Statement of Research

My research interest has taken two directions: the role of religion in the lives of immigrants and the effects of political and social structure on violence against women. The first direction builds on the literature about the effects of religion on the immigrants’ lives, which have been proved by a significant number of sociological studies. Religion plays a very important role in maintaining an immigrant’s identity and in modifying it to function in an unfamiliar host environment. Furthermore, religious institutions play an important role in helping immigrants find work, legal advice, and schools for their children, government help, and friends. My dissertation focuses on how religion affects the lives of Muslim immigrants in America, highlighting their political participation in terms of their political thinking, voting registration, and voting.

Researchers have started studying Muslim community in America especially after 9/11 terrorist attacks. For several reasons little was known about the American Muslim group’s political participation before 9/11. One reason was that this social group is small and their participation has not had a significant impact on the outcome of the voting process. So, as compared with other American immigrants such as the Latino, Japanese, or Chinese communities, the study of Muslim communities in American society is a little. Most sociological research used qualitative data on social organizations and Islamic leaders based on dozens of interviews. However, conducting quantitative research on Muslim Americans is problematic for
a number of reasons, one of which is the paucity of quantitative data and the small percentage of the whole population represented by this group.

So, I use the quantitative data to measure the effects of Islam on their followers on their participation in the American political process. Does Islam motivate American Muslims to participate in elections? Under which circumstances does religion affect their participation? Does it affect American Muslims’ political and social beliefs? If so, how? Does Islam work like Christianity and Judaism in terms of the life of immigrants? To answer these questions I make use of the sociological literature and research findings on other religious groups such as Evangelicals, Catholics, Jews and Hindus. I examine the various levels of religiosity, religious beliefs, conservatism, religious salience, and the religious environment on the various levels of political participation within the American Muslim community. Little is known about the differences between American Muslim women and their male counterparts concerning their political participation. The questions here are as follows: Are women more religious than men? If so, does this affect their level of political and social participation? Are they more liberal than men? If so, what effect does religion have on this difference? This direction of research will contribute toward filling a gap in sociological research on the social and political participation of the Muslim Americans and other non Judeo-Christian groups in the American society.

The other part of my research interest is on the relationship between political participation and democracy and violence against women. Although a significant amount of research on violence against women (VAW) has been done along with attempts to study the correlations between (VAW) and other social structure components, there is a shortage of studies concerning the relationships between political structure and (VAW) on either the micro or the macro level. In my Master’s thesis I present quantitative data on political, social and cultural
circumstances surrounding (VAW) collected from 169 countries. Using the OLS model and controlling for economic, religious, and educational variables, I found that an increase in democracy leads to a decrease in (VAW). Furthermore, although religion is statistically significant as a part of a culture, its effects are lessened in cases exhibiting other variables such as literacy and the degree of urbanization of the area in question. In conclusion, suggestions for future research in this area are presented.

Violence against women takes various forms including physical violence against wives and other domestic or intimate partners dating violence and sexual assault and abuse, along with emotional abuse, human trafficking, and stalking. In the future I will explain which kinds of violence against women are affected by political democracy. It is important to distinguish which part of the political structure has the most significant effects on the rate of violence against women cross-nationally. This research will require the collection of more data from many countries concerning both the multiple aspects of violence against women and the various political structures in which it occurs. This research is important because there is a gap in sociological research concerning violence against women within diverse political structures.