ABSTRACT

What is American about American Islam? focuses on narrative constructions of *Muslimness* and *Islamicity* by large Muslim American organizations. As these narratives are configured in fluid and multidirectional processes, they are considered co-constructions that involve not only the Muslim American organizations but also their supporters and the narrative repertoires emerging from the public sphere.

Empirically, the study is based on data collected between 1996 and 2009 from the following four Muslim American organizations: the *Islamic Society of North America*, the *Nation of Islam*, the *Council on American-Islamic Relations*, and the *Islamic Circle of North America*. Along specific selection criteria, the organizations' output was compiled in four different corpora and analyzed with corpus analytical tools and a discourse analytical perspective.

The study both suggests and follows an approach that traces processes of integration on the basis of narratives. Accordingly, it establishes constructions of Muslim American selves and their emplotment vis-à-vis the Muslim world, within the broader Muslim American community as well as within American society. By (re)constructing processes of boundary drawing, it contributes to assess the configuration of Islamic authority. Special attention is paid to the effect of 9/11 on the construction of difference among Muslim Americans and how this relates to the American discussion on social coherence with its broad scope between liberal and communitarian paradigms. Furthermore, by focusing on functionality, this study locates Islam within constructions of American *Muslimness* and *Islamicity* and thereby contributes to assess the status of religion in culturally complex societies.

Based on its findings, *What is American about American Islam?* challenges perspectives of *Islamwissenschaft* respectively Islamic Studies that framed contemporary *Muslimness* and *Islamicity* configured in the West in relation to early Islam and in relation to the dichotomy "Muslim world"/"Western world". Instead, this study makes a case for acknowledging Islam in the West *as* Western and, as a consequence, for adjusting explanatory frameworks beyond concepts such as diaspora. Therefore, it promotes a comparative perspective that contrasts various categories in order to establish what is particular – or American – about American Islam.