of Islamophobia and discrimination, while organic collective actors recognize these rights but tend to opt out of confrontational tactics to protect themselves. Their tactics can best be characterized as flight rather than fight. Their everyday experiences lend to their conviction that fighting may encourage backlash against Muslim, and they are the most visible targets because of their hijabs.

3 The Tactic Is the Technology

The hijabi movement demonstrates that collective action through the Internet can move beyond the instrumental and symbolic framings of it presented by Nip (2003). In this case, Internet use provides a space where hijabis can interact freely, a space free of the disparagement they face in the offline universe. While the space serves symbolic functions, in that the collective actors strive to empower members and develop an overarching sense of collective identity as well as parameters of inclusion and exclusion, it also performs a tactical purpose. Similar to *hacktivism*, the technology itself is central to their tactical repertoire; their tactical withdrawal from the larger society to protect themselves is provided through the technology. In contrast to theorists who opined in the early stages of the Internet's development that it would bring about social isolation in a negative sense (Katz and Rice 2002), this form of isolation is fundamentally sociable and collective.

4 Methods

The author conducted a grounded, qualitative content analysis of seven hijabi fashion blogs (HijabiTopia, HijabTrendz, We Love Hijab, Fashioning Faith, Modesty Theory, Luff is All You Need, and Haute Muslimah) to explore thematic continuities among the bloggers and commentators on these blogs. The blogs made up a network based on their content and the bloggers' commentary on each others' blogs. Many of the bloggers also participate in a bi-annual weeklong initiative started by "Em" of Modesty Theory—Hijab Fashion Week (Em n.d.).

Posts between February 2010 and June 2011[1] were included in the analysis. The principal goal of this content analysis was to discover how the hijabis reacted to the Boudlal and Khan cases and other postings and commentary related to discrimination they have faced in the workplace and how they believed that the hijab might affect their employability. The "About" pages of the blogs were also reviewed to gain a greater understanding of the bloggers' motivations for blogging toward elucidating the frames of the movement.

CAIR's website was also examined to understand how it frames the issue of Muslim American civil rights and the tactics it employs to promote greater understanding of Islam, the rights of Muslim workers, and the normalization of the American Muslim identity in mainstream discourse.

5 Target Populations

The frames and the target populations of the hijabi fashion movement and CAIR converge on many levels. In regard to target populations, many of CAIR's campaigns call upon Muslims and "people of conscience" to speak out on various issues through letter writing and spreading awareness; thus, it hopes to influence the entire American population. American Muslims, however, stand to benefit the most from the normalization of Muslim identities and Islam through these campaigns; thus, the American mainstream is the focus of CAIR's campaign and American Muslims are the population that stands to benefit the most.

Similarly, some of the hijabi fashion bloggers want to build a network that supports the decision of hijabis and other American women to dress modestly. Some also mention wanting to impact the fashion industry and/or countering the commodification of women's bodies on a larger scale. Therefore, their target readers are Americans who are interested in modest fashion or diminishing the misogyny associated with the mainstream fashion industry. Similarly, however, other hijabis would tend to benefit the most from the normalization of the hijab and modesty in the American mainstream.

6 Frames of the Hijabis Fashion Community

The hijabi fashion bloggers frame the movement in various ways but they often refer to bringing modesty into fashion, forging a community, and creating positive role models. Many of the bloggers highlighted here have linked the creation of their blogs to the paucity of material options for modest fashion in the American society

[1] Khan was terminated in February 2010 and filed a lawsuit in June 2011. Boudlal was suspended in August 2010.

and state that their motivation for blogging is to promote Islamic-appropriate dress, modest fashion options, and pride in the American hijabi identity. They blog to share ideas about designing couture that is both fashionable and modest, often using runway ensembles and altering them to comply with their standards of modesty.

Creating a space where hijabis can interact seems to be one of the most important motivations for hijabi fashion blogging. One commentator mentioned that part of the reason that she decided to wear hijab was because of the "We Love Hijab" website: she writes, "knowing there is a group of woman i can turn to for support was very positive for me" (Hamidullah 2010). Another states, "Although I am now growing more comfortable in my hijab, I do feel that many people tend to stare at me...I find that 'forums' like this give a sense of support for girls like me who do at first struggle with criticism..." (ibid). In an article that features Sobh of HijabTrendz, she is quoted in saying, "With the Internet, there's so much out there. There's so much support" (Torres 2010). Diana, writing for *Muslimah Media Watch*, states, "I...feel as though *I am not autonomous, because other people have already spoken for me*...Muslim women have the wherewithal and intelligence and...the space to speak for themselves" (Diana 2010). The last comment highlights the important concern of Muslim women that they are often denied a vehicle through the mainstream media to speak for themselves and the Internet has provided them with this opportunity.

This space for hijabis to interact is very important because, while wearing the hijab is often considered a personal struggle (jihad) to bring one closer to Allah and/or to acquiesce with the mandates of the Qur'an, the knowledge that other women endure similar experiences is a comfort. Jokima Hamidullah of "We Love Hijab" claims, "wearing hijab can be a very stressful experience outside of the community" (Hamidullah 2010). "just like issues of skin colour prejudice or straight hair vs. kinky hair -being different is still a major issue. And women always get it worse on these things," says an interlocutor on this blog (ibid). Another commentator says, "You can't work if you [are] wearing hijeb, you can't go to school...You can't have a normal life... it [is] consid[e]red like a soumission [slave[ry]] for women..." (ibid).

To counter this connection between "slavery" and the hijab, some bloggers cite the need to develop positive hijabi role models. Stephanie Luff, who blogs at "Luff is All You Need," claims she wants to act as one of these. She claims that modestly dressed role models are severely lacking in the American culture and "girls starts to watch these western role models & believe that the immoral lifestyle is a suitable alternative" (Luff 2010). On the "Modesty Theory" website, when Em writes about her decision to no longer model her fashion ensembles, one commentator suggests that Em's decision is related to her recognition that, as a blogger, she is an example to others (Em 2010). Some of the websites, like HijabiTopia and Haute Muslimah, showcase various "Super Hijabis" (hijabis that deserve recognition for their accomplishments) and hijabis that have been successful in the modest fashion industry as role models. A few women state that wearing the hijab is "paving a way" for other Muslim women to do the same (Hamidullah 2010).

As demonstrated above, the frames of the hijabi fashion community vary substantially, particularly in comparison to a unitary, hierarchical organization. The discussion of how CAIR frames its mission will be brief because this information is readily available on the organization's website, but it functions similarly to other civil rights organizations. CAIR was established in 1994 and claims to be the largest Islamic grassroots organization in the United States (CAIR 2012) with 29 chapters across the country. Its mission is to "enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding" (ibid). It advances its mission through various humanitarian, advocacy, and educational campaigns.

7 Confluence of Frames

While CAIR perhaps takes a conciliatory approach in attempting to normalize perspectives of Islam in America, some of the hijabis demonstrate increasing frustration with having to tolerate the insensitive remarks, absurd questions, and blatant derision that are commonplace in their dealings with other Americans. When a drama instructor questioned whether Sobh had difficulty hearing because her scarf was too tight, many hijabis responded with similar experiences (Sobh 2011a). A few questioned how long hijabis would be forced to endure the discrimination they often face (ibid). Another suggested that it was acceptable to be sensitive about inappropriate comments like the one her instructor made (ibid). Several hijabis claim to have been asked questions about wearing the hijab in the shower or whether or not they get hot (Parvez 2011; Kavakci 2010). One commentator claims that a man called her a "shariah lawyer" when she complained about the fumes from his generator (Sobh 2011a). One hijabi stated that she did not want hijabis to put up with derogatory comments in an attempt to remain "above it all" (ibid). Other hijabis discussed their experiences in the workplace, which will be broached presently.

In contrast to those hijabis that have become inured to the prospects of the normalization of their identities, a few hijabis, similar to CAIR's advocacy, believe that they can influence the perceptions of non-Muslim Americans. One commentator writes, through hijabis "people can better understand Islam!" (Hamidullah 2010). Another stated that hijabis should serve as ambassadors for Islam (ibid). Clearly, there is some hope that perceptions of Muslim women can be destigmtized in the mainstream.

Other hijabis were less hopeful. For some, the problem was not so much the belittling comments as the assumptions and prejudices. One woman claimed that non-Muslims assume that hijabis do not speak English or that they are uneducated (Hamidullah 2010). Sobh outlined four common assumptions that non-Muslims have about hijabi: "they are very religious, they are very serious, they do not have interests outside of having children, and they are not real Americans" (Sobh 2011b). Women in hijab are aware of the stigma attached to their identities, but their

sentiments as to whether or not they are able to mitigate the prejudices of mainstream culture are somewhat ambiguous.

These comments about the exclusion of hijabis from those who can be considered legitimate Americans are relevant to CAIR as well. CAIR obviously believes that its campaigns have been or will be effective in influencing mainstream perceptions of Muslims, because its campaigns have remained consistent over the nearly two decades that it has been in operation. However, a HijabTrendz posting indicates the negative perspectives about Muslims persist and have actually worsened since 2001—anti-Muslim sentiment reached an all-time high in 2010 (Sobh 2011c).

Despite the pervasive Islamophobia in the American society, hijabis and CAIR express a great deal of pride in their Americanism. Sobh posts in jest a list of the "top 5 ways to announce to the world that you're Muslim": one is "Carrying an American flag at a rally but shouting in Arabic" (Sobh 2011d). Luff showcases her fashion ensemble for July 4th—dressed from head to toe in red, white, and blue. An interlocutor on "We Love Hijab" sums up her perception of religious freedom in the American context: "[in the United States] you have the freedom of religion, I love that and am so proud of that because I have the right to freely chose to cover my head" (Hamidullah 2010).

Likewise, to demonstrate its Americanism, on the "25 Facts About CAIR" webpage, the organization discusses some of its advocacy campaigns that are or have become part of mainstream American ideology: CAIR's opposition to the invasion of Iraq in 2003; CAIR's advocacy against the use of torture in interrogation; and CAIR's early rejection of the Patriot Act (CAIR n.d.a, 25 Facts). This section of the website is perhaps related to the accusations of anti-Americanism that are hurled at the organization, which will be discussed promptly.

Both CAIR and the hijabi community also stress their moderate adherence to Islam, which is arguably the norm of the Muslims both in the United States and abroad. Islam is a religion that preaches moderation. Some of the hijabis draw attention to the mainstream connection between the hijab and extremism. One commentator mentions that she was considered "extreme," excluding her from the ranks of moderate Islam, by her own Muslim family due to her decision to wear the hijab (Hamidullah 2010). Likewise, Kavakci (2010) emphasizes, "I'm not an extremist Muslim," refuting this common connotation of the hijab in mainstream America.

Similarly, CAIR attempts to refute the Islamophobic rhetoric that characterizes it as an entity that spreads anti-Americanism. One of the pages on its website attempts to dispel the "myths" associated with the organization: CAIR has backing or is connected to Wahhabism and/or other "fundamentalist" groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and/or the Muslim Brotherhood; CAIR promotes anti-American extremism; and former associates of CAIR have been deported for terrorism-related charges (CAIR n.d.b, Disinformation). In refutation of these allegations, CAIR writes that it condemned the 9/11 attacks within the first few hours of the incident and, later, issued a public service announcement, entitled "Not in the Name of Islam," which attempts to demystify the connection between Islam and terrorism,

and a fatwa to declare the murder of civilians as haram (forbidden) (ibid). CAIR has also been accused of subverting the U.S. Constitution, although it claims that most of its advocacy is based on upholding it (ibid). It has earned its unsavory reputation, not through its own workings but through its connection to Islam and the connection in mainstream American consciousness between Islam and extremism.

Neither CAIR nor some hijabis question the incongruence between their belief in the tolerance of American society and the substantial discrimination they face as "others" in the culture. One commentator demarcates the difference between discriminatory legislation and personal prejudices against Muslims, citing the former as more insidious (Hamidullah 2010). While it is difficult to gauge the extent to which Muslims agree with this public/private dichotomy of prejudice, the fervent Americanism of some hijabis and CAIR, in the face of the pervasive Islamophobia, speaks to the somewhat widespread acceptance that discrimination is due to the private intolerance of ignorant people rather than a public, systemic issue. Mohanty (2003) might say that these Muslims have bought into the fallacy of multiculturalism in the United States, which tends to pass off racist attitudes as personal defects rather than casting them as systemic ones, grounded in the country's foundations in white, Christian, heterosexual, able-bodied, male privilege.

8 Hijab in the Workplace

The hijab was understandably a concern for some of the interlocutors in the hijabi community who were in the workforce. One commentator claims that the first time she wore the hijab to work after converting her boss took her into a different room, "slammed his fist on the table and said, 'If you don't take off that da_n scarf, you won't be working here'. . .I'd always done a good job. . .After that, I couldn't do anything right. . ." (Sobh 2011a). Another hijabi had a supervisor that told other employees that she was oppressing herself and allowing men to dictate her life (ibid). Another interlocutor mentions, having spoken to a "number of working and professional Muslimahs," ". . .the experience of stares, hostility and aggression b/c of wearing the hijab is felt all around" (Hamidullah 2010). Another woman agrees with this comment, stating that workplaces are hostile to "outward expressions of religion" (ibid).

This is not to say that none of the hijabis had positive experiences in their places of employment, but the reservation of non-hijabis to put on the hijab and look for a job was tangible, even for those who believe that it is religiously mandated. When hijabis invoked disapprovingly the excuses that non-hijabis make for not wearing the hijab, employment options were typically at the top of the list, even though many hijabis agree that the hijab definitely impacts employment options (Sobh 2010; Hamidullah 2010).

CAIR does not believe that the hijab should affect the employment options of Muslims, so it has created a pamphlet, entitled "An Employer's Guide to Islamic

Religious Practices," to disseminate information about the rights of Muslims in the workplace (CAIR 2005). One section that focuses specifically on women suggests that some Muslim women may wear headscarves or face veils and, although employers may ask people who wear religious apparel to use certain colors or fabrics, they should consider modifying their dress codes to accommodate religious apparel. The pamphlet specifically cites altering "no hat" policies.

Some hijabis understand their rights as outlined by CAIR, that is, employers must modify their regulations to accommodate religious beliefs. One says, "they can not do anything to you. If they fire u because of [wearing hijab], they should be ready for a law suit" (Hamidullah 2010). Despite this commentator's apparent understanding of the rights guaranteed to her under the 1964 Civil Right Act in regard to religious accommodation, there was less evidence that these rights were widely acknowledged within the hijabi community.

The case of Boudlal's suspension from her job at Disneyland was illustrative of the misunderstandings associated with religious accommodation in the community. One hijabi writes, "If a woman came in and said "I only want to wear a sleeveless shirt" and she refused to wear the proper uniform she would be fired for not following the rules" (Sobh 2010). Another suggests that corporations are "very sensitive" about their employees upholding a particular "image" (ibid), although the ADL website stipulates that preventing employees from wearing religious garments is limited to "safety issues" and employers cannot ask employees to remove these garments due to the potential discomfort of their clientele (ADL n.d.). A third commentator says, "I'd rather see a company offer a compromise than fire her for her beliefs" (Sobh 2010). A fourth woman states, "I also wear hijab and i had to leave my job because of it...when you think how it's difficult to find a job...employers have so much choice...they are not forced to propose a compromise for religions reasons" (ibid). While the first two comments demonstrate a lack of understanding between failure to comply with a dress code and failure to comply with a dress code for religious reasons, the latter comments tend to view religious accommodation in an optional sense rather than as a right that is mandated by federal law.

Blatant discrimination and termination after being hired appeared to be as much of a concern for some interlocutors as not being able to get a job in the first place. Sobh, who started the thread about Boudlal's case, states, "it's pretty cool to have a company that is willing to give you an alternative...most people...wou[l]d basically never offer you a job" (ibid). Another commenter claims, "Many places don't even hire you because of wearing hijab at least not me" (ibid). A third claims, "many people nowadays can't get a job...because of their religious beliefs" (ibid). Even though some hijabis acknowledge the fact that it is exorbitantly difficult to secure employment in the hijab, they were more sympathetic of Disney's compromise, which it is legally mandated to offer, than of Boudlal's desire to wear the hijab on the job. Despite a few comments indicating that Disney had only offered an alternative *after* Boudlal had filed suit, though she had waited to hear back from the company about her request for religious accommodation for months, few commentators believed that Disney's actions were discriminatory. The women that favored

Disney's alternative ignored the comments about it being offered after Boudlal had requested assistance from CAIR in filing the EEOC complaint.

Boudlal rejected Disney's alternative because she said it was silly and mocked her religious beliefs. A few also agreed that the alternative was "silly" (ibid) and "a bit overboard" (ibid) and that Boudlal would look out of place anyways, either in hijab or in Disney's proposed alternative, because she would be the only employee wearing "headgear." However, the woman who thought Disney's alternative looked "silly" claims that she would accept a Disney job that was out of the view of the public or she would quit (ibid) rather than fight for her right to exercise her religious beliefs. Several hijabis believe that Boudlal's rejection of Disney's compromise reflects poorly on other hijabis and might preclude employers from offering alternatives in the future, again, demonstrating that they believe it is an option rather than the law.

This suggestion to work outside of the public eye evokes the question as to whether or not there are more or less appropriate places for hijabis to seek employment. In regard to the Boudlal case, "as a muslima, i couldn't even work for a firm like disney (due to, among others, their implication with israel)," writes one woman. The hijabi community was much more sympathetic to Khan's experience, because, unlike Boudlal, she had interviewed and been hired in her hijab. Even so, Kavakci, blogging at HijabiTopia, claims that Muslim women should be careful about where they seek employment: "... Muslim girls please choose where you work wisely. A store that greets its customers with half naked model looking guys, is not a place for a muslimah to work! There are so many places for a muslim girl to work at." Her statement denies the perspective of several other hijabis that it is very difficult to get hired in a hijab. Further, contrary to Kavakci's assertion, Zahra Billoo, the CAIR Outreach Director in the San Francisco Bay Area, the branch that took up Khan's case, says, "It's not ok that Muslim women have to think twice about where they can work, that their religious freedom is being impinged upon by employers who have blatantly decided not to follow the law" (AP 2010).

9 Tactical Repertoires

Both CAIR and the hijabi network attempt to have their worldviews accepted by the larger American population. The legitimacy of CAIR's tactics is couched in modeling other civil rights organizations, which rely on increasing awareness and highlighting cases of abuse through the extensive publicity of their campaigns; however, CAIR has become the target of attacks due to its high degree of notoriety in the mainstream. To counter these attacks, CAIR emphasizes its positions on various issues that have been accepted by the majority of Americans and/or reaffirmed by city/state legislation and the courts. The organization appears to believe that its strategies are effective and that its campaigns will promote change despite the continuous growth of Islamophobia in the society.

Similar to CAIR's ideology, hijabis tend to be proud, moderate Americans but, in contrast to CAIR's very public campaigns, evidence suggests that the tactics hijabis employ are related to maintaining a low profile. Some hijabis seem less convinced that the American society is moving toward greater tolerance of Muslims. One states that it is "en vogue" (Sobh 2010) to be intolerant toward Muslims, and another claims that this intolerance will endure "as long as the cold war" (ibid). Another hijabi points out that judges are more inclined to favor the right of businesses to enforce dress codes than to rule in favor of individual acts of discrimination against hijabis (Sobh 2010). While quite a bit of continuity exists among the frames and target populations of the organizational and organic collectives, the tactics they employ in regard to hijab in the workplace are quite polarized.

CAIR's campaign to improve the image of Muslim Americans involves drawing discriminatory action into the public sphere. However, CAIR itself recognizes that the high publicity of its campaigns has made it the target of anti-Islamic sentiment: "Because of CAIR's high profile...a small but vocal group of anti-Muslim bigots has made CAIR the focus of their misinformation campaigns. Internet hate sites then recycle these attacks..." (CAIR n.d.b, Disinformation).

Perhaps hijabis believe they have been on the receiving end of enough attacks due to the conspicuousness of their association with Islam so, rather than facing more attacks, they are inclined to withdraw from the public sphere. This tactic is not so much imposed upon the community in a top-down fashion, but it is a strategy that has developed discursively through the shared experiences of hijabis in an effort to protect themselves. Although the analysis of these blogs reveals the inclinations of a relatively small community, a related trend has been noted elsewhere in a larger sample of over 200 hijabis. According to Ghumman and Jackson (2010), hijabis tend to look for jobs which are outside of the public eye because they are aware of the stigma attached to their religious apparel. Therefore, despite the assertion of CAIR's spokesperson that hijabis should be able to work wherever they want because their religious beliefs are protected by law, the perception of hijabis is that it may be difficult to secure employment in hijab if they are not careful about where they apply to work or how they frame their identities (King and Ahmed 2010). Furthermore, if they face discrimination in the workplace because of their hijabs, they feel like they are better off looking for another job rather than standing up for their constitutional rights.

10 Conclusion

Both the organizational and the organic forms of collective action employ tactics that speak to their contextualized understandings of opportunities for American Muslims. CAIR wants to eradicate discrimination through creating widespread awareness about the pervasiveness of Islamophobia in the American society. Hijabis are more inclined toward self-preservation through withdrawing from the public eye and relying on the Internet to socialize in a safe place if they live in

communities with few Muslims. While their tactics are diametrically opposed, neither one can be said to be superior—they are simply products of the various realities of Muslims living in America. However, the organizational collective actor may be less attuned to the "on the ground" experiences of the most visible targets of Islamophobia, the hijabis.

In the current political context of American foreign policy in the MENA region and the anti-Muslim current integrated into mainstream culture, it is difficult for CAIR to maintain legitimacy as an organization that is founded on moderateness and constitutional principles, when it is associated with a religion that is synonymous with extremism in the American imaginary. When a sizeable portion of the U.S. military budget is devoted to "maintaining political stability" in MENA nations and "opposing factions of militant Islamists," it is very easy for non-Muslim Americans, with the help of the mainstream media that too often presents Islam as a religion of extremists, to equate typical, moderate Muslims with fanatics. My point is that CAIR's mission may be untenable until there is a radical reimagining of Islam in the U.S. culture.

The tactics of the hijabis are customized for this context. They are disabused of the tolerance of the American people and few are persuaded that there is hope for the normalization of their identities in the foreseeable future. They tend to reject the high notoriety of the CAIR campaigns because these campaigns may actually encourage backlash against Muslims. They retire to an online space where they are safe and can feel empowered among their peers, awaiting a day when non-Muslim Americans gain a more balanced perspective of Islamic beliefs, and they will no longer have to justify their right to exercise their beliefs as they see fit.

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